**JOG report, 2020/21**

We started the season in the knowledge that we would have to adjust to a different style of JOG to keep going during the pandemic, but we did not anticipate a complete shutdown after Christmas 2020.

All our autumn activities were ‘virtual’ and many thanks to the planners/controllers who adjusted their courses and skills to accommodate the different requirements. Especially to Alasdair Shaw who attended to the technical requirements of the MapRun apps, uploading the events and making adjustments to control sites and maps.

We managed to provide contactless sites in the following areas: Vivary Park (Phil Sorrell), Triscombe (Pete Shirvington), Lydeard Hill (Mike Andersen), Thurlbear Woods (Jenny West), Combe Wood (David Harrison), Taunton School (Andy Bussell), Crosslands (Alasdair Shaw), and Longrun Meadow (Ollie Rant). Many thanks to them and to the regular JOGgers (averaging about 40 each event) who made the effort worth-while.

Consistently good performances on each of the 4 courses meant we were able to present JOG awards to Ollie Tilley (Hare), Matthew Bussell (Squirrel), Martha Macpherson (Badger), and Ollie Rant (Fox).

One of the outcomes from the new ‘virtual’ system was that JOGgers were able to try their courses at any time over a week or a weekend to encourage social distancing and prevent groups gathering. Although that was disappointing for some (including us) who enjoyed the interacting, it did provide more flexibility for busy families who often have to juggle other activities over a weekend. However, it does require the ownership of a decent GPS smartphone, as the bulk buy cheaper phones we purchased for loan from the club were too slow and insensitive. We ran a survey at the start of the term and were surprised by the variety of the devices owned, but I’m sure they are becoming more common now, especially after ‘lock-down’ education.

However, to try and be more inclusive we are now providing the junior courses with pin-punches, as before, but with the option of using smartphones to enable contact-free punching either by using GPS signals or QR codes on the code number at the controls. The JOG ‘competition’ will now return to Saturday 2-4pm but if you wish to attempt these courses outside these times, the virtual controls will be available over the weekend or as a Permanent Orienteering Course.

Thanks to Andrew Hopkins, the QO Permissions Officer, who has had the thankless task of obtaining access to areas we have used during this period. With many of the National landowners cutting back on staff and workplace activities, he has had to ‘battle’ with changing permit conditions and increasing fees. A pattern is beginning to emerge but we will not experience the freedom and availability of low-cost, informal family orienteering that has been so successful in QO in the last few years.

Roger & Judy Craddock 14/09/2021