



# Essex Stragglers Orienteering Society (SOS)



## Newsletter Volume 21 December 2009

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Club website - <http://stragglers.info>

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Photographs by John Williams



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# Editorial

## Rachel Archer

Some of you may have wondered whether you would ever receive a SOS newsletter again, but I would like to reassure anxious readers that the two new editors are now fully trained up and ready to go. Geraldine is doing the technical part, thanks to advice from Andrew, and I am doing a few twiddly bits that don't involve much time commitment. Although editorship of the newsletter was offered to me, I felt I could not give it the time required, so Geraldine offered to do the lion's share, for which I am really grateful.

Although by the time you read this, the festivities will nearly be upon us, and your thoughts will be slightly less on your running, I would repeat my plea in the "STOP PRESS" article for you to keep me informed of any newsworthy orienteering events that you experience. Also, please let me know if you see any articles in the local press that originate from SOS. The more publicity we get for our sport the better!

## Geraldine Russell

I have received some excellent feedback from the training events that our coaches have organised. 22 members braved the cold and damp conditions on Sat 5<sup>th</sup> Dec at Notley for the night training run by Steve Cartwright ably assisted by Julie Laver and enjoyed by all who attended (the youngest being just 6 years old)

We wish everyone a happy Christmas, and hope to see you all at the New Year event at High Woods, Colchester. After your run there will be an opportunity to socialise and enjoy a hot drink and cake.

## Noises from the Chair – John Collyer

Firstly I must pay tribute to my predecessor, Martin Sellens, who has led the club so well over the past few years. Thank you, Martin.

A number of areas regularly crop up at Committee, and I would like to air one of these now. Please feel free to button-hole me about your views.

Dave Skinner, who works hard at getting permissions from landowners, and then doing the necessary paperwork for BOF, also has to find major officials for our events. If you are not sure who they are and what roles they play, then the following summaries may help.

Organiser: Organises all aspects of the event up to the start line and back from the finish.

Pre-event information, organising helper teams on the day, and tidying up the paper work afterwards, are all time-consuming but essential aspects of a successful event.

Planner: Uses BOF guidelines to plan appropriate courses for the level of event, uses OCAD to make map files for Kevin Machin to print from, sets up the SI program and units, and puts out controls in the forest.

Controller: Ensures BOF guidelines are adhered to by planner, and is also responsible for the safety and smooth-running of the event, including on the day checks of control sites.

In further issues I will deal with each of these roles in greater detail, but for now I would like to mention some Committee decisions which will hopefully get more members to take on these tasks.

The Club has a large store of information about event structure and organisation on our web site, so there is general support for people, detailing the time-lines and aspects of the jobs. Now, we fully accept that the tasks are onerous, particularly for a first-timer, so we are proposing a mentoring system to help guide you through the processes.

The first two of these are for Planning and setting-up SI. Andrew Cordle (and hopefully Martin Sellens) will be covering the SI tasks, and Jenny and I will do the Course Planning side. The idea is that we can help and guide new planners, the task is very satisfying and the best feelings you get as an orienteer are often down to the planning of the courses. This is also a very satisfying aspect of being a planner, being thanked after the event by competitors definitely gives one a lift.

Getting new officials is an essential part of moving forward for a club and even though we have several members very experienced in all these roles, we need to increase our pool of new officials. We recently tried to interest people in certain aspects, and if you feel that you might like to explore taking on a more major role, these please let Dave Skinner or myself, know.

## **Grade 3 Planners Course**

This two-day course will cover the BOF grade-3 planner's syllabus and is aimed at anyone who wishes to plan local orienteering events. There will be an optional session on the functions of the OCAD course setting computer software. This course is aimed at people new to orienteering planning or those with limited experience who have not attended a formal course.

Dates: Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> March 2010

Venue: Belhus Woods Country Park, near Aveley.  
Approximately 5 miles from M25 J29 or J30.

Times: 10am to 3.30pm both days.

Eligibility: The course is open to everyone but priority will be given to members of EAOA and SEOA clubs.

Prerequisites: Some knowledge of orienteering and an understanding of the colour coded system used for courses. Experience of competing at events on courses at Light Green standard or above is sufficient for acquiring this knowledge. Reasonable computer skills will be needed for those attending the OCAD course setting session.

Course Content:  
The role of the planner  
Technical difficulty of legs  
Technical difficulty of courses  
How to start:  
course lengths  
start / finish locations  
taping control sites, includes practical exercise  
Roles of the controller / organiser  
Final maps and descriptions  
The event:  
preparation  
control hanging  
control collecting  
Event timetables  
Safety  
OCAD course setting functions  
Using SI equipment

Anyone interested in attending please let me know.

## **Captain's Corner – Jenny Collyer**

Firstly I would like to thank Geraldine for being “Club Captain” at the 2009 Compass Sport Trophy Final. Finishing fourth out of eleven clubs was a great result and many thanks to the 47 club members who made the journey.

## **Compass Sport Trophy Qualifying Round 2010**

This is at Shouldham Warren near Downham Market, Norfolk on Sunday **January 24<sup>th</sup>**. Again I would like to persuade you all to take part in this competition where your efforts will again hopefully enable us to get into the National Final. Please let me know **now** if you are able to go to this event and by early January at the absolute latest. You will be entered on a course according to your age class.

