



MDOC NEWS



Newsletter of Manchester and District Orienteering Club

October 2020



*MDOC's new contactless payment and registration system in action at Chorlton Water Park
(Photo: Nick Taylor)*

**Orienteering is back!
plus...
Navvies Summer Series
A European Orienteering Holiday
Planning the JK77**

Thankful for my Orienteering Journey

Nick Taylor

Ok, so I've gone straight in there with a cheesy title! But I just turned 40 and my sentimentality just went up a notch, so you'll have to forgive me. Thankful for what? And to who?

Turning 40 (and perhaps having too much time in lockdown) made me reflect a bit more on some of the things I've done with my life thus far and it occurred to me just how much orienteering has given me, and therefore how much I'm in debt to those people who gave me the opportunities to explore it. And so this is primarily a thank you to those people.

I first tried orienteering when I was around 14 years old, when the Woodcraft group (kind of like a more lefty version of the Scouts) which I was part of took us to a few MDOC events. It was places like Lyme Park and Bramhall Park where I first gave this brilliant sport a go and I was hooked very quickly. I could run a bit but couldn't read a map for toffee and spent many an event running round in circles. 180 degree errors, running off the map, I did them all!

That's one thing I say to everyone who's new to orienteering or would still refer to themselves as a novice. It can be a tricky sport and while it might look like the more experienced orienteers just have some kind of special gift, the truth is, every single one of them has gotten lost many, many times, in every way you can think of. So if you are still learning the sport, next time you're running round in a patch of brambles hunting for a control that doesn't seem to exist, after coming in from the path junction four times already, just remember we have all been there and it's all part of the fun!



Orienteering in Gothenburg in 2019, with Yvonne Hung

I stuck with it and with my mum Janet and my sister Martha, we started to go further afield, doing our first badge events (now called regional events) and then national events. I loved the navigational challenge and I loved the feeling of running through the forest. I loved being able to travel to new places around the UK and eventually orienteering took me abroad too. It taught me to get out in nature, to go outside on the weekend whatever the weather, and to explore. And it gave me the confidence, skills and independence to embark on other adventures like hiking, skiing and cross-country skiing. If you're reading this as a relative newcomer to orienteering or you've got kids who are just getting into it, stick with it, as there really is so much potential for you to have a lot of fun experiences yourself and as a family.



An impromptu swim on the way to O-Ringen 2016

All of that started for me because a group of kind people in MDOC gave up countless hours of their time to help beginners and regulars take part in orienteering. We might not have come back after those first outings if it wasn't for the smiles and encouragement from everyone involved. And what's even more amazing to me is that many of those people are still contributing so much to the club to this day. To anyone who currently volunteers for the club or has volunteered in the past, thank you! You do such an amazing job of giving people opportunities to enjoy life and it really is appreciated by so many of us.

I'm not sure we say thank you enough to the people who volunteer in orienteering. So as well as a personal thank you to those people who helped me, this is a reminder for us all to take those few seconds to say thank you to the volunteers at the next event we go to, to remember to temper our grumbles about the planning or the map (let's face it, we all have a moan at times!) and recognise those amazing people that enable us to take part in this great sport.



O-Ringen, way back in 2000, with some of MDOC's volunteering heroes

Summer Orienteering In Poland

Sue Birkinshaw

I went to a 3-day event in the forests near Gdansk with my son Julian. We were the only Brits there among 400 Poles.

I was the only woman over W65 so inevitably won a buff plus a jar of homemade strawberry jam.



The forests were a delight, the organisation and courses excellent, minimum but sufficient covid-proofing, everybody friendly.

The old city centre was a pleasure to visit. It was FULL of tourists.

They are doing a major IOF event next year. Well worth considering for a trip.



MDOC's Youngest Orienteer

Fiona Millington

2020 was always going to be a different year for me, as Eva was born at the start of January.

The GMOA map offer was my inspiration to make my daily walks with Eva more interesting by completing all the local permanent orienteering courses, including Macc Forest, Teggs Nose and Alderley Edge. Finishing Lyme park is my next challenge!



I have really enjoyed getting back into orienteering, and appearing out of the woods with a baby and a map has started conversations about what I am doing! My running is gradually improving and I hope to be back at an event soon.

