

MEROC NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF
MERSEYSIDE ORIENTEERING CLUB



Next time you complain about conditions in the car park at an orienteering event, remember it could be worse. This happened on me the way to work one morning !

APRIL 2009



Editorial

Welcome to another edition of the club's newsletter. If we play our cards right we might be able to increase our membership. Caroline Bulcock, who honed her early orienteering skills at Ormskirk Grammar School, under

Jean Platt's tutelage, is back in the area and attending events with her partner. Moreover, two Liverpool University students (Claire Woods of WAOC, a second year medic and Matt Whipple of SOC, a first year engineer) turned up at the Hightown event and are keen to attend events locally. Matt has apparently been in touch with Chairman Matt to share transport to the JK, so fingers crossed.

Inside this edition you will find, an update on preparations for the 2010 Middle Distance Championships, details of the state of play with the Princes Park POC plus the usual mix of highly personalised event reports and, bizarrely for MEROC News, a serious article about a pertinent issue for the club and the sport as a whole, the proposals for event levies to be paid to British Orienteering.

And now for an explanation of the cover photo. There may, just possibly, be a club member who I haven't bored with the fact that at the end of February I 'had' to lead a party of 11 teachers from Liverpool on an International Professional Development Visit to Malawi. We were based in village schools, accessible only via unsealed roads, and February is the height of the hot wet season. After one particularly rainy night we had to take a detour using 'minor roads' because a truck was stuck in the mud; and look what happened! Thanks to some lads from the local village we were soon out of the mire, but I'm ashamed to say that I was dubbed 'Too Posh To Push Paul', but after all I was wearing my M&S beige linen suit !



PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE BRITISH ORIENTEERING LEVY SYSTEM

Please try to stifle that yawn and read on. Normally I tend to put most communications from HQ straight into the recycling bin, but after reading an article in DEESIDE NEWS I have dug out the most recent envelope to find my proxy voting form for the forthcoming AGM, and I intend to use it!

British Orienteering's proposals to charge the full levy to all participants, both juniors and seniors, over a certain threshold number has caused consternation to clubs like ours who organise events at which juniors form the majority of the participants, but which are not exclusively for juniors. I know that Anna Nilsen has been trying to persuade the Junior Competitions Committee that our Schools league events should be levy exempt, but I am not sure what success she has had.

However, someone in Matlock must have been listening and exercising some common sense. Perhaps they have finally realised that the original proposal could result in one of these highly undesirable outcomes.

Clubs could

- Stop incorporating Schools League type events into local or district events because the fee they charge juniors in order to encourage participation would not cover the levy
- Charge juniors a much higher fee in order to cover the levy. (Hardly likely to encourage participation)
- Continue to charge the low fee to juniors and run the events at a loss. For a small club like MEROC, for whom the Schools League events are our 'bread and butter' this is not an option.

Anyway, there are now three proposals on the table and full members of BO have the chance to vote for their preferred option at the AGM on Saturday April 11th, either in person if you are attending the JK, or by proxy.

I have taken the liberty of summarising the three proposals and showing how they would impact on two of our recent events. I would like to have applied them to the Ainsdale Regional Event in September 2007, but could not find the full participation details.

Option A

No levy paid for the first 75 participants

Lower rate of levy paid for 76 – 250 participants

Higher rate of levy paid for any participants in excess of 250

Levies	Lower rate	£1.60
	Higher rate	£2.60

No distinction between juniors and seniors

Option B

No levy paid for the first 65 participants

Lower rate of levy paid for 66 – 220 participants

Higher rate of levy paid for any participants in excess of 220

Levies	Lower rate	£1.90
	Higher rate	£3.00

Juniors are weighted at 50%, i.e two junior participants are equivalent to one senior participant for levy purposes

Option C

No levy paid for the first 60 participants

Lower rate of levy paid for 61 –190 participants

Higher rate of levy paid for any participants in excess of 220

Levies	Lower rate	£2.00
	Higher rate	£3.00

Juniors are weighted at 33.3%, i.e three junior participants are equivalent to one senior participant for levy purposes.

