

Quantock Orienteers – Minutes of Committee Meeting

8 May 2017 at the COACH facility, French Weir, Taunton

1.1 Attendees: Roger Craddock (Chairman), Rosie Wych (Secretary), Bill Vigar, Bob Lloyd, Steve Robertson (Treasurer), Julia Robertson (Membership), Judy Craddock (Fixtures/JOG), Jeff Pakes, Chris Hasler

2.1 Minutes of previous meeting approved

2.2 Matters arising:

ACTIONS:

- 1. ACTION – SI TRAINING REFRESHER DATE TO BE SET - ROSIE/ANDY - SEPTEMBER SUGGESTED-CONTINUES**
- 2. ACTION– TIGHTEN UP MANNING OF SI AT FUTURE EVENTS – ANDY – CONTINUES**
- 3. ACTION – QUERY IF “3 EVENTS ONLY” RULE FOR INSURANCE OF NON MEMBERS APPLIES TO ACTIVITIES – ROSIE - NO RESPONSE SO WILL PURSUE – STILL NO RESPONSE SO RC TO PURSUE**
- 4. ACTION – PRODUCE FIXTURE LIST FOR 2017-2018 AND CIRCULATE TO BILL AND BOB FOR VENUE AGREEMENT–JUDY /FIXTURES SC ONGOING – SEE FIXTURES SECTION**
- 5. ACTION – ATTEMPT CONVERSION OF MAP FILE TO OCAD INHOUSE – ANDY – DONE/ONGOING**
- 6. ACTION – RESEARCH FEASIBILITY OF PARKING AT ALFOXTON HOTEL – BOB – ONGOING**
- 7. ACTION – PROMOTE CLUB JACKETS THROUGH WEBSITE – ROSIE – ONGOING THROUGH WEBSITE**
- 8. ACTION – Arrange consultation with Andy Harris and Owen Jones STEVE/BILL/ RICHARD/BOB - DONE**
- 9. ACTION - WOD – suggested a website news item to promote interest – JEFF**
- 10. ACTION -Norton Camp – 28 June – Roger suggested a follow up activity to utilise enthusiasm – ROGER - ONGOING**
- 11. ACTION – GPS training to be included in coaching programme – RC/ANDY**
- 12. ACTION -- approach likely candidates to lead summer relay series – ROGER – DONE – BRIAN PEARSON**
- 13. ACTION – Report on aspects/weaknesses of permissions system for discussion at next meeting – BOB - DONE**
- 14. ACTION - paying for the improved Doodle Poll version – ROGER – DONE – REVIEW USEFULNESS**

3.0 Money – see attached status report. SR talked through content of the report. Opinions varied on the recommendation to increase event fees – RW and BV thought not in view of the amount of money in club funds and the unusually large amount of one off expenditure items this year. JC in favour in order to help fund the expense of the coaching programme which runs at a loss. RC announced the award grant of £6294 towards SIAC cards, coach payment and expenses, room hire, first aid training etc. QO to contribute £646 to support project. The grant did not extend to £1000 for promotion and £88 to purchase mobiles/GPS units. Target result would be 100 new members. Consequently it was deemed that event fees remain the same at present apart from SR proposal that fees for a galoppen and larger events be set on an ad hoc basis – agreed. To be put to AGM for agreement. RW suggested that the SIAC cards could be advertised as available to hire out to other clubs. JR raised the importance of running a major event every 2 years both financially and to maintain club expertise at that level.

4.0 Events

4.1 Past – Final QOFL 6 ran smoothly. Scores for the season still being produced ready for award at AGM. Yvette Baker – team did very well – almost trouncing BOK juniors! Attendance at final depends on being able to raise a full team. Costs to be supported from QO funds. SR and JR attended SWOA conference. JR gave a brief verbal report – full copy attached.

4.2 Future

Club champs 24 June/AGM – arrangements under way. RW to produce agenda. Details to be on QO website by 24 May. RW and JR to assist Richard Sansbury. Suggestion to promote at Parkrun on 17 June and also check parking regulations.

JR prefers to resign from committee but remain as membership secretary. RC to approach Sarah Maynard and Jennie West to join committee.

Christmas/New Year novelty – decision deferred

Events 2017/8 season – see attached progress sheet. Best location for galoppen discussed – RW to assess suitability of Dunster Deer Park, BL to check access arrangements and larch issue at Blackborough.