A Daunting, Diverse Dash at Dove Stone

Sam Drinkwater

As soon as the MDOC Navvies 'Summer Series' was announced, event four at Dove Stone reservoir in Saddleworth caught my eye. Last year I did a MapRun score course there and had a great time exploring the steep slopes and rocky areas, so I decided this would be the perfect return to real orienteering terrain, after six months off. Since then I had conveniently forgotten about the rough tussocks, tall bracken and ankle traps; but it would all come flooding back to me soon enough.

I was so eager to get going that I chose the very first day that the courses went online, Saturday 12th September. I also decided that I would take the train, rather than drive; recently I've been trying to drive less and its been great fun discovering some of the interesting places you can get to quickly and efficiently by train. As well as reducing your carbon footprint, its a lot more relaxing than driving and an extra mile or two warm up does wonders for the legs.

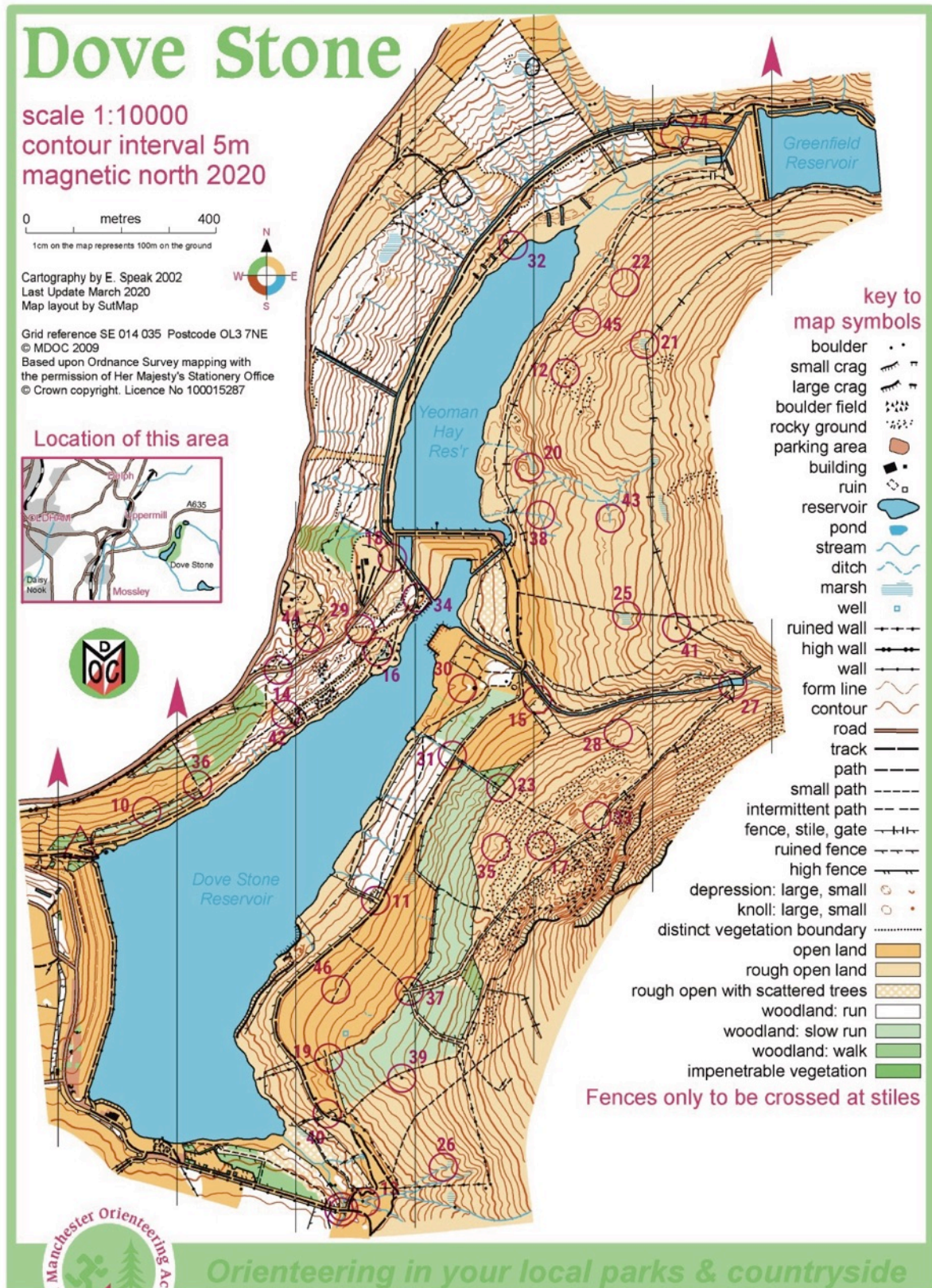


Only 23 minutes from Piccadilly to Greenfield

The jog from Greenfield station to the reservoir is straightforward, if a little dull, before a steep ramp to the start area. I had downloaded the 'Daunting' course, where the challenge was to visit any 30 out of the 37 controls on the map and get to the finish as quickly as possible. Initially the route was fairly clear, with the start leading directly to a group of 9 controls on the west side of the main reservoir. They were all close together so no debate about picking them all up, however a couple of very steep legs added some interest and gave a taste of things to come.

Then came the big decision: either cross at the dam, thus skipping out the 6 most northerly controls; or do a long lap of the upper reservoir to pick these up and allow some of the high controls in the second half to be skipped. Short but steep and rough, or long but flatter with some better paths. At this point it's worth mentioning that I went for a grand total of six runs between March to September, due to my lockdown laziness, so for me the shorter route was always going to be the best choice.

After the next few controls came the big ascent of the day – a very steep tussocky slope that I took at less than walking pace. But finally it relented and I could push on, for about two minutes, before another steep slope slowed me to a walk again. Next up, a fun cruise down to a control on a bridge where the rushing water was so loud that it drowned out the MapRun beep. But sure enough it had recorded and over the whole day I had no complaints about the MapRun app - sometimes a little patience is needed, but a few seconds rest at a few controls is not a problem for a fun training event like this.



The next section was a great rocky area with some interesting navigation, all slightly harder than a normal event as there are of course no flags to look for, which means you really have to focus. The rocky ground enforced slow progress anyway, but the location was stunning and I regret not taking a photo or two! It was a good challenge for me and definitely served as motivation to get back to some tough events in the future.