Please consult the table opposite to see what the three different options would have cost the club in respect of the Schools league events at Calderstones Park (December 6th) and Hightown (March 7th). I have obtained the participation figures from DEE's web site where the results are published. I do not know what, if any, levy we have actually paid on these events.

	Calderstones Park		Hightown	
Participants	Junior	Senior	Junior	Senior
		112	11	136
Option A				
Participants for levy	123		160	
Levy paid	$(123 - 75) \times \text{£}1.60$ = $\text{£}76.80$		$(160 - 75) \times \text{£}1.60$ = $\text{£}136.00$	
Option B				
Participants for levy	67		92	
Levy paid	$(67 - 65) \times \text{£}1.90$ = $\text{£}3.80$		$(92 - 65) \times \text{£}1.90$ = $\text{£}51.30$	
Option C				
Participants for levy	49		69	
Levy paid	$(49 - 60) \times \text{£}2.00$ = no levy to pay		$(69 - 60) \times \text{£}2.00$ = $\text{£}18.00$	

From a personal point of view, with the interests of the club's coffers and the continuation of the Schools' League at heart I will certainly be voting for Option C ! The article which I read in DEESIDE NEWS came to a similar conclusion after also considering the impact on the levy paid from a larger regional event with 500 senior and 125 junior participants.

Any comments, either by post or by e-mail would be welcome.

Coincidentally, Anna has also worked through these figures, including two further events, which I have included as an A4 insert, and she has come to a similar conclusion.

PROGRESS (or otherwise) WITH PROJECTS

British Middle Distance Championships; April 2010

- The Controller, George Esson, has visited Formby and is satisfied that, even with the current OOB areas, the area is suitable to stage the event. He also noted that the area was very popular with dog walkers and other casual users. He appeared to support our view that a Sunday morning event rather than a Saturday afternoon one would be the best option.
- Range High School have been contacted to investigate the possibility of using their facilities as a car park and assembly area. No reply has been received to date.
- Andrew Platt has contacted the main landowners at Formby, The National Trust and Sefton MBC. The National trust appear to be quite happy about access to their land in the northern part of the area. Sefton's Ranger Service appear to be less happy allowing an event incorporating upwards of 1000 runners, fearing that there might be an undesirable impact on natterjack toads, sand lizards and ground nesting birds. Although they haven't given a definitive reply yet they are not making encouraging noises. A date in autumn, outside the mating season, might be more acceptable.

Princes Park Permanent Orienteering Course

- I have now marked the control sites with short lengths of plant stake and insulating tape. An employee of the Parks' Department has followed me round and spray painted the appropriate code letter on the ground.
- Apparently Liverpool Probation Service has produced the posts and is ready to install them. Once they are in place I will check them and amend the map if necessary. We can then print the maps and settle the bill!
- Apparently Liverpool Parks Department plan to 'open the course' during a community sport festival this summer. I will circulate further details if and when I find them out.

Schools' League goes SI

At the recent committee meeting we agreed to follow DEE's lead and use SI punching at next season's events. We have some reservations about security of the SI boxes in some of our venues and will discuss these with DEE.

RESPONSES TO MY RECENT E-PLEA

Knowing that the fixture lists were in the club's possession, and hence that the newsletter was due, although I had little if anything to write about, caused me some consternation recently. So, I responded to the age old tactic, begging for event reports! And I received some interesting replies.

This came from PLATTJ@sky.com

Hi Paul

The events I have competed in recently have all gone badly-I am trying to forget them all. I would just like to include a reminder for the Club Weekend:-

Club Weekend Rookhow 17-19 April

Just a reminder, various club members have indicated they will be coming, and I will be doing a ring round to confirm when people expect to arrive. On present numbers accommodation will be less than £15 per head per night, plus food. There will be the opportunity to orienteer in the Regional Event at Graythwaite on Sunday and train or relax on the Saturday. Rookhow is a cosy warm venue, handy for Grisedale and the Coniston Fells or Hawkshead and we can look forward to gathering around the log burner at the end of the day. Anyone else who would like to be on the weekend please ring Jean on 01695 726965

Editor's additions

The closing date for on line entries for Graythwaite is April 4th

On Saturday April 18th there is an opportunity for clubs or individuals to train at Bouth. Apply through British Orienteering

Also on April 18th The British Squad will have a running only x-country course incorporating the use of SI punching for self timing over sections with different types of terrain at Great Tower.

