

Christmas Score

Clare Dallimore planned event and decided to combine a score event with bonus points for answering cracker jokes at each control. She then disappeared to Yorkshire caving leaving Nick and Caroline the map & questions and told to get on with it. As they couldn't do any of the questions it was decided to put some clues on the answer sheet to make it a bit easier. On the day the weather held and there was a very good turnout of over 40, fortunately there were just enough maps. The number of people getting all the controls was surprising as we thought it would be nearly 10km until someone mentioned using a decidedly rotten tree trunk which had fallen over the canal feeder as a shortcut to no 8!! It definitely wouldn't have got through the risk assessment! The other surprise was the number of very sad people who knew the answers to most of the jokes.



The full age range of competitors sprint off at the start of the Xmas score

Wenallt Local Event

Thanks to the Graham family for organising this event in the rain, gales and thunder. Weather conditions were atrocious although about 25 people turned up including several newcomers. Although the start was based in the Forest fawr car park Malcolm had planned the event so that the shorter courses got to visit the Wenallt side of the map which made it more interesting.

A fun weekend in Sheffield

I didn't need much persuading to spend a weekend in Sheffield in early December to see how Lauren was settling in at University, particularly when I realised that, just by chance, the weekend coincided with a couple of orienteering events.

The trip up on early Friday evening was uneventful, and we even found the hotel with a bit of help from Tom-Tom. Finding food was more problematic as everywhere we tried was full of Christmas parties.

Saturday morning was the prologue of the ShUOC Chasing sprint event on the outskirts of Sheffield. The weather was wonderful: wet, cold, windy with the occasional snow and sleet shower just to add to the fun. The 2km walk to the start added to the occasion. Lauren was helping on the starts and we got a panic phone call as soon as we go to the car park asking if we could hurry to the start and take umbrellas, coats and anything else we had to help keep the start team from getting hypothermia.

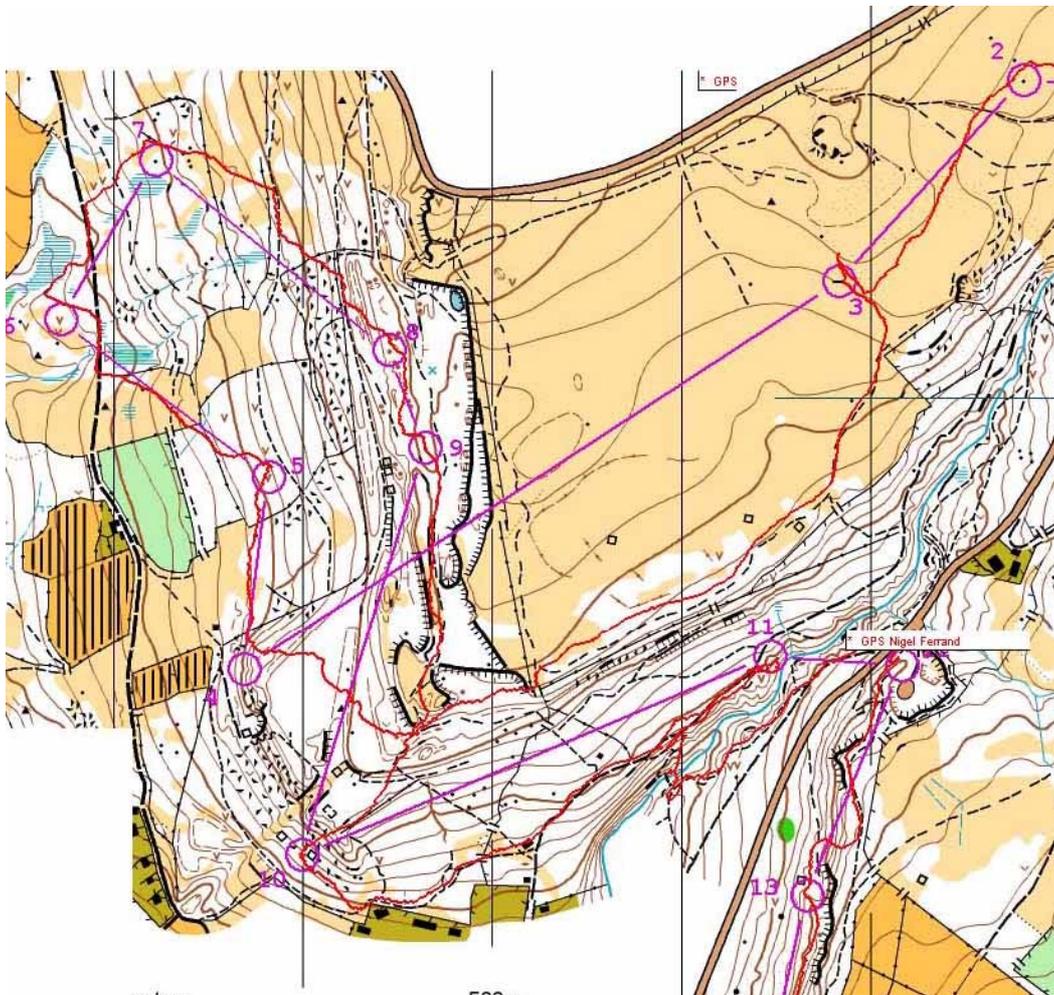
On the way to the start we bumped into another SWOC member, Carys Morgan who was up for the weekend with her dad.