Back down to reservoir level for the next few controls, but with it came my big mistake of the day – running too fast into a little wooded area and missing the path down to control #30. After a brief period of denial, I retraced my steps and was onto a long path run into the final area. I had to pick up all of the remaining controls and this required some more elevation gain, not bad compared to the rest of the course, but at this point it was enough to really hurt my legs. In particular one steep climb (from #40 to #39) through some deep bracken took almost 4 minutes to cover 150 meters. Almost there now and a sensible, slowish run-in was needed as the main path was starting to get busy – Dove Stone is a popular place at the weekend. I finished in just over 54 minutes and according to the gps trace covered just under 6km (realistically I maybe went a little further). Result uploaded straight away and position 1st out of 1, although this only lasted for about an hour, as it turns out the 'Glossop Galloper' himself had been out even earlier on Saturday morning and set a fantastic time of 52 minutes to rightly take the top spot!

As the course had been so much fun and it was still 10:30am, I decided that it would be a waste to leave straight away. So in a reckless and impulsive act, I downloaded the 'Diverse' course to my phone – I genuinely hadn't planned to do this, but it felt like too good an opportunity to miss, especially after coming all the way here. This course required you to find any 20 out of the same 37 controls on the map and I thought it would be a good chance to visit the northern controls, which I had skipped out on the daunting course.



The view to Saddleworth Moor from Greenfield station

Being able to skip out 17 controls this time, I avoided the steep controls from the early bunch, instead sticking to the low paths and making quick progress. Disclaimer: as I had already visited these controls (and most of the later ones) finding them a second time was much easier – this definitely counts as a non-competitive run! The good track continued as I moved into new territory on the west side of Yeoman Hay reservoir, before rounding the top and returning south to pick up a string of three new controls – all a good distance from the path.

Physically these were much harder and although the terrain was just about runnable, the addition of a headwind forced me to walk. This did give me chance to enjoy the navigation, which although not very difficult was very satisfying, especially after so long away from the sport. Before long I was back to controls I had visited on the previous course, shamefully taking longer to find some of them the second time round. Then it was a straightforward run to the finish, picking up all of the easy controls on the way.