RC communicated that Devon are putting on a Controllers course at Level C. this has been promoted to possible attendees.

COACH launch event Thursday 8 May – RC requested help from committee. RW to assist am and SR/JR pm.

28 June – Norton schools event – RC will later request help.

Long O = RW to finalize area locations and inform BL

RC has had request from Star Track for help during summer holiday – to approach Vikki Page

CSC – SR explained parking/assembly issues

5.0 Activities

5.1 JOG – see attached report from JC

5.2 Coaching – see attached report. JC also read out very complimentary correspondence from the Carter family as new members and Vikki Page on the website and Jeff's prompt updating. The importance of social media in advertising was recognised.

6.0 People

6.1 Membership – report attached.

6.2 Club Captain – no report. Issues dealt with earlier.

7.0 Places

7.1 Mapping – see attached.

7.2 Permissions – see attached – BL has produced the requested information.

7.3 POCs – no reported issues. See also Volunteer co-ordinators report attached.

8.0 Equipment and Communications

8.1 Equipment – no issues

8.2 Website – see attached. Working well and changing news adds interest.

9.0 AOB

9.1 Doodle Poll next meeting after AGM

9.2 JR asked to use Club resources for WI event at Lydeard Hill – agreed

9.3 RC had received a request from Knowle Hall, Puriton to map the site. JC suggested that she should be invited to attend an event to find out about orienteering.

9.4 RC suggested that a "shadow" for the role of permissions officer would be a useful back up. RW suggested Pete Akers.

Signed

Chairman

ACTIONS

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7. ACTION – PROMOTE CLUB JACKETS THROUGH WEBSITE – ROSIE – ONGOING THROUGH WEBSITE
8. ACTION – GPS TRAINING FOR SUMMER COACHING – RC/ANDY
9. ACTION – APPROACH POTENTIAL NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS - ROGER
10. ACTION – INFORM BL OF LONG O VENUES - ROSIE
11. ACTION – MONITOR USEFULNESS OF FEE FOR DOODLE POLL– ROGER
12. ACTION – ASSESS SUITABILITY OF DUNSTER DEER PARK FOR 2018 GALOPPEN – ROSIE
13. ACTION – CHECK LARCH ISSUES FOR BLACKBOROUGH – BOB
14. ACTION – PRODUCE AGM AGENDA INCLUDING CONSTITUTION CHANGES - ROSIE
15. ACTION - APPROACH PETE AKERS RE INTEREST IN LEARNING PERMISSIONS ROLE – ROGER

Webmaster's report

Web admin

I'm still the only one responsible (no other volunteers so far)

Contributors

Written pieces – Tom (via his OINFO newsletter) continues to be the main contributor. Email requests for event write ups for the Compass Sport Cup and QOFL6 produced no results. Didn't bother asking for Yvette Baker write up. Sarah Hasler has contributed two pieces (one for JK) and I have semi regular reports from the Chair & the President. Pictures- Judy and Jim Pearson's photos much appreciated, have also used several from Vikki Page and the Toomers. PF Web- continues to tweak aspects of the site, which explains why somethings have looked strange occasionally e.g. the layout and formatting of the photos

Content

Since the last committee meeting, I've added to the Information directory:

Training tips (originally written by Richard Sansbury)

Multi-day history - of QO members at the various festivals

Results 2004-2016- made this section as complete as possible

New members - item on home page has been running a few months now; I've currently dropped it off the home page because no new joiners in the last month or so

Jeff Pakes

Volunteer co-ordinator's report

POC's- Haven't heard from Steve Elliston or any of the POC monitors since the last committee meeting.

Relay teams- Brian P's co-ordinating. To my knowledge, no on-the-day captains appointed yet.

Forthcoming tasks:

Team lists – produce these for 2017/18. They will continue to appear under each QOFL event listing online. Julia R has suggested that I include new members as soon as they join so they get a sense of belonging to a team and let her or the new members know which team they are in by email.

Jeff Pakes

Permissions Report

All permissions are in place, as far as I am aware, for all events up to and including QOFL1 on 16.9.17, including the Club Championships on 24.06.17, using Longrun Meadow and Silk Mills P & R Nature Reserve.

Long O. 30.09 & 1.10.2017

I'm not aware that a venue has been decided for this event yet.

St Audries. QOFL2. 21.10.2017.