The map and the course were brilliant, which is more than can be said for my run. Lesson to all doing a sprint race – learn the sprint race map symbols and do not go looking for a big road when you should be looking for a small leaf covered path.

By the time we had walked 2 km back to the car park, Liz had told me that we were going to warm up back at the hotel and then go Christmas shopping in Sheffield rather than hang around in the snow for the afternoon chase. I didn't argue too much, and we soon found out that Lauren had decided to do the same (an hour and a half standing in the cold at the start hadn't prepared her particularly well for 2 races).

On Sunday morning we picked Lauren up from her Halls nice and early. It soon became apparent that she had been out celebrating the previous days event with the rest of the ShUOC team well in to the night, as she tried, unsuccessfully, to eat a dry piece of toast in the back of the car.

The good news was that the weather was much better. When we arrived at the assembly area



the temperature had risen to plus 1 degree and visibility was a good 100m. Apparently the previous night, the car park had a few inches of snow cover and the organisers nearly had to cancel the event.

Needless to say, Liz stayed in the car to keep warm rather than walk yet another 2km to the start. As we started the walk down to the start the weather started to improve, the mist cleared and temperatures rose, early indicators that this would be a really good event. Even better, we passed a great looking pub only a few hundred yards from the assembly area.

The terrain had a good mix open fell and mature, in some places steep sided, but mainly very runnable woodland and the planner made good use of what was on offer. I really enjoyed the course.

A couple of interesting issues; we often moan about 'compulsory whistles'. This rule was enforced, and when some lad got well and truly stuck in a marsh the only way he could get attention and help was to use his whistle. Apparently it needed a few people to give up their runs to pull him out. The heavy rains had made the crossing of a small stream dangerous and it was correctly decided to have a taped route between two controls to make sure everyone crossed at a bridge.

The time for this leg was then excluded from the overall time. The average time it took to walk the taped route was over 10 minutes and needless to say most competitors took advantage of this and planned their route ahead for the remainder of the course.

I had a good clean run and ended up just below half way on the M50's. Interestingly, had I been an M45, who were running the same course, I would have been well in the top half. Just shows that you improve with age!!

One of the benefits of an early start was that we able to get a table at the nearby pub and have a really enjoyable Sunday lunch before dropping Loz back at University and beginning the long drive back to south Wales.

My gps route can be found on DVO's route gadget page if anyone wants to see the map.

<http://www.dvo.org.uk/cgi-bin/reitti.cgi?act=map&id=4&kieli=>

Orienteering through the ages.

Abba were at the top of the charts, the Sex Pistols were at the height of their fame. James Callaghan was Prime Minister and Margaret Thatcher had yet to swing her handbag into the heights of British Politics. I am 8 years old and as the youngest of a young family of 6, I am being introduced to a new sport known as orienteering. Being kids of the 70's, we had no fancy gadgets or toys to be dragged away from. It seemed like a great alternative to Sunday School.

From what I remember of that time from where we lived in Yorkshire, all cars suffered with serious great rust holes in them. There didn't seem to be the wealth and standard of living that one might expect today. Child car seats were an invention of the future along with our sense of comfort, so in our rusted out charabang, we went to our first family event – the 1977 JK rundown event in Sheffield. In those days, the JK consisted of a warm-up event, two individual days, and a run down event.