### **Relay teams**

As usual I shall be making up teams for the JK and the British Relays next year.

The **JK** is being held in Devon over Easter. On Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> April there is a Sprint race at Bickton College. Don't be put off by the word “sprint”. The courses will be short using a large scale map necessitating quick and complex decision making and are great fun. The Saturday and Sunday events are normal long distance races in Cookworthy Forest and Braunton Burrows – an area of open sand

dunes. The relays are also at Braunton Burrows on **Monday 5<sup>th</sup> April**.

As usual I will enter teams at the cheapest entry date so please let me know before the end of January if you would like a relay run. The **British Championships** are being held on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> May on Cannock Chase. Like the JK I will be entering Relay teams at the cheapest entry date.

I will have more details of costs and final dates for entries later but if you already know you are going to any of these events please let me know **now**.

Geraldine has 3 maps from the CST final – 1 Green Woman and 2 Blue Men. Contact her if they may be yours.

## **Club Activity Sessions – Julie Laver**

Since the new season started in September the coaching team has been running Saturday club activity sessions. If you have not been yet you have missed:

A romp around Bridge Woods including some tricky contour (what really? in East Anglia??) only exercises courtesy of our head coach Richard Barker

Circuits and a score event at Fordham with Richard, Tracey and Julie

A map memory exercise and a Norwegian Course with Daniel and Julie

Night orienteering at Notley with Steve followed by hot chocolate and biscuits

These have all been well attended with club members of all ages 6-60+ and are usually followed by an opportunity to socialise with your fellow club members in a local pub, café or in the case of Notley Steve's tent!

Although all the sessions offer an opportunity to improve your orienteering they are also a fun way to spend a Saturday morning (would you prefer the shopping crowds in town?) and a good way to meet your fellow Stragglers. New members will find lots of help and encouragement while the more experienced will find challenging activities which will stretch even the most seasoned orienteer.

It is also a good way to break in new coaches and we have already had a few exercises run by Tracey and Daniel.

There will be no session in January, our next sessions are to be Feb 6<sup>th</sup> and March 6<sup>th</sup>. Details and venue to be confirmed – see website for further details. If there are any members who want us to cover particular techniques or have ideas for activities please contact the coaching team

# Essex & Suffolk Schools Orienteering League - Julie Laver

The results for this season (09-10) so far are as follows after 4 events:

## Up to Y6 Boys

Timmy Harrison  
Thomas Addison  
Ben Wetherill

## Up to Y6 Girls

Bronwen Mansel  
Elspeth Harrison  
Lizzie Robinson

## Y7/8 Boys

Bryn Wilkinson  
Thomas Birkett  
Nicolas Harrison

## Y7/8 Girls

Rachael Harrison  
Kitty Becher  
Gaby Jones

## Y9/10 Boys

Michael Archer

## Y9/10 Girls

Rhiannon Ware  
Erica Williamson

## Y11/12/13 Boys

Will Hooton  
James Park  
Alex Ware

## Y11/12/13 Girls

Sarah Roach

**The top three schools are**  
Barnardiston Hall Preparatory  
Beyton Middle  
Debenham High

For the full list of competitors please visit the ESSOL pages of our website. If I have missed out your details or they are incorrect please contact me.

Next year's provisional dates are as follows so put them in your diary NOW. Do not forget any person up to year 13 can enter the league by just turning up to the designated events and entering your school details on the registration form

## ESSOL Fixtures 2010

07 February	Chalkney	SOS
25 April	Ickworth	SUFFOC
09 May	Danbury	SOS
20 June	Wivenhoe	SOS

Please note these are preliminary fixtures and participants are advised to check Club websites before travelling -

SOS - <http://stragglers.info>

SUFFOC - <http://pdl.demon.co.uk/suffoc>.

## Stragglers' League - Andrew Cordle

Top ten positions are (position at time of the last newsletter in brackets) –

Posn	Prev-Posn	Name	Best-6	Runs
1	(1)	Richard Bonnett	600	13
2	(2)	Jenny Collyer	589	13
3	(4)	Martin Sellens	588	7
4	(3)	John Collyer	586	13
5	(6)	Geraldine Russell	574	10
6	(7)	Tracey Apperley	549	13
7	(16)	Lyn West	547	11
8	(7)	Chris Childs	536	18
9	(15)	Hilary Sellens	533	8
10	(11)	Eddie Banks	525	11

Congratulations to the above, particularly those breaking in to the Top 10 (and even more particularly Lyn, up nine places!

There will be plenty of oportunites to score points in 2010, starting with the New Years Novelty at Colchester High Woods. Don't forget that you need to enter the Shouldham Warren event via the Club Captain. The first events are –

01-Jan-10	SOS High Woods
24-Jan-10	EAOA Shouldham Warren
30-Jan-10	CUOC Brandon
07-Feb-10	SOS Chalkney
13-Feb-10	SUFFOC Kings Forest
21-Feb-10	HAVOC Epping SW
14-Mar-10	SOS Donnylands & middlewick
18-Apr-10	HAVOC Belhus Woods
25-Apr-10	SUFFOC Ickworth

The League has been running for two years now. Let me know if you think the rules or criteria for including events could be improved. They are to be found on the club wesite <http://www.stragglers.info/league> , which also has the latest scores.