In the last edition I produced a list of all the past winners of The Wooden Whistle and asked if anyone who could fill in some of the gaps or explain some of the anomalies in the awarding of this somewhat anomalous trophy. Former club chairman Al Riley sent me this reply.

THE WOODEN WHISTLE

As a past sometime chairman of the adjudicating panel for the club annual awards, I can perhaps shed some dim light on the questions raised by Paul in the last issue.

The idea for the Wooden Whistle (and True Grit) award was hatched by the members of the Epilogue relay team (B. Lump, D.Plank and A.Wiley) during one of their regular training sessions in the Sportsman's Arms. The trophies were hand crafted by Brian in his Helsby workshop, in the case of True Grit, from a piece of millstone grit recycled from a garden wall somewhere near Glossop.**

Should anyone be interested, I have a record of nominations from 1990-1997 but be warned, in the sober light of day, they are not quite as amusing as you might remember.

The winning nomination was usually decided, on the night, by the reading from the laughometer and consequently is lost in the mists of the Hightown Sports Club. I think the first award to Terry was for the great cock-up on Great Cockup, Capricorn Long-O on Caldbeck Fells.

The award was made in January for acts in the previous year but, in the tradition of the Wooden Whistle, there has been no consensus about this.

I believe dates are wrong up to 1991. Martin Pape put the correct date on in 1993. I think there are actually two missing winners 1992 and 1994. Who are they? I'm not at all sure.

**** Editor's comment**

Alan I will do everything within my limited powers to ensure that copies of this newsletter do not fall into the hands of any member of Derbyshire Constabulary.

And from Bill Ball, celebrating not only being the club's elder statesman but revelling in his new found status as an M80 came the following missive...

OK Paul -If you insist

After our dedicated editor's desperate plea in a recent e-mail for copy here are some senior ramblings.

On recovering from the shock of receiving my BO(F) card for 2009 with M80 emblazoned over it, I decided I really ought to do something about it. I entered the British Championships. The incentive was there, an event in the New Forest, my old stamping ground and a Naval dinner in the same week.

The only fly in the ointment was that I would not be around for the Hightown event. How on earth could I start the Finish stopwatch from 250 miles away. Would I get the sack as the equipment officer for being absent from place of duty? (a nautical flogging offence.)

Shrugging off my intense feelings of guilt I set off southwards to thoroughly enjoy my "run" in the "Forest", although most of it was rough open. I shall not bore you with a blow-by-blow control-by-control run down but just to say I managed to get around. I did break into a run a couple of times and only missed a couple of controls the first time round. I managed to finish halfway down the finish list, coming much to my surprise a few minutes inside championship standard.

Anyone REALLY interested can go on a web to a site for nerds and compare my performance with the winner, loser and probably Steve Cram (Who?) by examining lots of wiggly graphs only comprehensible to the Graham Nilsens of this world. Just in case anyone is really interested I will bring my map to the club weekend.!

Any road up (Can you tell I moved up from the south twenty years ago) is that enough Paul? My elderly brain and fingers are getting tired. I promise one day I will compose something interesting and sensible.
Bill Ball

Editor's response

Have MEROC ever sacked an official ? I've been trying to get the push as Newsletter Editor for years, and haven't succeeded yet?

Also originating from the outbox of PLATTJ@sky.com came this tale of woe:

TALES FROM THE FRONT

Those of a certain vintage will recall Michael Green's series '*The Art of Coarse Cricket/Rugby/Sailing*', a hilarious account of incompetent sportsman in vain attempting to improve performance, defeat the encroaching marches of Father Time and convince themselves that all was not lost.