Not all competition area owners have been contacted yet but there is no reason to expect any problems. However see parking comments below.

Parking for N Quantocks: -

NW Quantocks.

Staple Plain Car Park: We have used this many times before and there is no reason to suppose it won't be available.

FC Deer Park at Stowborrow Hill (accessed from the A39): Andy Harris has said that this should be OK after consultation with the FC Forestry Team but has reservations about us parking near the tops of the forest roads.

However, this should still be OK.

A walk up to the top of the area from the A39 showed the forest roads to be very good with plenty of parking room near the top, close to the open moor (as Judy thought).

NE Quantocks.

Alfoxton Hotel. Extensive online investigations and site visits have not resulted in making contact with the owner or anyone who could definitely give permission to park on the area to the south of the hotel. Further efforts could still be made.

Field opposite Alfoxton Hotel (To the NE of the hotel access road): Permission has been given in principle for the use of this field. However, the ground to either side of the track through the field looked very steep to me. Another visit is necessary.

Wind Down QOFL3 18.11.17

Permission in principle has been received for this.

Young Wood QOFL4. 14.01.2018.

Jon Burgess of FC and Gavin Saunders of Neroche Woodlanders have replied to queries about this area and there are points that have to be sorted out. The main ones are the use of the actual Neroche Woodlanders area and permission for access along the route that they take in.

Compass Sport Cup Round 1. 11.03.2018

Access/parking/permission proposals and negotiations have been ongoing and a solution seems to have emerged. Steve (planner) has made an access/parking proposal that Richard Sansbury (organiser) is happy with. I am also happy for this to be put to Andy Harris (FC). If he is happy we will be OK in principle and only the paperwork would need to be done.

Everyone will be happy!

Deer Park at Dunster for Galoppen 8.04.2018

Still to be fully investigated. A suggestion of the required area has been given by Bill.

Silk Mills Park and Ride Wildlife Reserve.

Following a second approach, SCC have now given permission for this area to be used as an extension to Longrun Meadow.

However two fields to the north of the reserve are not owned by SCC and these are still being investigated. Their unavailability would not affect the viability of the reserve area.

Willett Hill

FC Manage this area for an unknown owner.

A date for a proposed event has been given to Andy Harris who will ask the owner if this will be OK.

Haddon Hill

The ownerships (Exmoor National Park and one other) are now known and contacts to approach about event permission have been given.

Bob Lloyd

Job Description for QO Permissions Officer

05.05.2017

The job consists of several different functions which can, to some extent, be considered separately. Rough headings are:

A. Prospecting for and investigating possible new competition and activity areas and investigating new areas suggested by others.

(At the moment, most of the prospecting is done by others and the perm' off' tends to do most of the further investigation but this can vary.)

B. Finding out the owners of new areas and any new owners of areas already being used.

(This could be part of the "investigation" mentioned in 1. but is in any case, a special function.)

C. Advising the fixtures secretary and committee about area ownerships and restrictions, etc. when future events and the event fixture list are being discussed.

(While the type of event has usually been decided, the date and/or venue are likely not to have been. It is probable that liaison between two or more of the fixtures secretary, prospective planner (if already identified), mapper, perm's off' and others will be required to fix them. An iterative process is sometimes required with several successive suggestions being considered before one is adopted). The perm' offs saved information is often essential in connection with this process.

D. Getting permission from owners and managers, etc. of venues, for the Club to run events there.

(This is the largest part of the perm' offs job.)

The Main Actions Required of the Permissions Officer for a single event is given below in the chronological order in which they would usually be carried out.

1. Find out or check, the date, venue and type of event that the fixtures secretary has in their list for the particular event. (See also the notes under heading C above).

2. Contact the known landowner(s) or their manager(s) or agent(s) (whichever is known to be the best contact). Find out if they are willing, in principle, for the required area of their land (see 4.) to be used for the event on the chosen date and, if so, if they want to impose any limits on what the club can do, such as staying out of certain areas, etc. When contacting the owners of areas that have not been used before, it is best (if possible) for the first contact to be face to face.

If appropriate, also ask if any areas that would appear to be suitable could be used for parking and if there would be any limitations or charges.

In practice, for areas that have been used before, the vast majority of the necessary information is already known and is in the records.

3. If the initial approach to the landowner is satisfactory, find out, also from the fixtures secretary, the names of the planner, organiser and mapper. Without these, it can be difficult to proceed much farther in some cases.