## SOS Notice board - 'O' kit for sale

**Are you having a clear out of kit for the new year?**

**Bring your good quality unwanted 'O' kit to the enquiries point at our events and we will display it for sale.**

**All items to be marked with the price and sellers name and contact number.**

**Please collect unsold kit before you leave as we cannot store items.**

**Also for sale are club T-shirts (£5) and sweatshirts (£7)**

**For New Club 'O' kit see Lyn West**

# Fixtures in East Anglia and Nearby Regions

The information provided below normally consists of **Event Date, Region** (eg EA = East Anglia), **Event Grade, Event & Location Names** and **map reference. Organiser's contact details**. Contact details, costs, closing date etc. for **Pre-entry** when provided. Whether **Entry on the Day** (EOD) is possible and the surcharge payable. The range of **courses** offered. The address of a **website** from which additional information can be obtained. Additional information in plain language.

At Essex Stragglers' events registration normally opens at 1000hrs, starts are from 1030hrs until 1230hrs and courses close at 1430hrs.

## 2009

### December

12th	SEOA HH Local	<b>HH Local Event</b> , Verulamium St Albans, TL137073 Organiser: Kate Breed, verulamium-12-12-09@happyherts.org.uk, 01525 860834 Entry On Day: Senior £4.00, Junior £2.00, Student £2.00. , Punch Type: SI, Dogs: On leads Start Times: 10.00-11.15 www.happyherts.org.uk
20th	SCOA TVOC Local	<b>TVOC Local Event</b> , Wendover Woods Wendover, SP889090 Organiser: Martin Ricketts, martinricketts@waitrose.com Entry On Day: Senior £TBC, Junior £TBC, Student £TBC. , Punch Type: None,
26th	SEOA LOK Local	<b>Boxing Day Score at Trent Park</b> , Trent Park Cockfosters/Oakwood, TQ289969 Organiser: Penny Parkes Entry On Day: Senior £TBC, Junior £TBC, Student £TBC. , Punch Type: None,
27th	EAOA NOR Local	<b>NOR Informal Xmas Score Event</b> , Horsford Heath Norwich, TG184176 Organiser: Geoff Eagles, g.eagles@uea.ac.uk, 01603 436522 Entry On Day: Senior £3.00, Junior £1.00, Student £1.00. , Punch Type: None, Dogs: on lead please Start Times: Registration open 10.15 to 11.00am; Orange starts from 10.20 to 11.00am. 60min Score Event, one Mass Start at 11.00am. www.norfolkoc.co.uk
28th	SEOA MV Local	<b>MV Local Event (inc SE Vets &amp; Families Comp)</b> , St Leonards Forest Horsham/Crawley, TQ194314 Organiser: Ian Ditchfield, ian.ditchfield@bigfoot.com, 01306 880794 Entry On Day: Senior £TBC, Junior £TBC, Student £TBC. , Punch Type: None, www.mvoc.org

## 2010

### January

1st	EAOA SOS Local	<b>SOS New Years Day Event</b> , Highwoods Colchester, TL998271 Organiser: Geraldine Russell, geraldine@russell2.fsnet.co.uk, 01206 272761 Entry On Day: Senior £5.00, Junior £2.00, Student
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**£2.00. , Punch Type: SI, Dogs allowed. Start Times: 10-30-12.30  
www.stragglers.info**

- 3rd SEOA **DFOK Regional Event** , Chelwood Vachery Wych Cross  
DFOK Organiser: Andy Elliott Entry On Day: Senior £TBC, Junior £TBC,  
Regional Student £TBC. , Punch Type: SI, www.dfok.co.uk
- 9th SEOA **CHIG Local Event** , Pishiobury Park Sawbridgeworth  
CHIG Entry On Day: Senior £TBC, Junior £TBC, Student £TBC. , Punch  
Local Type: None,
- 10th EAOA **NOR Colour Code Event** , Cockley Cley Swaffham , TF781061  
NOR Organiser: Pat Bedder, 01603 424589 Entry On Day: Senior £TBC,  
Local Junior £TBC, Student £TBC. , Punch Type: SI, Start Times:  
Registration 10.00 - 12.00Starts 10.30 - 12.30Courses Close 14.30  
www.norfolkoc.co.uk
- 16th SEOA **DFOK Kent Orienteering League** , Croydon tbc , TQ318568  
DFOK Organiser: Andrew Evans Entry On Day: Senior £TBC, Junior £TBC,  
Local Student £TBC. , Punch Type: None, www.dfok.co.uk
- 17th SEOA **MV Regional Event** , Sheeples & Effingham Dorking  
MV Entry On Day: Senior £TBC, Junior £TBC, Student £TBC. , Punch  
Regional Type: None, No dogs allowed.
- 24th EAOA **CompassSport Cup 1st Round , Shouldham Warren Downham  
NOR Market , TF680105**  
Regional Organiser: Graham Louth, graham@louths.org.uk Online entry  
through TBC Entry On Day: Senior £TBC, Junior £TBC, Student  
£TBC. , Punch Type: SI, www.eaoa.org.uk
- 30th EAOA **Thetford Thrash - Day 1, Icenian Trophy & EA League** , Brandon  
CUOC CP Brandon , TL785853  
Regional Organiser: Ben Stevens, ben@neystone.co.uk Entry On Day: Senior  
£TBC, Junior £TBC, Student £TBC. , Punch Type: SI,  
www.cuoc.org.uk
- 31st EAOA **Thetford Thrash - Day 2** , Warren Wood Thetford , TL834854  
WAOC Organiser: Sue Woods, sue\_woods@ntlworld.com, 01223 721433  
Regional Online entry through www.fabian4.co.uk Entry On Day: Senior £11.00,  
Junior £4.00, Student £5.00. , Punch Type: SI, Start Times: 10.30 to  
12.30 www.waoc.org.uk