This course had taken me 35 minutes and I actually ran almost as far as I had for the Daunting course, albeit with a lot more path running and a big reduction in elevation gain. I'm not sure that this would be the best way to complete the Diverse course if it was your only goal for the day, but I am glad I made it up to those extra controls, particularly on the East side of Yeoman Hey. Overall the Diverse probably provides the best route choice challenge out of the three courses, with enough controls to force you into some exciting terrain, but enough freedom to make big tactical decisions.

I did feel quite tired by now, but it would have been rude to leave without trying the final course – the 12 control 'Dash'. This one can be completed fairly easily by sticking almost entirely to paths and most people will complete a very similar route. My first six controls were exactly the same as the start of my previous course (this was another non-competitive run for sure!) and after crossing the dam I needed another six out of eight likely looking controls close to the path. I decided to try something a little different and picked up #15 and #30, so that the final mile was non-stop path running and I could skip out the wet hill to #46 and #19. I was regretting this towards the end as my legs really started to complain, but I finished it off in just under 19 minutes.

After a little rest and a drink I jogged the two miles back down to Greenfield station, stopping in the 'Station Brew' cafe for a sandwich while I waited for the train. In more social times the real advantage of travelling by train is a post run pint and debrief in the pub with your fellow competitors, but sadly it looks like we will have to wait a bit longer for this to happen again. Having said that, on the train home I did start chatting to another runner who had been out on the fells around Dove Stone. Turns out we had a mutual friend through running and had even travelled to the same overseas races over the last few years. Even with facemasks it is still a sociable way to travel!



Tyvek!

Peter Ross

Once upon a time I was a member of the MDOC Prize Finish Team. We never got a prize, but we did give them out. In those days of yesteryear the Finish line was a line of tape on the ground, and as a competitor crossed it the first member of the MDOC Finish Team, handily placed near the Finish, shouted "Now!". This was the signal for the Second Member, usually protected from the weather in a little tent but nonetheless ever attentive, to press the button on a small matrix printer which caused it to produce a chitty upon which was printed the time. This was handed to adjacent Team Member Three.

The competitors were guided by Team Member Four round a long taped loop during which time they unpinned their control cards from their person. This was not the easiest thing to do or witness because of the nature of orienteers and safety pins, but it did explain the length of the loop. In short, Team Member Four managed the queues and if you've ever seen sheep being dipped you'll know what can happen.

Once a card was free the competitor handed it to Team Member Three, who in addition to being adjacent to Team Member Two in order to receive the chitties was also handily placed at the end of the loop to receive the cards. He/she stapled the correct two together and put them in a neat pile. Face up, tabs to the left, oldest at the bottom. Team Member Three had a Key Job. Team Member Five was required to manage the complaints: the usual stuff, bad map, bad planning, and controls in the wrong place. There weren't many complaints logged because the MDOC Prize Finish Team were fiercely protective of MDOC Maps, Planners and Organisers.

The Team used to give prizes to the competitors, sweeties mostly, but sometimes posies of wild flowers in a number of categories. The first competitor to finish was one of them. The betting was always that it would be an M10 or W10 but it was usually Margaret Gregory. We also rewarded the first person to trip and fall over the finish line, the muddiest competitor, the cleanest competitor and the one wearing the most tasteful colour coordinated kit. Doug Edwards programmed the printer to play a jolly tune every 50 competitors so they got both a fanfare and a prize. (Ed: I'm not sure about this. How can a matrix printer make music, maybe it was a percussive thing?)

A sixth person was required to deliver the neat pile of stapled card/chitties to the Caravan (more properly called the Results Team). Neither the Start Team nor the Caravan were ever keen to do this job so it was usually entrusted to any competitor good enough to do it. Those in the Caravan scrutinised each card, calculated the run time and wrote the result on the perforated tab attached to the (left) end of the (face-up) card. The tab also contained the competitor's name and age group and it was then torn off to be published in strict time order by means of a washing line in the Assembly area.

And when it worked, that's how it worked.

Sadly the control cards were just that: card. They were just postcards really with numbered squares - one for each control - to receive the unique pattern of pin holes made by the punch. If it rained the card turned to paper mache and the pin holes disappeared, which made life difficult for Team Member Three and for the Caravan too. Even if it didn't rain there were still problems due to wet marshes, sweaty runners, blood, saliva and snot.