4. Unless the competition area is under one owner and has very clear boundaries, such as fences, walls or hedges, ask the planner for a definition of the area they hope to use. This is best done by the planner supplying a copy of a map with a line round the proposed competition area. The line should obviously allow for competitors sometimes wandering well off the straight and/or sensible route between controls.

In some cases, for areas with multiple owners and complicated and/or special features, etc. it may be best if the perm's off' supplies a map to the planner, showing the overall boundary, the boundaries of individual owner's areas, any areas that have to be OOB and features that must be avoided, etc., that he already knows about or has been told about by the landowner.

The maps mentioned here don't necessarily have to be the current orienteering maps. A blank copy of an earlier version or even a section of an OS map may well be OK.

The landowner may ask for an "all controls" map to check for himself if he is happy with the positions of the controls, from environmental considerations, etc. . This may obviously not be possible until the planning has progressed some way.

Any comments or request from the owner, such as this, must obviously be passed back to the planner.

5. There may be other organisation or individuals that have an interest in the land being used.

These may include the actual owner(s) of the land (when dealing with the tenant), any tenants (when dealing with the owner), the local AONB, the local shoot, Natural England, the local parish, district and county councils, etc. etc. The owner or tenant will possibly volunteer this information and, in some cases has an organisational obligation to do so but it is still best to ask.

It may be necessary to contact any or all of these organisations or individuals and some may require more information, completed application forms, etc.

6. From this point on, there may be little to do. JOGs tend to be like this because the areas have probably been used several times before, the owners/managers know the club and the admin' is well known to both sides.

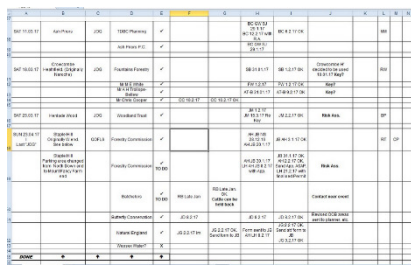
On the other hand some events like the Quantock Weekend of Orienteering (partly because of the number of competitors and partly because of the complication of the event) may involve a lot of work by several people for weeks before and right up to the event date. The perm' sec' may be involved at various stages of this and needs to keep in touch with the situation and event officials and use his/her knowledge of the actions up to this point, background knowledge and imagination to spot any problems or additional things that need to be done.

Operational Information

(Stored information needed to carry out the job)

Perm. Record

(Permissions record chart)



This is simultaneously a very brief record of things to be done, a record of the major actions that have been carried out and the major communications that have happened between parties.

It has been running since 1999.

Although the chart is in the form of an Excel spreadsheet (stored on a computer) this is only a convenient way of generating an easily manipulated chart.

I have attached a copy of part of the chart to the covering email, which I hope can be opened and read.

The columns, from left to right are:

Date of event - proposed venue - type of event - owner(s) to be contacted - what stage the permission application has reached - contact and date(s) of outgoing phone calls to owners, etc – ditto for incoming calls from owners – outgoing emails to owners – incoming emails from owners – remarks – charges, if not standard FC, etc. – planner – organiser – controller.

The chart is obviously heavily abbreviated. There is a range of symbols listed at the bottom of the chart that can be insert in the “what stage the permission application has reached” column, such as ☑= All done, TO DO = still to do, ☒TO DO = ok in principle but some things still to sort out, ??? = waiting for a reply, etc.

Also at the bottom of the chart are all the names (of owners, managers, club officials, planners, organisers and club members associated with the two or three letter initials used in the chart.

Contact Information

The contact information (names, addresses, email addresses, telephone numbers, etc.) for virtually all of the owners, organisations, organisation officials, individuals and others that the club has to deal with about permissions is kept in an address book, that is updated as information is received or changes.

For several multi-owner areas and areas that involve a lot of contacts, there is a reference page that points to all the individual named contacts for the area.

Also, all the known email addresses for contacts that could be involved with permissions are contained in an electronic email contact list on a computer.

Record Keeping

(Recording what has happened or been said.)

All significant emails received or sent in connection with permissions are saved on a computer in the usual hierarchical filing system.