## February

- 6th SEOA **HH Local** , Wormley Broxbourne , TL321059  
HH Organiser: Bob Kay, wormley-06-02-10@happyherts.org.uk Entry On  
Local Day: Senior £TBC, Junior £TBC, Student £TBC. , Punch Type: SI,  
Start Times: 10.00-11.15 www.happyherts.org.uk
- 7th EAOA **SOS Colour Code Event** , Chalkney Earls Colne , TL872280  
SOS Organiser: David Skinner, dave.skinner@btinternet.com, 01245  
Local 381266 Entry On Day: Senior £TBC, Junior £TBC, Student £TBC. ,  
Punch Type: None, www.stragglers.info
- 13th- EAOA **Punch & Dumpling Weekend 13th Punch Regional Event** , The  
14th SUFFOC Kings Forest Thetford , TL825748  
Regional Organiser: Simon Hooton, s.hooton@ukonline.co.uk, 01379 871494  
No Entry On Day. Entries Close: TBC , Punch Type: SI, Dogs: Dogs  
on Leads please www.suffoc.co.uk
- EAOA **14th Single Dumpling Regional Event** , Lyndford Thetford ,  
TL819940  
Organiser: Alan Bedder, alan.bedder@virgin.net, 01603 424589 No

Entry On Day. Entries Close: TBC , Punch Type: None,  
www.norfolkoc.co.uk

- 20th SEOA **SAX KOL** , Bixley & Beckley Northiam  
SAX Organiser: Simon Maytum, simon.maytum@tiscali.co.uk, 01622  
Local 746011 Entry On Day: Senior £TBC, Junior £TBC, Student £TBC. ,  
Punch Type: None, www.saxons-oc.org
- 21st EAOA **HAVOC Epping SW** , Epping South West Chingford , TQ394950  
HAVOC Organiser: Barbara Fothergill, secretary@orienteering-havoc.co.uk ,  
Local 01277 213758 Entry On Day: Senior £TBC, Junior £TBC, Student  
£TBC. , Punch Type: None, www.orienteering-havoc.co.uk
- 28th SEOA **Regional Event** , Burnham and Egypt Woods Slough , SU950850  
HH Organiser: Roger Moulding, burnham-28-02-10@happyherts.org.uk  
Regional Entry On Day: Senior £TBC, Junior £TBC, Student £TBC. , Punch  
Type: None, No dogs allowed. www.happyherts.org.uk

## World Masters Games, Sydney - John Collyer

The World Masters Games is held every 4 years, and this year the annual Orienteering Masters were included within it. Over 1200 orienteers (age 35+) came from all over the world for the Sprint Races, (held in the Sydney area), and the Long Races (based at Lithgow in the Blue Mountains).

### Sprint races.

A model event in the grounds of an old hospital helped us get used to orienteering after long journeys, followed by Round 1 at McQuarrie University and the Final around part of the Olympic Park.

The University campus was typical of any that we had run on in Britain, but the Olympic Park had a few surprises around and within some of the stadia. We both ran well enough to make the B finals, within the Olympic complex and which were based around the Log Choppers stadium (yes they do have their own venue), ran reasonably well, but with enough odd errors to end well down.

### Long races.

The model event at Ben Bullen, introduced us to lovely eucalyptus forest with generally clear floors, and extremely complex rock detail of very large boulders and cliffs.

Day 1 was in the same area with my course having a good mixture of rock and undulating forest, but Jenny was disappointed with only relatively easy forest and no rock.

Day 2 moved further north to Clandulla, where we both had a good mixture of forest and rock, and enjoyed our runs.

Jenny was in the B final due to a mix-up over start times on day 2 (also at Clandulla) which led her to start nearly two hours late, an extra time penalty that the organisers would not re-adjust. I had a generally good run but a missing river on the map led several of us to climb up a spur too early and waste time searching for the control.

We also spent time in New Zealand and took part in two days of their South Island Championships based in the Dunedin area. The sprint was around Dunedin University and the Middle Distance race at Gabriel's Gully, an area of complex, old gold workings. The middle race produced some very long times for the quoted distances due to the complexity, steepness, and low scrub which reduced visibility and was difficult to run straight through.

Around all these we did lots of sightseeing using, where we could, trains across both Australia and New Zealand, and enjoyed sights such as a flight over the glaciers of the Southern Alps and walking around the crater of an active volcano.

Next year's Masters are in Switzerland – much nearer for any of you who are old enough to qualify.

John Collyer

## **Autumn on the Fells – John Williams**

As a newcomer I thought that I had a good reason for missing the Compass Sport final, namely the UKA Fell Relays. Unfortunately someone felt that this might make a basis for a report for the newsletter. I have my doubts.