But one day there was a revolution. New control cards appeared made of Tyvek. Now Tyvek is a kind of plastic/paper that has the wonderful property of not disintegrating when subjected to moisture, whether it be rain, sweat, marshes etc. It also does not tear. Pinholes remain pinholes. Objections to Tyvek were raised: it was dearer; the Stores were rammed with sunken assets in the form of card control cards; it was marginally harder to stick a safety pin through Tyvek than card and therefore an inconvenient medium etc, etc. But we all knew that the future was Tyvek. And for a while it was.

Where is Tyvek now? I don't know.

The other day I went orienteering on the dunes at Formby. I turned up one Sunday, but it could have been any day, and with the family so that after our orienteering we could all go and paddle in the sea together. It was a beautiful day for outdoor pursuits. There was no Tyvek of course. There was also no real Start and no real Finish and no real kites come to that, but the terrain was real enough and challenging and the navigation was really tricky. And here's the rub: I had not finished for as long as two seconds before my time had been calculated and my route plotted on the map and compared with the times and routes of every previous competitor. Moreover, within those two seconds the whole digitised GPS shebang had been published to the world.

It turns out I hadn't done badly. I'm awaiting my prize.

Planning The JK77 Individual

Ian Gilliver

In 1977, the JK was held in the south east, and the individual event was organised by London OK. Several people within the club had volunteered to plan, and so a competition was held to produce a short-list. Each candidate had to plan a course on the JK75 map of Star Posts (Sandhurst / Crowthorne). We weren't told what criteria were used to judge the courses, nor the scores eventually achieved, but four planners were selected, some 18 months before JK77: Bob Downs, Alan Platt, Mike Hampton (now OD) and me. The 29 separate courses were allocated between us, and a programme of activities was drawn up, allowing for checking, controlling, printing etc, so there would be no rush as the event drew near.

The event was held at Leith Hill, then a largely runnable forested area in Surrey measuring about 4km x 3km, with some fields in the centre of the map, one minor road running north-south in the west of the map, and Leith Hill tower in the south. The top of the tower reaches 1000ft and is the highest point in south east England.

The area had also been used for JK71. Updating the 1971 Harveys map was coordinated by Mark Blackstone (now BOK), assisted by five others. I struggled to map Pasture Wood in the SW of the area. Mark had advised that the smallest clearing to be shown on the map would accommodate a London double-decker bus on its side. Nevertheless, I diligently mapped 20 or 30 tiny depressions on a slope - none of which appeared on the final map, as they were all too small - representing hours of nugatory effort. I already knew I wasn't cut out for mapping.

I drafted my courses on a printed draft of the map, secured to a flat block of polystyrene left over from unpacking some domestic gadget. Each course took shape using coloured pins (one for each control) and a length of string 'with a knot every kilometre', so I could judge roughly how long the course would be without measuring each leg - and when I did measure the course properly, leg by leg, it was always a bit shorter than I wanted it to be. I used that block of polystyrene for many years until Condes came along.

JK77 pre-dated Barry Elkington's excellent course planning guidance by several years, and the M10 course had just 7 controls in 2.9km, with each leg being what we now know to be light green standard. Collectively we still had lots to learn about planning junior courses!

All courses (juniors included) were printed on a 1:15,000 map in landscape format. Control descriptions were in text. JK77 was one of the first events for which courses were printed on Tyvek, a waterproof, tear-resistant paper-like fabric made from spun polyethylene fibres. An advert for Wiggins Teape who marketed Tyvek occupied the left 5cm of each map. Unusually, the control card was integral and measured 7cm x 35cm so that each control's description and 2-letter control code could be printed in its punching box, the idea being that mis-punches would be minimised if competitors didn't have to refer to a separate control description list. The M21E course had 24 controls, the maximum permitted by this control card design. Some competitors commented that they thought the integral control cards made the map unwieldy - it certainly meant they had to re-fold the map after each control, and continuous thumbing was impossible.

Where events now have Download, the control card had to be removed from the map using a guillotine. Marks from control punches were checked manually, as was the norm then (and a very time-consuming activity requiring a dedicated team of helpers), as SI dibbers didn't come into use until the British Championships in 1999, and then only for the elite courses.