For instance, all emails sent to and received from Owners, etc. in connection with a certain event are saved, in chronological order in a folder reserved for that event, within a folder for emails to and from Owners. Similarly, there are folders for all events for emails to and from Planners and Organisers. These folders date back to 2007. There is a folder where all the maps, of various types, that have come into the possession of the perm' sec' are saved and many more folders to contain other types of information.

Backing Up

All the information on the computer is backed up once a day onto an external hard drive that is wired to the computer and once a month onto an external hard drive that is stored in another part of the house.

Improvements that could be made to the system

1. There is no backup of the information in the address book and, although the book is never taken out of the house, there is a risk, as there is only one copy.

If the book were destroyed, most of the information in it could be reinstated, although some might be lost, but it would be a long and tedious process.

It would therefore be sensible to take action to avoid this.

As a first step, the 35 or so A4 pages with something on them could be scanned and kept elsewhere.

The contents of the book could then be copied into an electronic document.

This would have the additional advantage of it being much tidier and easier to amend.

2. Although all the electronic information is backed up, the two external hard drives are still in the same house. I believe the slight danger with this situation could be overcome by saving the files externally using Dropbox, etc. I haven't really looked closely enough at this system, although I use it to be able to look at files when I am away from home (on holiday, etc.)

Alternatively, the portable external hard drive could be left with the next door neighbour (who is an ex-policeman).

Mapping Report 04-05-17

Not much activity to report.

A number of changes have been added to the map of Staple Hill for QOFL6.

Maps have been provided to the planners of the forthcoming events at Young Wood (Orchard Portman) and St Audries.

A quick visit to Staple Common has shown that a number of revisions would be needed before it is used. There is a problem in that there is no track network, planning of a White course would be impossible and Yellow very difficult. In the past this area has been used in conjunction with Neroche, so that only the longer courses have used Staple Common. At present felling is in progress at Neroche so this area is not available.

Priors Park with Ashcombe Wood.

In the past we have parked on the main forest road with the start and finish nearby. It has become increasingly difficult to plan the shorter courses using this arrangement. Starting on the east side at Ashcombe Wood was explored for the last event. Bob had contacted the owner of a very suitable field but as she wanted £2 per car we did not think it good value and declined the offer. As there is a suitable path network in Ashcombe Wood we may have to use this in future.

Areas for the Compass Sport Cup have been reviewed by the mapping group. The conclusion being that the best option would be to use the area to the east of the Triscombe car park (The Slades), in conjunction with the open area to the south (Aisholt Common), using the usual field for parking. The planner (Steve R) is currently appraising this option.

The recent felling at Blackborough has been added to the map of this area.

Plans to convert the QO maps to OCAD format are ongoing.

Bill Vigar

Quantock Orienteers Club Nights and Training

Thursday evening 6.30-8.00pm

There are two components to the QO Club Nights:

Fitness and orienteering training with Tess Stone and Vikki Page

Meetings to provide information, training and discussions on various topics such as mapping, use of SI, planning etc. On 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd March Tess and Vikki ran Fitness and orienteering training sessions on Longrun Meadow for a mixed group of about 12 adults and children. They also ran a warm-up and fun relay session before the Presentations on 30th March.

Activities in the COACH Room

2nd March An introduction to the COACH building followed by a look at:

Spencer's JOG courses at Lydeard Hill

How to use Route gadget Brian Pearson

16th March Richard Sansbury ran a Safety Course for 10 people.

23rd March John Warren discussed the courses he planned at Moors Valley Compass Sport Cup qualifying round.

30th March JOG presentation Evening with President Mike Crockett presenting the Trophies.