Rather than a lot on the Fell Relays, I thought that a little on a number of fell events that I have enjoyed this autumn might be preferable, starting back in September, with a weekend in the Lake District, the wife swimming in the Great North Swim in Windermere, giving me the chance to take part in the **Lake District Mountain Trial**. I was uncertain which course to opt for, but eventually wimped out and entered the short course, listed as about 10 miles with 3500ft of climb. This seemed about right on the day, a good 3h50m run around some 5 checkpoints, starting at Eskdale YHA, and taking in Peelplace Noddle (sorry, the name amuses me), High Scarth Crag, Hard Knott, skirting Harter Fell to Green Crag and back to Eskdale. Visibility was excellent, conditions perhaps a little warm and the 1/40,000 map took a little while to adjust to. The full trial was listed as being about 16 miles. In the event it turned out to be more like 25 miles, visiting Great How, Broad Crag, Seathwaite Fell, Allen Crag, a long trek back south to Great Carrs, Crook Crag and back to Eskdale. Seeing the route I was pleased to have opted for the 10 mile fun run, and with finishing 28<sup>th</sup> out of 67.

The weekend after I was hoping to renew the fierce fell running rivalry with my son at the **Isle of Wight Fell Running Series, St. Boniface Fell**, 3miles/780ft, **Ventnor Horseshoe**, 7m/1500ft and **Wroxall Round**, 13m/1500ft. Unfortunately he couldn't make it, car troubles and the prospect of being beaten in the longer races, possibly. These are enjoyable races though, and conditions were again very pleasant. Possibly the prospect of a second climb on to the downs above Ventnor in the second race on Saturday is the hardest part, though racing up and down through the streets of the town is also interesting. Placing in the series 44<sup>th</sup> out of 68.