All I remember is going out into the forested unknown with my sister on that first outing not having a clue what I was doing. I had no concept of what a map was, why were we punching a card, or why we had to run. I let her do all the work and just followed her dutifully like a gormless but faithful hound, as any younger brother would do under such circumstances. The fact I was ignorant of this strange new concept didn't stop my parents thrusting me out on my own two events later. No nanny state in those days to protect the rights of the young individual. Tell kids today they are spoiled, and they don't understand.

I retired from that first individual effort, but I wouldn't retire again until a year later when I was blue with hypothermia competing at an event in the Yorkshire Dales in the depths of winter. Tell kids today they are spoiled, and they don't believe it.

When I was 9, short lived success came my way. I won my first event at Cropton Forest. My orienteering professional life had begun and I had made it to the top of my sport. By the age of 9 ½ it peaked and it has been pretty much downhill ever since.

Though my parents were proud of my first win, the following confession may make them gag into their gins and tonics. I didn't exactly do it alone. I caught someone up who happened to be much faster and normally a better navigator than me. His name was Richard Thornton and was of exactly the same age from a neighbouring club. It did teach me that in order to win

you have to run like the wind and make no mistakes. Something I have tried to emulate ever since without much success. If you can follow some-one who is even better than you then so much the better. I wouldn't have exactly called it cheating, not at that age. More opportunistic and using the benefit of 10 year old guileless intuition. I followed him closely for the whole course. And subsequently won.

I sometimes wonder what Richard is doing now, as well as many of my other fellow orienteers from that time. There was another girl who was my age who ran her course in Wellington boots and always seemed to win. We were deeply envious and called her Wonder Wellies. I think I may have seen many of my ex-contemporary names from that period in some recent results and so wonder have they continued orienteering all this time? Or maybe like me they are reaching an age where after some years in the professional wilderness with all the trappings of drink, too much good living and the pre-child disposable income, then the mid drift really takes hold and now is the time to remove it. The mid life crisis is looming and orienteering is easy to re-discover. It has always had that nostalgic appeal with all the benefits of thinking while running and exploring charming worlds you'd never otherwise get the time to discover.

I gave up orienteering in my late teens when I discovered my Saturday evenings were not compatible with a following day exercising. Prior to this I had tried very hard to get into the British Squad, but I never quite made the grade and there were never any opportunities for me to improve such as by training with them or being encouraged to continue. After many knock-backs, I lost my motivation. I fell to the dark-side, gave up training, went to university and studied and drank for four years like any respectable student.

In the mean-time my parents always continued to orienteer and in 2003 invited my wife, Femke, and I to join them in Scotland. Femke had no concept of orienteering. When I explained that we were going to spend our holiday spending 7 days in Scotland, while 6 of those were running through hilly terrain, she naturally assumed I was playing an early April fools prank. Then the inquisitive questions came such as "Why?", "Are you mad?" "You are joking, aren't you?" Then came the denials "No", "Absolutely Not", "Never". I tried further to sell it to her. I explained that some of my early memories of Scotland were fantastic. Huge biting gnats. Sheep ticks. Cold showers.

No toilet facilities at events other than a deep trench to squat over with a pole to grab hold of in order to stop you falling in. (I could write a separate article on how toilets at orienteering events have progressed and improved over the years, but back in the old days to say they were primitive was an understatement.) Tell kids today they are spoiled, and they don't believe it. We never complained though. I remember one White Rose where our tent blew away. It seemed perfectly normal.

So we found ourselves in Scotland on the Moray in August 2003 on our holidays. My two weeks of training prior to the 6 days didn't prevent my body going into shock. It took longer to recover than the training, but it did re-ignite my interest for the sport. My wife was 8 months pregnant with our first born at the time so did not participate. She did however agree to come to the next Scottish but only on the condition she wasn't pregnant. When the next Scottish 6 day came round in 2005, just to make doubly sure, she was 8½ months pregnant. With twins. I am now a member of SWOC. We are now approaching the summer which will host the Scottish 6 days for 2007. And I have agreement from Femke to take my young family to the Scottish 6 days in Spey. I have started training and hope to be able to leave the event without the feeling that I have done 10 rounds with Nigel Benn. The wife has no excuses this time. The worry was we might have had triplets and so it's much easier to do the

Scottish then become pregnant. In fact it would be easier to do every Scottish for the rest of my natural life than to have more children.