Our Controller was Toby Norris who was working at the CEGB Electrical Power Systems laboratories (later CERL) in Leatherhead. He went on to become Professor of Electrical Power Systems at Aston University. He was well known in the early days of English and British Orienteering. In 1966 he was a founder member of the Mole Valley Map & Compass Foot Racing Society (MV). He was a member of the 1966 English Team to compete in the first World Championships in Finland, and in 1975 became Vice Chairman and then in 1978 Chairman of the British Orienteering Federation. Toby coined the phrase: 'May you all run in sunlit forests.'

In 1976/77 I was living in a shared house in Dorking. I had heard of Toby before I met him as two of my three housemates worked for Toby at CERL. Toby was highly intelligent and slightly unconventional, and he was a good egg, liked and admired by his staff. I liked him too and I learned a great deal about course planning from him.

The planners had I think three meetings at Toby's house (also in Dorking), which was notable for the Scottish tussock, which Toby had planted in the back garden. As there were four planners, it was inevitable that when we got together with our draft courses there would be directional conflicts at several controls, which needed to be resolved in order to remove unintended dog-legs, and overloads to be reallocated. Our meetings lasted several hours. In the end we had around 150 controls in total. When we needed another control site to avoid directional clashes, I volunteered to build 3 hides. Toby was clear; we could put an extra feature above the ground, but not dig any pits. One hide was very substantial and realistic. You could have slept in it and it lasted for some years after the event.

Each control site featured two upright stakes, on to which a horizontal plank was nailed, from which the control was hung and on to which at least two control punches were screwed: one facing left, one facing right. Preparing the trestles and putting them into the forest took several man-days of effort, and the planners were supported by a number of LOK members. My 1977 diary has the word 'stakes' on 5 out of 6 Saturdays in the weeks leading up to the event.



The planning team preparing stakes (Photo: LOK Newsletter April 1978)

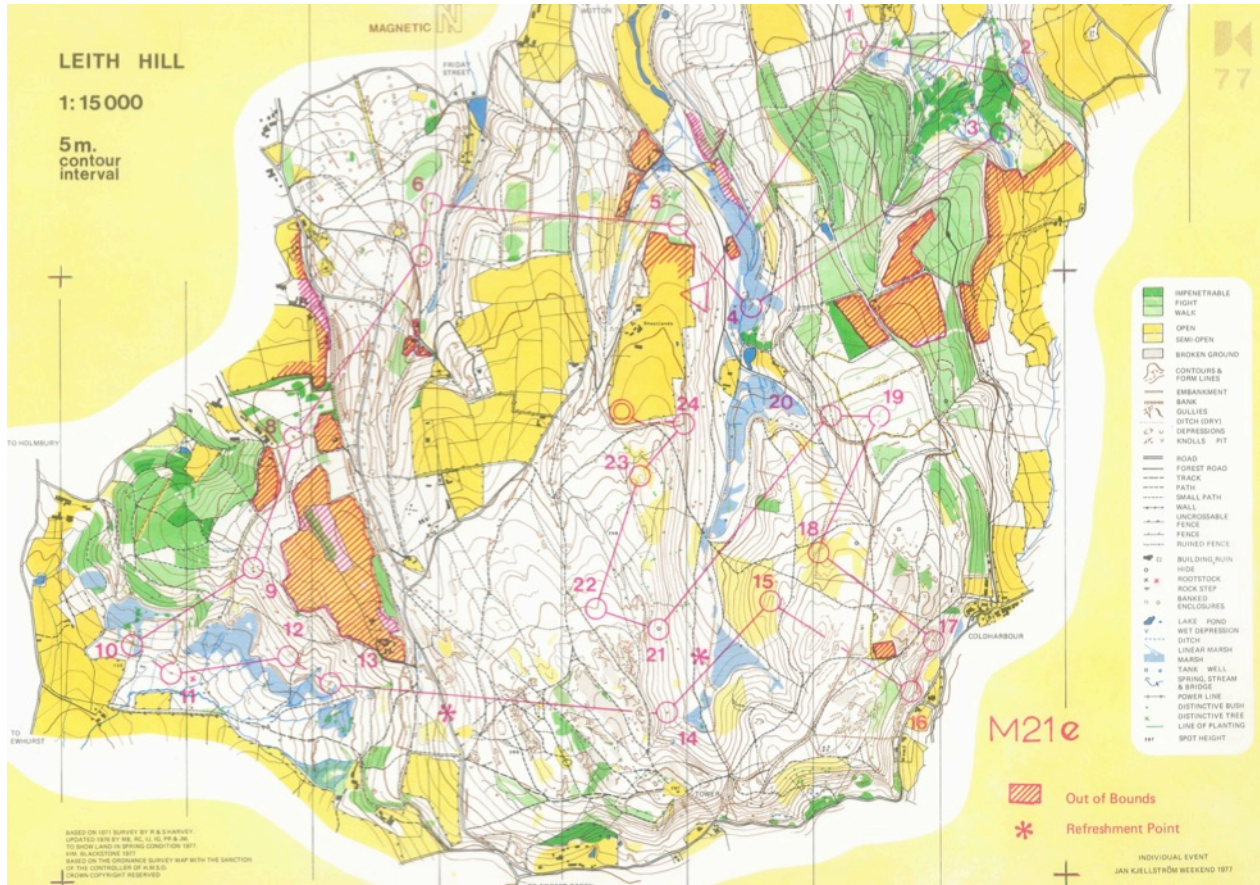
The trestle uprights were prepared at the forester's cottage in Coldharbour. The trunks of harvested young trees were cut to length and one end formed into a point. One visit to the forester's cottage coincided with the emptying of the septic tank. Unfortunately, at one point, the tube, which was draining the septic tank, became disconnected from the truck, spraying all of us in the vicinity. 'Ha, that'll make you grow!' said the operative.