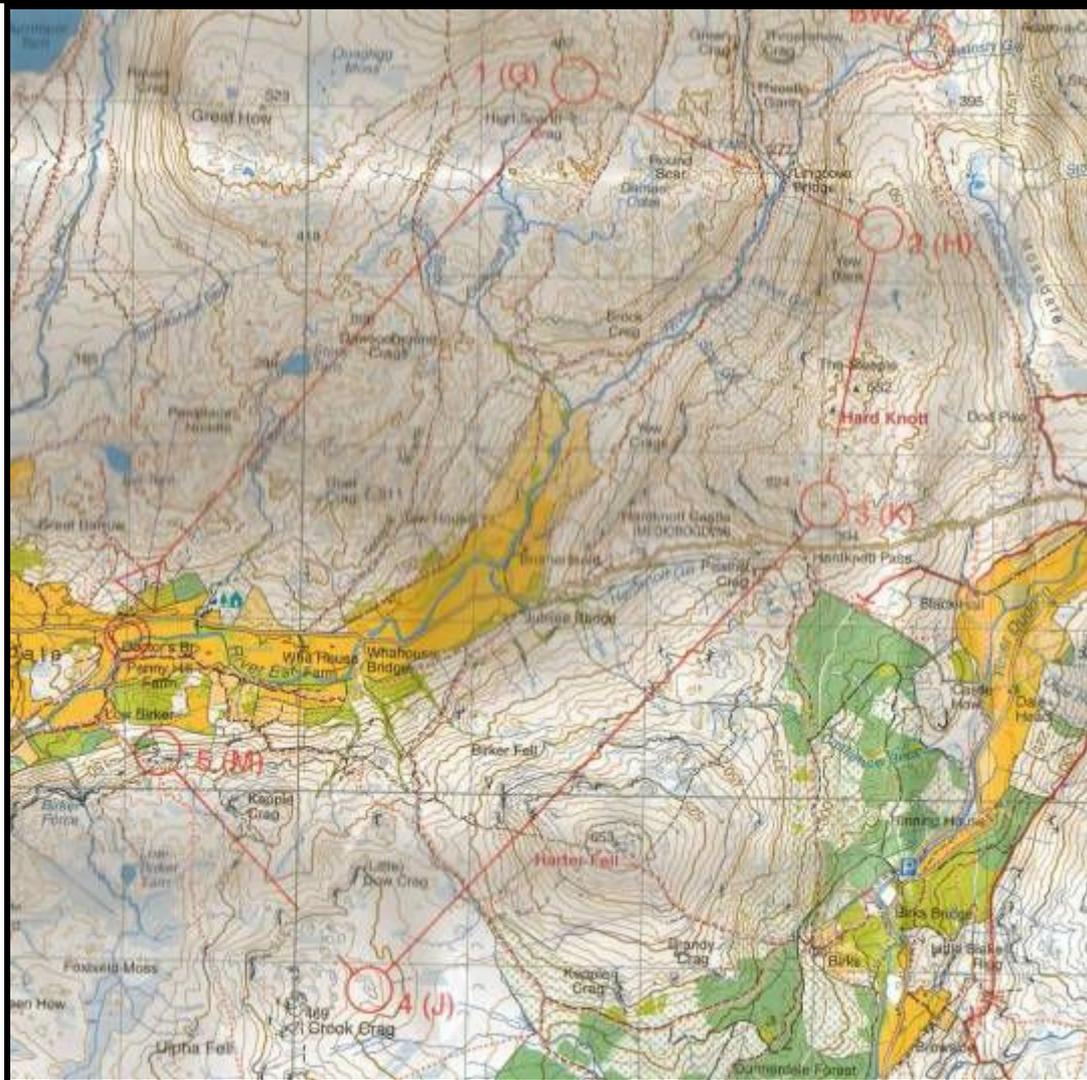
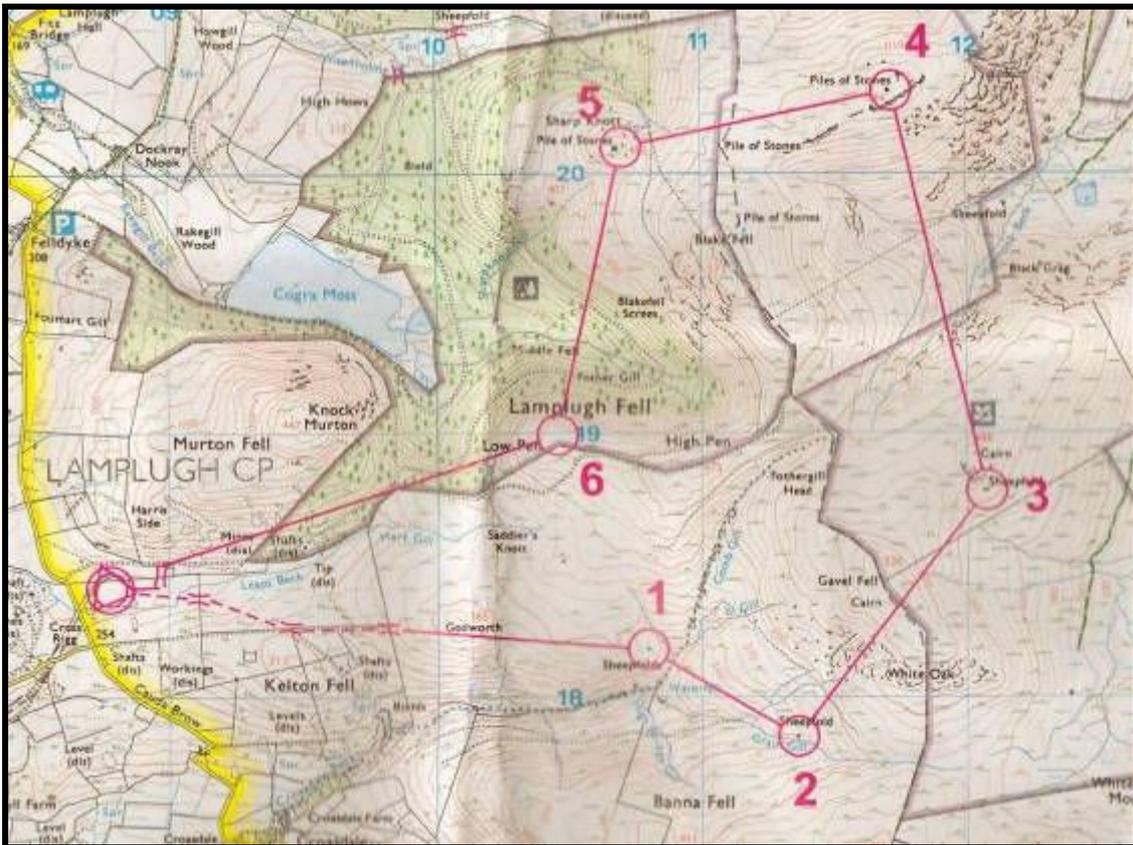
The races in the Isle of Wight series were all marked and marshalled, not that this stops some people from going astray. Many fell races are not, and for this reason and the increasing popularity of mountain marathons the navigation courses run by the Fell Runners Association are always fully subscribed. They asked for volunteer helpers a few years back; it's a free weekend away, a couple of days on the fells, looking at maps & trying to help three or four runners to gain a little confidence in map reading. The picture shows much of the hillside used (south west of Grasmere), and around 5 of the checkpoints in the navigation challenge on the Sunday.

**The UKA Fell Relays** took place this year near Ennerdale in the North West of the Lake District. Springfield Striders have entered teams in the event for a number of years now; this year we had an open and a vets team, with six runners per team, two singles and two pairs legs, one a specifically navigation leg. Unusually for this event none of the legs were marked or marshalled, just 6 or so checkpoints to visit over a course of between 5 and 7 miles with 1500 to 2500 foot of climb. As the weather deteriorated over the day the navigation became interesting as the visibility reduced from the panoramic views of the previous day to just a few hundred metres. The leading three teams into leg 4 missed one of the checkpoints and were disqualified. Given the poor visibility I was pleased to finish my navigation leg 114<sup>th</sup> out of 145 in 2 hours and 5 minutes. Our navigator in the open team was another new Straggler, Kevin Ellis, who with his partner finished 63rd in 1 hour 55 minutes. The winning time for the navigation leg was just over the hour. Overall our teams finished a pleasing 66<sup>th</sup> and 114th.

A few too many weekends away, so the next trip was a day trip to Edale for the first of three **Dark & White Mini Mountain Marathons**. The events are 3 hour score orienteering events. I visited 11 of the 20 checkpoints, about 15k with 2 big climbs to the skyline, perhaps around 600 metres of climb. Initially the visibility was poor and the rain heavy, but it cleared mid morning, just when I needed it to for some of the harder to find points around the edge of Kinder. I think the winner clocked 260 points out of the possible 305. I managed 185, to finish 24<sup>th</sup> out of 122 starters.