Well, Jean and I have for some time been looking forward to a dramatic improvement in our orienteering performance following retirement from paid work and more time devoted to healthy non-stressed pursuits. We had convinced ourselves that our miserable results (o.k. - my miserable results) were a consequence of lack of time to train and keep ourselves healthy and the distractions of having to work for a living. Furthermore, a couple of months in New Zealand trekking, cycling and swimming in warm sunshine were an ideal preparation for a concerted assault on the British orienteering scene in 2009.

This comprises a report of the first quarter's activity read on and weep, and let this be a lesson for those of you who might also dream of future success if only circumstances were different. I note that Jean has refused to submit an account of our 'O' activities, so disappointed has she been with our efforts but I'm made of sterner stuff and have no sense of shame so here goes ...

6 events this year but I shall omit further reference to the New Year's Day John of Goats on the grounds that I have commented previously (and Jean beat me).

EVENT 1 – Delamere

Dead easy area, know it like the proverbial back of the hand, must be an easy silver standard if not one of my few gold runs.
WRONG – always seem to make a mess of Delamere. 19/26 on M60L, 138% of the course winner's time. Beaten by Jean but not by much – 127% of her winner's time. But hey, this was the first event of the year, still suffering from jet lag. At least the day was sunny if cold, local event, no mud.

EVENT 2 – Nicky Nook. Tatty SROC area just off the M6. Has fond memories for us because it is one of the first events in which Tim and Kelda ran.

AWFUL – mud up to the armpits, car covered in grot. Grim terrain and got lost. 42/48 200% of the winner's time. Jean not much better – 170% of the winner's time but at least her course was shorter so got back into warmth quicker than me. Ideal preparation for the next event - National in the south.

EVENT 3 – Burnham Beeches. Superb beech forest as the name implies, west of the M25. This was in the calendar 'cos of babysitting duties for Tim and his partner Kerry. Tim and Nia daughter were helping, so of course we had to enter.

BEAUTIFUL area, however, no contours and as I don't know how to use a compass accurately the result was inevitable. 3rd last, 177% of the course winning time and that was after being rescued by Jean as I wandered around in circles looking for a ditch about 0.5 km beyond where I should have been. Little did I know that at that point J had also been well adrift of her first control. However, thoroughly enjoyed the event – was a little disappointed that my sensational finishing sprint into the finish funnel was seen by Tim as a desperate struggle to keep going. 'You looked awful' he said encouragingly. Jean did rather better – 154% if the winning time.

As usual and with a nostalgic ring about it, we were beaten by the younger generation – Tim was 4th on M21S and Nia won W12S (she was the only competitor but you can't do better than win). So no change there then.

Still no sign of improvement but our greater fitness was bound to kick in some time.

EVENT 4 – Thurstaston. Another familiar area – we ran there on a black and white map about 25 years ago. Another pleasant local, low key event.

DISASTER – both mispunched; Jean inadvertently missed out a control (but she was doing badly anyway) and as for me ... Paul and Jean attempted to show me where I was at different points, I saw Graham several times, the views were excellent from the top of the tors but after getting stuck in gorse and brambles miles from any control and watching the sun set slowly into the azure sea, getting worried that I was keeping

the planner (Norman Hall) from his bed and then finding that half way around I had to pass the finish before a second loop, I gave up and sauntered nonchalantly to the finish. Took 77 minutes for half the Blue course – won in 46 Minutes and I note with dismay that young Graham took 55 minutes. Ah well, things are bound to improve eventually.

EVENT 5 – Farleton Knott, a new SROC area east of Kendal on limestone with plenty of traditional SROC scrub, gorse and pavement.

LOVELY day but this was another example of hope over experience. Again, rescued by Jean after a 20-minute leg (average 6 minutes for the leg). Two areas linked by a long road route and finishing in the grot, but actually enjoyed the outing and most of the course. Ran ‘Green Men’, finishing 233% of the winner’s time. Jean ran ‘Green Women’, same distance but 20 meters less climb – 215% if the winner’s time (gets worse doesn’t it!). We noted that both Cochranes ran ‘Blue Men’ and, fortunately for Matthew’s sanity, he beat Jill.