2017-18 Fixtures to date

Thu 11 May	Castle Neroche Training 3	Staple Fitzpaine	Activity	Vikki Page	Tess Stone	
Thu 18 May	Castle Neroche Training 4	Staple Fitzpaine	Activity	Vikki Page	Tess Stone	
Thu 25 May	Castle Neroche Training 5	Staple Fitzpaine	Activity	Vikki Page	Tess Stone	
Thu 8 Jun	Thurlbear Wood Training 6	Taunton	Activity	Vikki Page	Tess Stone	
Thu 15 Jun	Thurlbear Wood Training 7	Taunton	Activity	Vikki Page	Tess Stone	
Thu 22 Jun	Buckland Wood (NW) Training 8	Taunton	Activity	Vikki Page	Tess Stone	
Sat 24 Jun	Longrun Meadow & Taunton West Club Championships	Taunton	D	Richard Sansbury	Richard Sansbury	Rosie Wych
Thu 29 Jun	Buckland Wood (NW) Training 9	Wellington	Activity	Vikki Page	Tess Stone	
Thu 6 Jul	Buckland Wood (NW) Training 10	Wellington	Activity	Vikki Page	Tess Stone	
Thu 13 Jul	Henlade Wood Training 11	Taunton	Activity	Vikki Page	Tess Stone	
Sat 16 Sep	Cothelstone Hill & 20 Acre Wood QOFL 1	West Bagborough	D		Tom Hasler	Graham Hartley
Sat 9th Sept	Peter Palmer Relays	Sutton Park, Birmingham		Vikki Page		
Sat 23 Sept	JOG 1		Activity	Judy Craddock		
Sat 30 Sep	Quantocks Long O, Day 1 and JOG 2	Quantocks	D	Judy Craddock	Rosie Wych	Steve Robertson
Sun 1 Oct	Quantocks Long O, Day 2	Exmoor	D	Roger Craddock	Martin Longhurst (DEVON)	Rosie Wych
Sat 7th Oct	JOG 3		Activity	Judy Craddock		
Sat 14th Oct	JOG 4		Activity	Judy Craddock		
Sat 21 Oct	St Audries QOFL2	Williton	D	Roger Craddock	Jim Nickolls	
Sat 28th Oct	JOG 5		Activity	Judy Craddock		
Sat 4th Nov	JOG 6		Activity	Judy Craddock		
Sat 11th Nov	JOG 7		Activity	Judy Craddock		
Sat 18th Nov	Wind Down QOFL3	Broomfield	D		Mark Maynard	
Sat 25th Nov	JOG 8		Activity	Judy Craddock		
Sat 2nd Dec	JOG 9		Activity	Judy Craddock		
Sat 9th Dec	JOG 10		Activity	Judy Craddock		
2018						
Sun 14 Jan	Orchard Portman	Taunton	D	Roger Craddock	Robert Green	
Sun 11 Feb	Ham Hill QOFL5	Yeovil	D		Pete Akers	Tony Hext
Sun 11 Mar	Ramscombe CompassSport Cup heat TBC	Triscombe	B	Richard Sansbury	Steve Robertson	Alan Simpson (DEVON)
Sun 8 Apr	Dunster Deer Park Galoppen	Minehead	C		Rosie Wych	
Sun 13 May	Blackborough South QOFL6	Cullompton	D			

JOG report for Spring Term 2017 14th Jan - 25th March, compiled from Jeff Pakes' entertaining reports posted on the website!

We started the season on 14th Jan at Staplehill with a JOG followed by a QOAD planned by Richard Sansbury. The Squirrel and Hare courses stayed at the top of the hill while the Badger and Fox ventured through the mire at the bottom of the hill and into the area to the north. 37 people attended with Martha Macpherson, Ben West, Jenny Wood and Brian Pearson taking a lead on the Hare, Squirrel, Badger and Fox respectively.

Netherclay Woods was on 21st Jan, footy matches were getting postponed locally due to frozen pitches and our numbers were bolstered by some of those younger footballers! No such problems with our "playing field", just nice crisp conditions for a Saturday afternoon run. Not that you'd think it was icy judging by those collecting their JOG awards in short sleeves. Here is an account of the Fox course by Sarah Hasler

A Sly Fox course

A chilly, overcast afternoon saw five runners tackling the Fox course at Netherclay. This took the form of a multiple-choice question at each control: you chose your answer to get directed to a control on the all controls map. If you were right the next question awaited, but if you were wrong you were directed back to the last control to try again. For Eleanor and I all was going well: we had correctly identified various map features, symbols and terminology, worked out photo O and trail O clues and pounded along frozen ground feeling smug. Then our downfall, namely the IOF symbol for runnable in one direction. This foxed several competitors and generated much discussion at the finish. After visiting all possible options for this control we were back on track. A quick question on scale led to the welcome instruction to navigate to the finish.

This fox course was great fun to complete, running in a small area that otherwise can be hard for the planner to build in enough of a challenge at fox level. Instead we were made aware of all sources of information, both on the map and in the environment that runners can use to help themselves be more successful orienteers.