We had planned a couple of other races, Breidden Hills and the Roaches, which we failed to make for various reasons. Whether our plans for the next, the Wrekin Wrecker on Nov 22<sup>nd</sup> comes to fruition is debatable, but the lure of samosas at the finish, and the race being the easiest fell to get to make it likely. After that is the next Dark & White Mini MM, Calderdale Way Relay and Springfield Striders own fell race on Hadleigh Downs. Then next year.





# The History of Orienteering in India – Richard Newton

*I sit on my flight deck dreaming of orienteering in English woodland and one day when I explained the sport to a first officer we laughed at the concept of a sport such as orienteering in the forests of Kerala. This was my inspiration to write. No disrespect is intended to the resourceful and tenacious people of India.*

Chithra had been struck by the enthusiasm of the western man he had met in the bar for a sport he had never heard of before. What was its name again, something to do with the east, it would come to him? The western man had been under the influence of Indian made foreign liquor but had still been coherent enough to convey the sense of the sport. Chithra had been captivated by the animation of the man as he described the thrill of navigating over native forest in a battle as much against himself as against his fellow competitors.

In the morning he found he couldn't shake off his curiosity and when he arrived at the shop he owned in the busy street just off the main road, still very handy for the bus station, he began to discuss it with Amit, his long serving and faithful manager. Amit had been a local cricketing celebrity in his time before the politics of the sport closed all the doors to him and he settled down to a life in the home town he loved. As Chithra struggled to make sense of how this new sport worked in discussion with Amit they both realised that they would have to give it a try and began to make plans for their first event. It had never occurred to them to wonder why no-one had tried it before.

The Kerala Stragglers were formed, they even had a website, and signs placed in the shop publicising an upcoming event in a new sport – enquire within. Chithra needed some woodland to hold his event in. The western man had mentioned something about woodland but they didn't have any of that nearby just forest, forest and more forest, dense tropical forest. That would have to do, it was trees after all wasn't it? His friend at the university geography department, Ranju, could help couldn't he? He called him up.

"But Chithra," he exclaimed, "this is India you know we can't have accurate maps of anywhere, we'd be swamped with law suits and counter claims over all the boundaries. People are very possessive over their knolls and suchlike, it cannot be done."

Chithra was not to be offput by such minor trifles and using all his powers of persuasion he finally got Ranju to agree that he would draw up a map of the forest to the north of the town. It had many tracks from all the wild animals and this would surely help. Ranju, being a resourceful intellectual type was able to find maps from this new sport on a Swedish website so he had some idea of what was required.

On his next day off Ranju was out in the forest noisily taking measurements and photographs and generally cobbling something together which might possibly be used for rough navigation without upsetting anybody's boundary claims. One thing he quickly realised was that he would need four shades of blue for swamp, run, walk, fight and swim. He decided that he would give Chithra the map and 'be out of town' when the day of the event came. The map wouldn't quite be what he had been asked for but he was sure it would do, Chithra couldn't complain that he had done as he had been asked.

Another problem for Chithra were the kites. It was something he still couldn't work out was why have kites in a forest, surely they would snag on the trees, how could anybody see them from the ground? He knew they had to find them, that was the objective of the sport, the western man had specifically mentioned the tiny surge of excitement when he found the kite. There was no doubt about, they had to have kites. Now he was lucky here because Indians are experts at making kites and not only that, his son, Baburaj, was the best in their neighbourhood at making kites. He won all the competitions after all.

"Baburaj, my son, I need your help, I need fifty kites that will fly in the forest, they must be triangular in shape and red and white in colour. Can you do this?"

"Surely, father, it can be done" was his confident reply. Baburaj knew that his father didn't like bad news and he didn't like to disappoint his father either so he said it could be done. When he told the boys in the street of the task he had been set they laughed and couldn't understand why he had been set such a task. Still they relished the prospect of watching Baburaj trying to achieve it. Baburaj prayed for a windy day.

Finally the day of the event came. Chithra was pleased that so many people had come out to try the new sport, he had done a roaring trade in compasses from his shop. They may have been Chinese and marked in some characters that no-one could decipher but everyone agreed that they were fine compasses and they certainly pointed to north. At that price no-one could complain. The westerner had expressed his regret that he could not take part as he had to work but he wished them all luck and assured them that they would enjoy their day.

Baburaj had lived up to his reputation and had hand-crafted fifty red and white triangular kites which fluttered in the lightest of breezes above the tree canopy so that they could be seen from afar and not get tangled in the branches. Unfortunately, because they were not looking down at where they were placing their feet it wasn't long before competitors began to succumb to snakes. Being home to 57 different varieties of poisonous snakes the forest was bound to claim some of the competitors and today was no different. Stretches of forest such as the one they were running in are becoming scarce in India and are refuges to some of the few remaining big cats. The resident tiger, at first annoyed by the disturbance quickly became accustomed to the novelty of having prey come to him and took advantage of the smorgasbord of local populace presented to him. By the time the tiger had worked out the route of the blue course some competitors didn't even make it to the second control.

In another cruel twist of fate, the local species of poisonous tree frog were dull red in colour and were attracted to the control punches. Such an abundance of new females in the forest could not go unnoticed and soon every punch had an amorous admirer. Many of the competitors, at first amused by the novel control design with a frog motif, did not realise their mistake in time.