I owe my parents the credit of introducing me to orienteering when I was young and my subsequent revitalisation. After 30 years the appeal is still the same, though technology with electronic dibbers and the ability to see your split times on-line is quite awe-inspiring. And to have real toilets is a bonus. My 3 year old, Jasmine has just done her first string course at Mallards Pike. Consequently I feel I have now done my duty to orienteering and passed the baton onto the next generation. I will encourage her if she wants to carry on and I hope she doesn't peak too early. Whether I buy her wellies to run in or send her out in sub-arctic conditions is yet to be decided. But when she is old enough I can tell her how it was all different in my day and that kids today don't know they are born.

Mark Andrews

Thanks to Mark for writing this, I note that he had a successful time at the 6 day, I only hope that Jasmine had her wellies on!

Scottish VHI trip

3 club members, 2 ex members Sarah Bayliss(now British MTB o team) and Chris Poole made the long trip to Pitlochry. Fortunately traffic on the M5/6 was sparse and with Clem driving we had a far shorter journey than Jill who was held up at the airport by "mechanical failures!" Somehow Jill, Brian Hughes and myself had been given the luxury B&B accommodation but unfortunately we didn't have time to enjoy the traditional Scottish breakfasts as we had to be away early on both mornings.

The relays were held on Saturday at Faskally close to Pitlochry which is a small peninsula by the loch where the JHI had been held in 2001. It should have been a relatively straightforward run but I found waiting for 3rd leg difficult and then made a parallel error at control 2 which was minor in comparison to the time I spent hunting for the penultimate control. Other team members were more successful and despite having a wrongly sited control Jill Managed to come in 1st helping her team to 1st place overall.

By the afternoon there was just time for a quick walk to the salmon ladders or to the nearest pub to watch the Scotland match before the dinner which took place in a very grand banqueting hall complete with stags heads and tartan.

The rains continued overnight and we went off to Errochty for the individual event. I enjoyed the area although it was both physically and technically difficult and was pleased to get around with only two major hiccups. Liz Campbell had a fantastic run finishing in 1st place on my course (and 30 min faster!).

We managed to leave by 12 o'clock and had another uneventful trip back to Cardiff apart from the several inches of snow around the Midlands which the traffic reports seemed to ignore. Thanks to Clem who did all the driving.

Caroline

CALENDAR

13th NGOC Compass Sport Cup 1st Round Sallowvallets Forest of Dean

16th SBOC Local Night 4

26th NGOC Local Symonds Yat

February

3rd SWOC Welsh League Mynydd y Gaer Organiser Graham Tough

9th NGOC Local Mallards Pike North

13th SBOC Local Night 5 Whitford Burrows

16th NGOC Local Mallards Pike

16th NGOC Night Bixslade WNL

23rd BOK British Night Champs New Beechenhurst SO613118 pre- entry only by 8/2/08

24th NGOC District Knockalls Coleford SO56119

March

1st SBOC Welsh Short Open Champs Oxwich Burrows, Gower

2nd SBOC Welsh Champs Cefn Bryn Gower

8th NGOC Local Mosely Green

9th Sarum National Event Salisbury

15th(Sat) SWOC Local St Julians Wood, Newport. Organiser Frank Ince

21-24 JK Guildford

April

6th BOK District event Wells

13th SWOC Local Porthkerry Park, Barry. Organiser Pete Colbert

19-20 British Champs Scotland

26th HOC Long O Castlemartin Common

May

3-5th BOK 007 Forest of Dean

10th NGOC Local Kidnalls, Blakeney

11th BOK trot Regional Brierley

17/18th TVOC Harvester Relays Henley on Thames

June

8th HOC National Brown Clee

3rd-6th August Croeso 2008 South Wales

28th Sept SWOC Welsh League Storey Arms

Events further afield

10/5-12/5 Belgium 3 Days Arlon near Liux www.3days.be

31/5- 2/6 Irish 3 Day Inishbofin Galway

21/7-25/7 Oringen Sweden www.oringen.se

30/7-3/8 Nordvestgaloppen 2008 Norway

Check www.worldofo.com for details



Runners starting the VHI relay at Fascally, Scotland



Extract from a new SWOC map showing a unique contour feature.