As I lived nearest to Leith Hill, our garage became the planners' Stores for the event. A nice set of unmarked controls was borrowed from Scotland, the World Championships having been held there the year before.

And so we were well prepared to deliver the event when, just 2 weeks before we were due to send the courses to the printers, the car park landowner withdrew permission, prompting a frenzy of unscheduled activity. The original car park had been situated in the north-east of the map, whereas the new car park was in the centre of the map, so we had to re-plan all the courses. At least the planners already had a very good knowledge of the forest, so we were able to produce decent courses in the short time available, and the shorter courses would now enjoy the most runnable parts of the terrain.

On the eve of the competition, all four planners stayed at my shared house. We got up early and along with Toby we each checked about 30 controls. I then spent a lonely, and occasionally snowy, 4 hours in a small depression, manning a control in case of theft. I didn't see many competitors, and certainly no members of the public, perhaps because of the cold. Consequently, I wasn't there at the Finish to hear competitors' comments on their courses.

Future GB international Stephen Palmer won M10 by nearly 7 minutes in 34.54, future World Sprint Champion Yvette Hague won W11 in 30.40, and Steven Hale won M13A in 38.57 – yes, the junior courses were long and rather difficult!



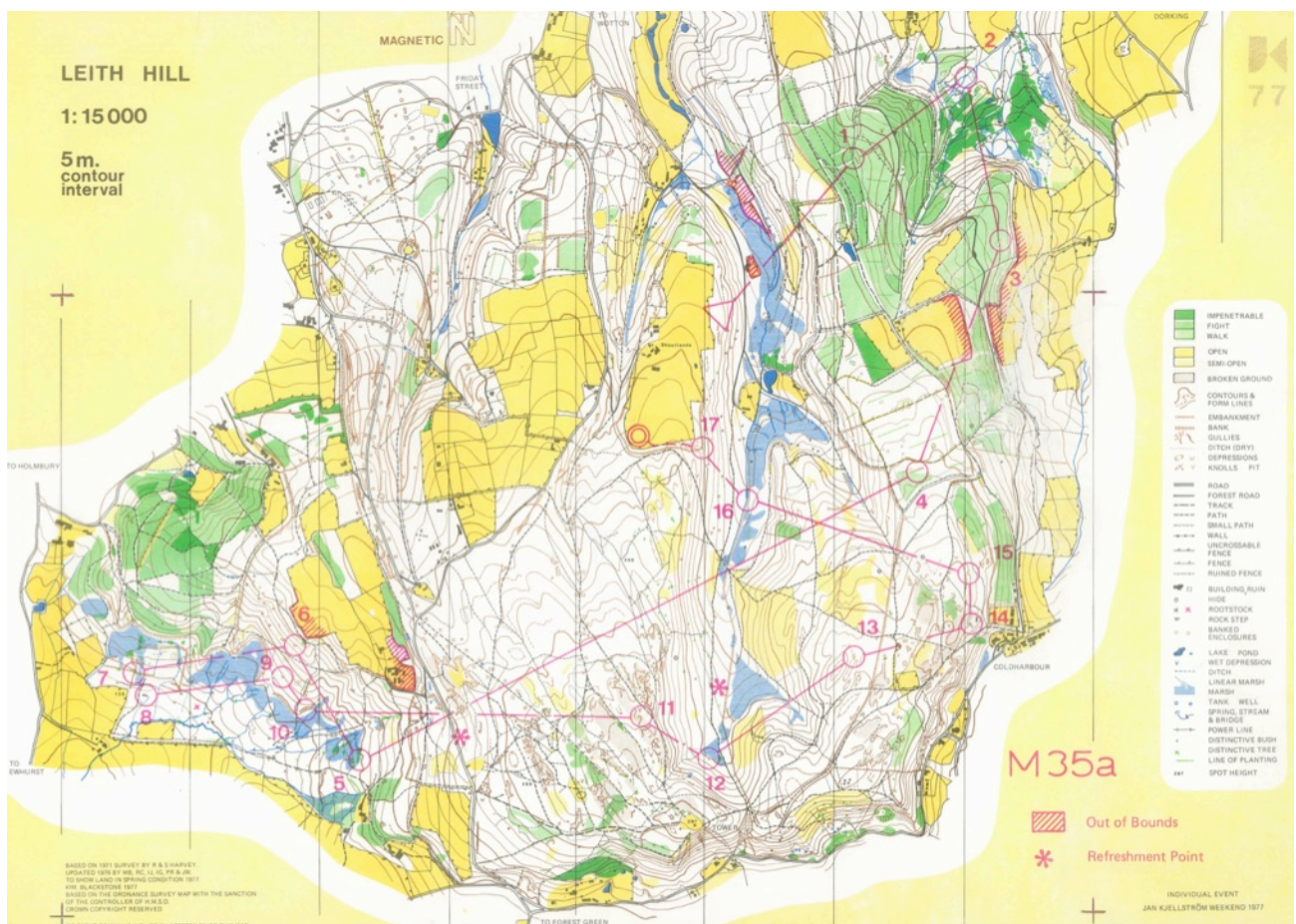
M21E course planned by Ian

Terry Harper (DEE) won M35. The oldest men's course, M56, was won by Dennis Challis (MV) in 60.29, and Jean Velecky was second on the oldest women's course, W50, in 60.58. How the age profile of participants in orienteering has changed in the intervening 43 years!