Naxal guerrillas, fearing an invasion of their forest home set up a no-go in the north-western corner of the forest effectively cutting off some of the more remote controls – times would be adjusted accordingly.

They didn't fare much better on the string course. Indian kite string is extremely fine and all thirty five toddlers and small children who set out on the course failed to return.

Of the hundred or so competitors who set out on the course less than half returned (including those who emerged in neighbouring states vehemently believing that they were still 'on Ranju's map'). In view of what happened the organisers decided it was only fair to declare the event a draw, posthumously in many cases. Baburaj declined to collect in the kites. Nobody ever mentioned the sport again, the bars in the town refused to sell the westerner Indian made foreign liquor ever again in case he came up with any more great sporting ideas. They stuck to cricket where you could be sure that the field of play was free of natural hazards/wildlife.

The creatures of the forest couldn't remember having it so good and coerced one of the monkeys into checking the website on a regular basis to see when the next event in their area would be. Even the tree frogs, broken-hearted from their unrequited love of the control punches and eyes still bulging from being squeezed too hard, agreed that it had been a good day over all.

## **Registering Surprise - Jack Isbester**

Experienced SOS orienteer? then registering for an event will hold no terrors for you - or will it? You may meet registration as a competitor, as a helper at Registration or even as a suffering member of disgraced, penniless SOS, drummed from British Orienteering because we were too idle or incompetent to satisfy the requirements of safe practice and the British Orienteering insurance policy.

At a recent SOS event only about 20% of the Registration Forms were correctly completed and correctly checked by Registration. What was the most common error? No, not the ability to spell your own name - we accept your spelling of that. The most common error was that non members, competing as IND(ependent)s, did not provide their home addresses. That is an insurance requirement, in case someone claims, years later, that they broke their leg while trying to vault over the prostrate Planner at the third control on the Blue course and we have no record of their presence. Why should that worry law abiding SOS members like you? Well, if our records are inadequate it will be

much more difficult to establish what happened and demonstrate that we did all that we could, and Faults means Fines!

The SOS Registration forms are being modified to make the requirement for an address more obvious, but if you help with Registration please make absolutely sure that if competitors are IND we know their addresses.

The next most common mistake was the failure to provide any safety information at all. The only acceptable reason for providing no vehicle registration number is if you arrived by bicycle, and the form has room for you to write 'Red racing bike' if that is how you reached the event. Did you travel to the event alone? If you don't know the answer to that, at least before your run, then you are not fit to take part! Failure to provide the safety check information shows lack of consideration for your clubmates who have organised the event. If you fall into a swamp and drown it will not be you who will be inconvenienced, it will be them.

Also surprisingly common were Registration forms sent to Download without the course, or the competitor's class, club or BOF number entered. These are no fun for the hard working Download team and at Registration, you can help the smooth running of the event if you ensure that the form is complete in every respect.

How can SOS members help? We are looking for a slogan to encapsulate our campaign for faultlessly completed registration forms - something snappy like 'Hug a hoodie' - so, what do you suggest?

## **STOP PRESS! The role of the Publicity Officer- Rachel Archer**

I have been in the role of Publicity Officer for SOS for about a year, having been persuaded that anything I could contribute would be valuable. Due to time constraints, this has not been a great deal, but my main focus has been on publicising events.

Keeping my eye on the fixtures list, I contact the websites of the relevant local media a few weeks in advance of each event. As we hold events all over Essex and Suffolk, I have had to track down some far-flung publications in the hope that they will include a few lines in their "What's On" guides. All of the newspapers and radio stations have websites that list our events, but make no guarantees that they will publish them in their paper or announce them on the radio. I remember myself many years ago, before I was a member of the club, seeing events publicised in the Essex Chronicle, which attracted me to start orienteering.

I then send a news release a couple of weeks before the event to the local paper, in the hope that they will publish it. Additionally, after the event, I send a news article to the papers, with a photograph when I can. This has had some success, and two of the stories appear below.

My main problem, and I could do with some help from members here, is knowing whether the articles have been published. I eagerly scan the pages of the Essex Chronicle, which is my local paper, but have no way of knowing if anything appears in the Colchester or Maldon papers, for example. I would be really grateful for members to notify me ([rachel.archer@talk21.com](mailto:rachel.archer@talk21.com)) if they see anything in the papers.

One real success was earlier in the year when KidAround and Primary Times, two magazines aimed at the families of primary school children in Essex, both published an article about orienteering as a great family sport. Following this, our event at Hockley Woods in March was inundated with small children! I have kept these two magazines up to date with our events, which they publicise in their "What's On" listings. The real hero in these cases is Julie Laver, whose phone number I happily include in these articles, who has to field all the calls from interested people!

Other successes include getting the British Schools championship mentioned on the Chelmsford radio, and establishing a friendly contact at the Gazette in Colchester, who is happy to include our articles where she can.

I would really like members to email me with their orienteering news that I can make a story of and send it to the local papers; if somebody represents the National squad, or wins a competition, for example. Do let me know your orienteering successes, so I can get our sport known.

### **NEXT SOS Newsletter**

The next edition of the newsletter will be available at the end of February 2010. Copy to the Editors [editors@stragglers.info](mailto:editors@stragglers.info) before 12<sup>th</sup> February 2010.