

LOCH NESS MONSTER SWIM 2011

Marion Slattery

My first competitive swim in Open Water Swimming was at the Pan Pacific Masters Games on the Gold Coast in November 2008, at the age of 55. I've been swimming in the surf since I was four. Since then I have completed fifteen swims - all different, but lots of fun! There has been one I definitely wished I had stayed at home instead of competing.

My Scottish ancestry pulled me back to Scotland to compete in the inaugural *Loch Ness Monster Swim* on the 13th of August - is that a good excuse! The Swim started from Dores - a little village about 20 minutes south of Inverness, complete with waterside pub.

It offered a 1.6km swim or a shorter 1/2km swim. The inaugural event fundraised for Marie Curie Cancer Care which provides in-home care for cancer patients. As a Physiotherapist, I also raised funds for this cause. It is not a requirement for the swim.

The day before the swim, Loch Ness was picture perfect - proof below! The day of the swim was windy, cold, choppy etc.— beautiful one day, awful the next! When I got to the start, even the ducks that had been in the water the day before, were standing on the beach - not a good sign — and the water was a balmy 11°C! Despite that there were non-wetsuit swimmers! We were able to get in and get wet and acclimatise just before the start. Because of the pebble/rock surface there were no dive starts.

Wave starts were on times so that each wave was almost finished before the next group started, for safety reasons. We had to call out our name and hat number at the first buoy to make sure we were ok, regarding hypothermia etc. I did take a few moments to have a look back down Loch Ness -spectacular!

The safety boat asked if I was ok. I said I was from Australia and was just looking at the view!

It was a reasonably difficult swim on the day - the elite swimmers, some of whom had swum the English Channel, were about eight (8) minutes over their normal times - so I was happy with my time.

"Swimtrek" organised this event and they did a great job for this event. I met some great people and was well looked after by the locals and the organisers. There were six other international swimmers at this event. Unfortunately, the conditions deteriorated and the 1/2km swimmers could not get in the water. At this time I was wearing a fleecy top, warm jacket and spray jacket - and I don't feel the cold?

The highlight of the day was the race start - a skirl from the bagpipes and each wave played in to the water! You have got to be happy with that!

I was standing in the beer garden of the Dores Inn, sausage and sandwich in hand, while watching the next swimmers come in - where would I rather be?

I just had a great time and I might be tempted to be back there again if the occasion arises.



Above: The day before the swim



Above: The day of the swim

Right: Marion at Loch Ness