I had planned the M21E course (14.5km, 565m), which was won in 94:48 by Geoff Peck who had also won in 1970 and would win again in 1981. Geoff had placed 11th in the 1972 World Championships, so you could say the right guy won. I recently re-read the JK77 event report in *The Orienteer* (the forerunner of *CompassSport*). Geoff had lost about 3 minutes in some indistinct rhododendrons in the NE of the map but still had a 2-minute margin of victory over Brian Bullen.

When invited to comment on his course, Geoff thought that too much focus has been given to getting an appropriate length and, having studied the JK 1971 map of the area prior to the event, the opportunity hadn't been taken to design a good course. He drew comparison with M35A, planned by Mike Hampton, which had a 2.5 km route choice leg. Mike and I had debated that long route choice leg on several occasions prior to the event. I disliked the leg because, in my view, the 'obvious' route to the south required virtually no navigation – but Mike pointed out in the Planners' comments in the Results, that the optimum route (which was taken by only a small number of competitors) was probably to the north and via the Finish.

In total there were 1772 competitors, and in her Organiser's report, Sue Jefferies wrote: '156 people were needed to run the organisation on the day and we could have used another 20 to great advantage'. Norman Harris (SN, and Sunday Times journalist) featured the event in his 1978 book 'Orienteering for Fitness and Pleasure'. Mike's long leg is shown on the back cover.



M35A course featuring the famous long leg

More photos from the Autumn Series



Chorlton Water Park looking resplendent (Photo: Nick Taylor)



The Score course planned by Dominic Wathey



The MDOC flag once again flying proudly

Please send your suggestions, news, photos and other articles to the editor at editor@mdoc.org.uk for inclusion in future editions.