

## Street Orienteering in Derbyshire.

It has become a tradition for Derwent Valley Orienteers to start off each New Year with a Score Event and in recent years this has taken the form of a Street O event. The 1st January 2008 was no different with Bakewell being the choice of venue. Situated on the River Wye this small, peak district, market town made an ideal location for this type of event. The map consisted of the historic town centre with its complex spread of streets and alleyways surrounded by the sprawl of more recent housing clinging on to the hillsides of each side of the valley. Being a compact town the map even extended to the woodlands that overlook the town.

First time organisers and planners, Bakewell residents Steve and Siân Mead created a very interesting course. To give proof that the competitor had visited the control site they asked questions uniquely related to the control site, such as "What year did trains last run through the station?" One question for a control site at the end of a very muddy and steep path asked, "What hangs from the large tree?" This nearly got the tongue in cheek answer "the Planner". There was also the now traditional question regarding Christmas decorations, with the planners keeping their fingers crossed that they hadn't been dismantled the previous day as happened in the previous year's event at Ashbourne!

The River Wye meanders its way through the town and effectively cuts any orienteering event into two distinct areas. Careful choice was needed to decide the best crossing points so that you didn't isolate yourself on the wrong side of the river with only minutes to go before the hour of allotted time had expired and penalty points were incurred.

Seventy competitors were able to enjoy this event, running off the excesses of the festive season or just take a gentle jog through the historic town. Being a tourist town with many visitors, even in January, the runners were effectively running billboards for the sport with many people enquiring about the sport. A report of the event was also published in the local newspapers. (Belper News, Derbyshire Times and Matlock Mercury). DVO stalwart, Graham Johnson, having forgotten his running shoes took a leisurely run around the town but was slow enough to be photographed. The picture in the local newspaper (Belper News) has been seen by a surprising number of people and poor Graham has become an ambassador for the sport having to explain what he was doing.

Melbourne will be next New Year's Day venue but before then DVO intend to hold many more street events. With Allestree, Ashbourne, Bakewell, Belper, Crich, Derby, Ilkeston, Matlock and Wirksworth already mapped, street events are planned for Sunday mornings in the summer. Wirksworth, however, was the venue for a Night Street O on the 30th January this year. This event even attracted sponsorship from the local firm Wedoit4you. A room in a local hostelry was hired and food was provided after the event making for a very congenial atmosphere after the run. Those present declared it far better than the usual Wednesday night training run and expressed a desire for more such events.

Neil Cameron advocated Street O as part of the Orienteering lexicon in his article in last autumn's Focus. DVO wholeheartedly agree with this and see a bright future for this aspect of orienteering. Some critics declare Street O is not traditional orienteering. Derwent Valley agrees, it's just different not an imitation, something to be enjoyed for what it is and a great opportunity to train, to participate, to recruit and to promote our sport in its many guises.

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