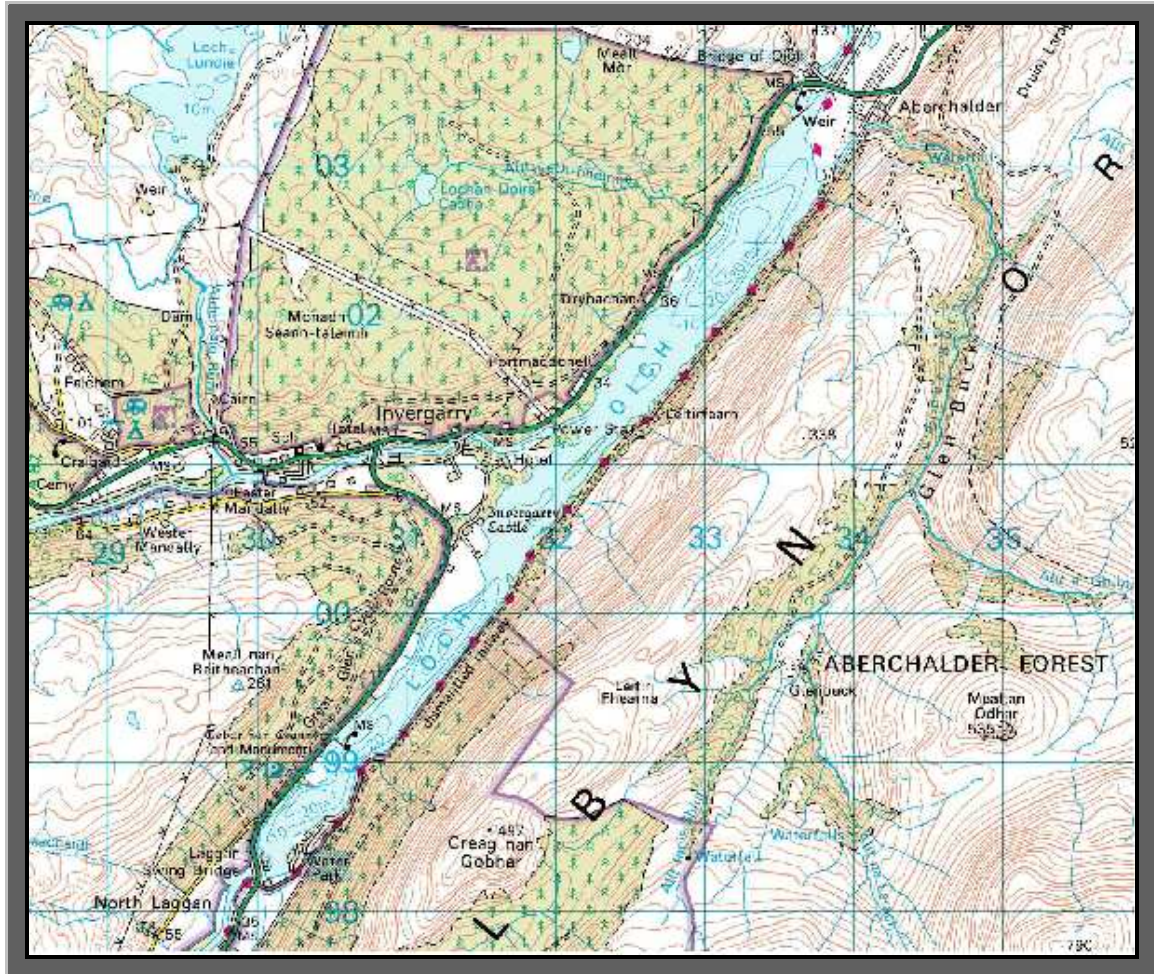


4th September 2010



After 6 and a half hours driving and only a couple of missed turns I eventually arrived early Friday evening at [Craigard guest house](#) Invergarry to a warm welcome from owner Andrew and his wife Joy.

After a quick runthrough of facilities and more importantly ordering my breakfast I headed off to my room to unpack and get a good rest before tomorrow's exertions.

After a lie in and very large breakfast I headed down to the [Great Glen Water Park](#) for registration at 09:45am for the first 4-mile swim. Swimmers and officials has started to gather as had the midges and as we quickly registered and sorted out lifts we set off to the start to the Bridge of Oich... minus the midges