Culm Davy 28th Jan saw JOGgers taking advantage of a lovely sunlit wood the day before Sunday's downpour! Training alongside our juniors were some very good senior orienteers, attracted to this most runnable and pretty part of the Blackdowns

The session planner Adrian Edwards did a great job. In particular watching all those fast finishes on the final leg downhill was great entertainment for the spectators crowding alongside the tent at the bottom and shouting encouragement at the runners! This is something those used to attending larger events elsewhere are used to, so it was good to see it at JOG.

The intricate network of buildings and passageways at Bridgwater & Taunton College and the adjoining Castle School kept our juniors focussed on Saturday 4th February. This concrete labyrinth provided a stern test for those daring to try Jim Mallinson's fiendish memory map exercise. Even the Hare course provided a significant navigational challenge to our smallest runners.

Queen's College was the venue for the 11th February and you had to be on the ball while running round the intricate combination of stairways, paths and alleyways between the buildings on the school site! The Fox course also explored parts of Comeytrove, using questions as evidence of visiting a control. Who knew that street furniture such as lamp posts could be so useful in daylight?

On closer inspection, they all have identification numbers, which served as control numbers to our JOGgers. That certainly saved planner Jenny Wood from putting out extra kites on the day.

Thar she blows! Bridport Sea Scouts made a windy Cothelstone Hill their port of call at JOG this Saturday 25th February. Some of their crew sailed along at a good rate of knots to show they could mix it with our landlubbers. 52 people enjoyed courses planned by Graham Hartley. The last QOAD of the season followed with Graham encouraging newcomers by making the Fox the same course as the After Dark event

On Saturday 4th March Jim Nickolls planned some excellent courses around the lovely grounds of Fyne Court, which was looking at its best, with clumps of stunning snowdrops and anemones in flower. We were lucky with the weather, the sun managing to shine now and then!

It was good to see several new families with teenage children trying various courses. Some 65 people enjoyed the event, so thank you Jim for your hard work.

On Saturday 11th March we had a fine spring day to enjoy a relatively new area which offers a nice contrast to our other JOG venues. It's strangely reminiscent of the New Forest, the terrain is relatively flat with a patchwork of woodland and large clearings, bisected by minor roads and streams.

The Fox course was the Badger course without the paths marked on the map! Funny to think how bewildered the runners on the Fox course must have looked compared to those on the Badger, who knew exactly which paths to choose. As opposed to running round in circles, staggering through brambles and into streams...

Thanks to planner Mark Maynard for planning and providing us with the perfect warm-up for the following days' inter-club event in Dorset.

Crowcombe Heathfield on 18th March provided the penultimate junior event of the season and saw us at an established forest league venue overlooked by the Quantocks. The tooting steam trains arriving and departing from the vintage station nearby always lends something to the atmosphere...full steam ahead, JOGgers!

Planner Rosie Wych used the bottom half of the area, which has spurs of woodland radiating into the surrounding fields, from a concave wooded flattish-topped hill in the middle of the area. Add in a grid of earth-banks and you have plenty of scope for parallel errors. Needless to say, your correspondent fell into the planners' trap on a couple of occasions.

The Fox course was linear affair this week and again a good number attempted it, with just enough maps to go round.

The craters and gorges to the south of the area provided added navigational interest- and at times, a physical challenge to get out of them!

Rosie thoughtfully provided a taped route during the course to steer runners through the worst bit of the landscape. At Henlade Hill on 25th March the course planners Graham and Brian Pearson made us work up a sweat in warm early spring weather this Saturday, taking us some of us round this lovely little wood once, twice or three times depending on which course you were running

This attractive site is situated on steeply undulating ground with elevated spots that afford spectacular views of the Somerset Levels and surrounding hills. The area is known to contain many fossils, including marine reptiles, so says the Woodland Trust website though many of the blocks of trees up there are pretty new having been planted in 1998.

Unusually for a memory map exercise, those running the Fox were given a map to take around. For the first eight controls, odd numbered controls were shown but every even control was omitted from the map. Even with no pen to mark the control on the map, some would at this stage still be in their comfort zone. Then the planners mixed things up a bit, with two memory controls in a row followed by a run of four marked controls.

This encouraged faster running. But with tired limbs and increasingly addled brains we then faced four consecutive memory controls, some of them set amongst decoy controls in the "jungle" area of the wood!

At the end of it, I felt like I'd been on the fairground waltzer, hurtled round and round and round, then sped up, slowed down and made to change direction..