So that’s it for now folks. Our New Year Resolutions have gone to pot, results seem to getting worse but strangely this seems to be in inverse relationship to enjoyment of the actual events. Perhaps we should take up full time work to take our minds off competition It’s the JK next in the north east. Perhaps our skills are more suited to the NE, though I can’t imagine why. But hope springs eternal; never say die and any other clichés that might apply. And there’s Scotland in the summer – always good for stories of derring-do and disaster.

Watch this space.

Your despairing correspondent

A

AWAY FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

In the editorial to the previous edition of MEROC News I stated quite publicly that in 2009 I intended to attend a few more orienteering events (at least more than the paltry 3 for which I turned out last year). I am pleased to report that I have already equalled my total for 2008, although must admit this refers to 'starts' rather than 'finishes'.

Colomendy January 31st.

I treated this as a fact finding mission. Colomendy used to be Liverpool LEA's outdoor education centre before it was sold to Kingswood, a private outdoor education provider. To my great shame, despite having worked for Liverpool for 6 years, much of it with geography teachers, I had never been there. Apparently, in the dim and distant past of the 60s and 70s every child in a Liverpool school was 'entitled' to a week at Colomendy. Those who were naughty were 'entitled' to more than one week, and the truly recalcitrant were sent to an LEA boarding establishment there. I'm not sure what sort of pupil Pam was at her alma maters of Colwell Road JMI and St Hilda's C of E High School for Girls, but she remembers going at least twice. When invited to accompany me on a cloudy January morning with winds blowing straight down from the Arctic a look of panic appeared on her face and she declined, saying that the memories of spam fritters, cabbage boiled to destruction, jam and banana sandwiches and forced marches to the top of Moel Famau* had left her with deep psychological scars.

I doubt that she would have recognised the site today. True the old wooden 'barracks' remain but there are now manicured lawns and new dormitories which resemble high class ski lodges. Oh yes, and the orienteering. The map was at a scale of 1:4000, excellent for ageing eyes, but I came to features (other than controls) much more quickly than I expected. Two laps of the site made up the 'green' course. Planner, Norman Hall had made good use of the steep woods to the south of the centre and it was certainly technically challenging enough for me. I took my customary 'just over an hour' and finished near the bottom of the list, with just one and half errors.

Footnote

** So deeply is Colomendy engraved in the minds of many 'scousers' that some, less well educated and of a certain age, still believe Moel Famau to be the highest mountain in Wales / Britain / Europe / The World*

Delamere February 8th

Like correspondent A on the previous pages, I approached the Delamere event with high hopes (Nothing as ambitious as a silver or gold standard, don't be silly, just a 'decent run'). Alas, 'twas not to be. After almost slipping on the ice in the car park my day went from bad to worse. For the first four controls I could barely relate the map to the terrain. 5 and 6 came a little more easily but as my confidence grew I made the fatal mistake of 'accelerating' (from dawdle to slow stroll). 'Ping' went something like an elastic band in my right upper thigh / groin area. "Ouch!" or something similar came out of my lips.

I was midway between controls 6 and control 7, the furthest part of the course from the finish. I made it safely to 7, but the brushings and uneven ground dissuaded me from trying to continue, so it was along lonely limp back along forest roads for my first 'mp' for a long time. 'Webmaster' Dave also realised how much fitness he had lost. Fourth place on M21S left him 12 minutes adrift of Graham and 10 behind Vojtech who ran the same course.

Thurstaston May 8th

I felt that I fared a little better than correspondents A and J here. I managed to make sense of the map and stay in good contact throughout. A few 'daft' route choices resulted in me running further or climbing more than I needed to and I overshot one control, undershot another and drifted off line a couple of times. Without these errors I met well have cut my habitual 'slightly over an hour' for the 4.5 km green course to 'just under an hour'.