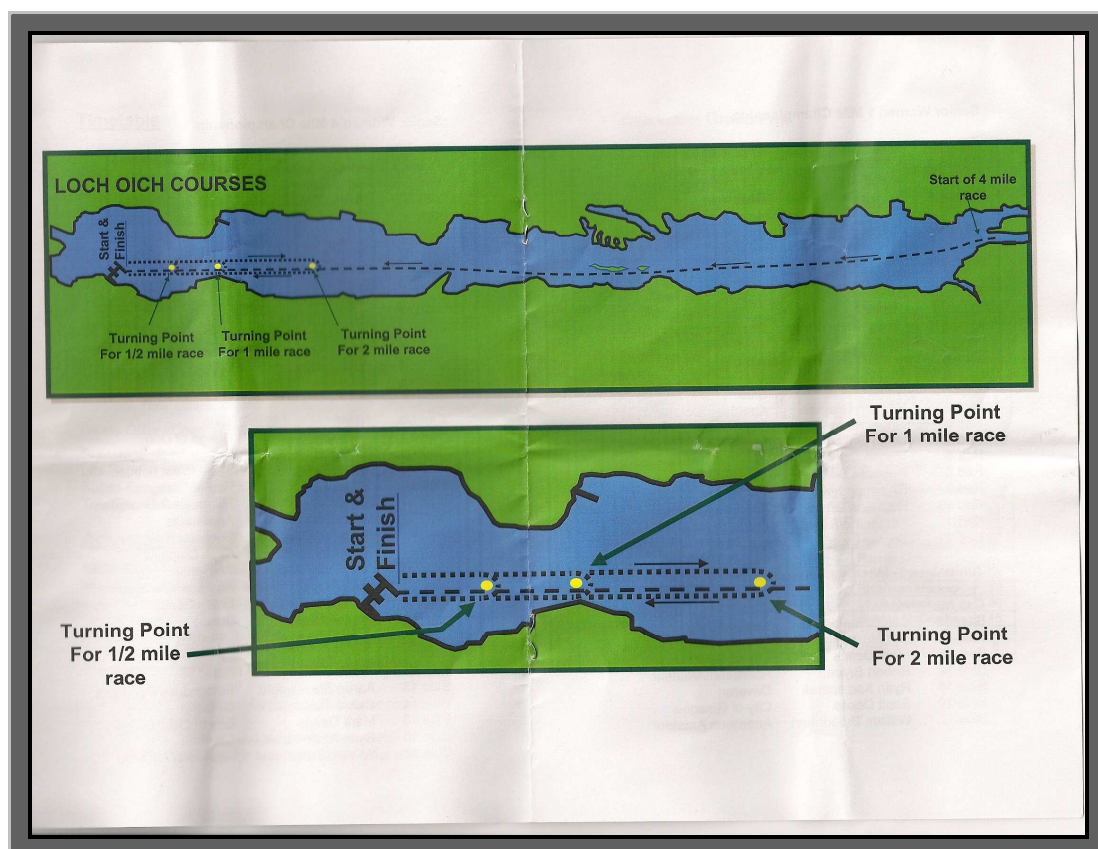
As we parked up swimmers leapt (o.k. fell) out the cars and prepared themselves for the briefing. As we wandered across the bridge to the start, the canoeists from Gordounston School launched their canoes and met us by the pontoon.



Weather report was for a fine day and water temperature 15.9 Fahrenheit or 60 centigrade in new money. Suitably briefed the nine swimmers received numbered hats, customary tattoos and were paired up with a canoeist.

The only notable piece of safety advice was regards the Red Cross who were due to officiate the Great North Swim which fortunately for us had been cancelled at the last moment due to water quality, so they were able to attend our event.

“...if you need to retire within the first 45 minutes you will be brought back to the start where you can be attended to by the Red Cross and if you wish to retire after an hour into the swim you will be taken to the finish where again the Red Cross will attend to you , just don't get into trouble inbetween 45 minutes and an hour...”



No sooner had we jumped in the water we were off promptly followed by our canoeists. The field was soon split with the speedy youngsters sprinting off into the distance whilst the more mature swimmers ensured they were off safely and made sure we could keep an eye on them. Unfortunately this didn't last too long as we soon lost sight of them.

The water conditions were perfect, not too cold virtually no wind and canoeists were keeping close quarters guiding us ably down the Loch. Next stop Great Glen Water Park.



Thirty minutes into the swim and I noticed my vision was becoming blurry...not enough food I thought, no as I had porridge, full Scottish breakfast and to top it off a banana before the swim. Was it too many whiskies the night before...no I daren't as I can barely swim in a straight line when I'm sober, heaven knows what I'd be like with a hangover. No it was much more simple my goggles were filling up with water as I had been allowed to wear two hats and the bottom one was riding up as I had smothered my head in insect repellent to stave off the midges.

After quick hat removal and throwing offending hat to Ben my canoeist I was off again but by this time I had dropped approx 50 metres behind Andrea Gellan and who knows where the youngsters were.

As we approached the island we had to go around the right hand side as we had been warned it may be a little shallow As I moved across I reverted to a bit of breaststroke and had to breathe in a bit as it definitely was shallow.

No sooner had we cleared the shallow water that I noticed Ben had dropped back a bit and was struggling to keep up. Unfortunately I hadn't picked up the pace the wind had and the water had become a bit more lumpy...exactly how I like it. This continued for what seemed the next 30 minutes but as Ben pointed out when he could get alongside me I was catching up with two other swimmers.

Sadly as we just got past the island the wind dropped and the water became flat and the two swimmers I was closing on started moving away again.

By now we had covered about 3 of the 4 miles of the Loch and I was fast approaching another point which would grab my attention, the River Garry. I couldn't see it from the Loch but I certainly felt where it fed into the Loch as the temperature dropped considerably. Not surprising as the River Garry is fed from the highlands.

Suitably refreshed I could now make out the bridge at the end of the Loch and knew I was not far from the finish, all I had to remember was not to swim to the bridge as I would have gone too far and would be on my way to Ireland.

No sooner had I started the swim was over and my role was complete I had made sure that all the other swimmers had finished safely before I finished .

Thankfully the midges had obviously eaten too much of us in the morning as they had disappeared. either that or they couldn't find us as we were too cold. I was barely dry by the time the junior 2-mile briefing had been completed. Sadly I didn't catch the start as I was having a shower and recuperating in the sauna before the 1-mile race.

After dragging myself way from the sauna and suitably refreshed it was time to swim again this time the course was 800 metres out to a buoy and back again. After a number of no shows a grand total of 4 swimmers were suitably briefed all four of us having completed the 4-mile swim. The only real difference in the briefing was to remind the speedier youngsters to watch out for us "slowies" on their return journey to the finish.

Water temperature was about the same and once again we were accompanied by Gordonstoun canoeists. As we set off the conditions were slightly windy but personally I felt stronger than in the morning's race. Obviously I should try a 4-mile warm up before every race.

Once again the swim seemed to finish to quickly and once again I made sure every swimmer finished safely and there were no collisions. Suitably showered and fed it was off to check out some of the local produce particularly the local alcoholic tinctures.... purely medicinal of course.