I'm afraid that the JK in the North East holds little attraction to me. After a week's intensive conditioning in Ireland (I believe that Guinness is a far better form of nutrition and re-hydration than bitter for the serious endurance athlete) I will probably spend Easter weekend immersed in an essay and preparing myself mentally and physically for the rigours of Graythwiate (the Saturday night feast that is, not the orienteering)

Farleton Knott 15th March

Having lived near Kendal, I've passed Farleton Knott a lot of times. As a student I climbed there. Even went there with Jill once while she watched me climb (I was then her best friend's boyfriend work that one out!). *When I was thinking of writing an article about this event I was going to leave out this little gem but we're all still friends! It was beautiful weather then, too. And a memorable sunset.* Ever since I started orienteering I've thought it would be a nice place to go – plenty of room, and a fair bit of wooded area too. At last SROC have negotiated access, and we went on the day of the CompassSport Cup so it was quite busy, and the choice of courses was quite intriguing – blue and green men, blue women etc. The blue women had a slightly harder course (more climb, more controls) than blue men. I thought this was a bit odd until somebody pointed out that the blue women were all younger than the blue men. So Jill & I thought it would be a hoot to enter the blue men together and compare notes. (Now why didn't I think of us entering the women's course together??)

The day dawned sunny and bright – the first day since some time in 2007 that it felt good to be outside. The area is about two-thirds limestone pavement, and about one-third limestone pavement with trees. But it's been very well mapped, and the planning was intelligent. *I'll say. I remember having a conversation with Graham some time ago about the quality of the mapping. And from then on I have had yet another excuse – the mappers!! But not on this course.* There were squillions of boulders, but they only put controls on very lonely boulders, or boulders in a recognisable feature somewhere, and it made for very pleasant orienteering providing you kept map contact, which with the quality of the map, was possible.

I managed my usual silliness towards the end and ran off at 90 degrees. Oxygen debt is a peculiar thing – you know you're not making sense (I had the map upside down but was running in the right direction because I'd sorted out which way to head earlier). But at least I had the sense to dash back to the last recognised spot to relocate. I'm not often that sensible. *Hmmm.*

So I had (for me) a decent time – within double the winners time. And the winner was Matt Crane (me with a couple of letters missing), so I reckon the boy Cochrane done good. And I beat Martyn Roome, which doesn't often happen.

Mrs Chuffed also had a decent run, spectacularly failing to finish last, and in fact achieving the distinction of being first woman! *Er, well actually, I think I was the only woman.*

So thank you SROC, we had a really good time. And a bit of fun getting out of the slightly muddy field – get in second gear and don't stop! Oh all right we admit it – Jill was the only female runner. *See, I told you so.* For some reason everyone else had taken the blue men title seriously. *Well, I am an Evertonian, so only part of the description was off-beam.* (Matthew with additions by Jill!)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Friday April 17th – Sunday April 19th

Club weekend at Rookhow.

See details on page 7

Saturday May 16th

Cheshire and Merseyside Schools' Orienteering Relays

Beacon Park, Skelmersdale

Pre-entries to Paul Bolton. Details have been distributed to schools who usually attend events. Ad hoc or family teams are welcome to enter.

Phone [REDACTED] or e-mail [REDACTED] for details and an entry form.

DEE / MDOC summer evening events

Tuesday April 21st Teggs Nose, Macclesfield

Wednesday April 29th Delamere (Linmere) SJ 550704

Thursday May 7th Welsh College of Horticulture, Northop, Mold SJ 237689

Tuesday May 12th Delamere (North) SJ 537726

Thursday May 21st Teggs Nose, Macclesfield

Wednesday May 27th Eaton Park, Chester SJ 403648

Thursday June 4th Pettypool, SJ 614695

Tuesday June 9th Macclesfield Forest

Wednesday June 17th Big Covert, SJ 207594

Thursday June 25th Brereton Heath nr Congleton

Tuesday June 30th Little Budworth, SJ 593654

Thursday July 16th Alderley Edge

More details on DEE and MDOC's websites.