HALO CLUB NIGHTS

Humberside & Lincolnshire Orienters (HALO) is a small club but covers nearly a million people living in four local authorities, so you would have thought that it would be very easy to establish a regular orienteering Club Night in the area.

However, one of the problems is that the area is nearly 2000 square miles in size, much of which is agricultural with very few large centres of population other than Hull. The other problem is the River Humber, which divides the area into two distinct parts and the Bridge costs £5.40 return in tolls. In the early part of 2009 it became apparent that many of the schools in the East Riding of Yorkshire had been introducing orienteering to their pupils without any involvement or indeed knowledge of HALO. Following a number of meetings with the Partnership Development Managers employed by the two School Sports Partnerships that cover the East Riding and our British Orienteering Regional Development Officer, Colin Best, HALO decided that the way forward was to concentrate on its efforts on a particular locality and that it would try and establish a regular Club Night on Monday evenings during term time at Longcroft School in Beverley on the North Bank of the Humber.

### Beverley Club Night

It did not start well. The first night in September 2009 was saga of ongoing following extensive publicity via the 25 neighbouring schools. Despite this no-one turned up which was a huge disappointment after all the work put in. Our initial idea was to do for juniors (which hopefully would also have attracted parents) but after the first night, we decided to change this to a Club Night which would have activities for existing members whilst also catering for newcomers of any age. This model was found to be correct for the rest of the year with a mixture of fitness orienteering, orienteering activities and technical training and exercises.

In early October we organised a ‘Newcomers event’ at the School which attracted a couple of family groups who subsequently became regular attendees at the Club Night. Throughout the year we had a small, but steady, influx of non-members. They have come along because they have read articles which we sent to the weekly Beverley newspapers, posters in the local sports shops and the ‘What’s On’ section of the Council’s monthly newspaper. Sadly, no-one yet has turned up as a result of the promotional ideas. Publicity is obviously one of the keys to attracting new members and it is something that each term has concluded with a competition. This is normally a new technique worked out beforehand and followed by the ‘end of term party’ where everyone brings food to share which is always very popular. The social side is a very important aspect and we make sure that there is always time for this at the beginning and the end of the evening for the Club Night.

In the first year there were 39 participants in total (16 members and 23 non-members, 7 of whom subsequently joined HALO) and 35 ‘firsts’ and 20 at any one Club Night. Disappointingly some of the newcomers attended for a few weeks and then were not seen again. We think that one of the reasons for this is the lack of orienteering events in the local area and we have taken steps to address this with our 2-1-5 series of events this autumn.

#### A Typical Evening

We asked Junior Coach Neil to describe a typical Club Night,

“No such thing really, variety being the spice of life, but we always start with a warm-up, maybe a steady jog around the field, or some speed drills or perhaps some relay races.

The coaching element then follows, concentrating on one aspect of orienteering, e.g. decision making, attack points, pacing, bearings etc. One problem with using the school grounds is that we all become familiar with the site which means that rather than try to find an accurate bearing to get to a point, you don’t need to rely on knowing where it is and so you sub-consciously (or consciously) navigate by the familiar features.

To overcome this we have used a lot of ‘white maps’ (and very small controls) so that there is nothing familiar on the map. Winter is also an added advantage as nothing is familiar in the dark. Fortunately I usually have time to set up the controls in daylight and then the coaching can be done in the dark. As a result you can then become a necessity to find a small control on a large field in the dark.

We normally finish off with some sport courses in the school gym. Although it is designed to be fun and the evening, route choice, planning ahead, map orientation and code checking are all essentials to ensure a fast time. SI boxes are placed on line intersections, usually 3 or 4 courses can be run and they use UKC software which can quickly check who has completed their course correctly. We also have had circuit training evenings and sessions on course planning. Sessions the school is keen to promote orienteering and very accommodating regarding the hire of facilities.

#### A Man of the Schools Grounds

The challenge for our Junior Coach, Neil Hanutt, who runs the Club Night, has been to cater for complete beginners as well as junior internationals – quite a wide range of ability!

This has been done in two ways. Sometimes we have separate activities, with, for example, the experienced group going on to the Westwood and the beginners remaining on the school site for coaching. Alternatively, both groups have done the same exercise with, for example, the experienced group working from memory whilst the beginners have to run with a map. When both groups have been together it has been pleasing to see how willing the experienced group are at helping the beginners.

The coaches and the participants are committed to continuing the two Club Nights. There has even been talk of starting a third, possibly in the Scunthorpe area but these developments are very much dependent on the continued availability of dedicated volunteers.

John Butler and Neil Harvatt, HALO

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### East Riding Schools Championships

The Championships were organised by HALO for the first time earlier this year with 171 year 5 and 6 children from 27 schools competing in the final event at Longcroft School. Over 700 children, many of whom had no or little experience of orienteering, from 57 schools took part in the 12 heats which HALO helped to run. The top children from each of the heats were invited to take part in the final. We also put on a fun event – the Maze – creating a lot of interest which many of the children had a go at with very little problems. As well as medals and certificates provided by the School Sports Partnerships each of the prize winners received a HALO prize voucher which entitled the bearer to free admission at any HALO club night or orienteering event for a year. Unfortunately, only one person took advantage of it – and she was already a HALO member!

### British Orienteering Support

British Orienteering has been very helpful in establishing the Club Nights, especially Steve Vernon, the Northern Participation Manager. HALO was one of only six clubs to have been selected by British Orienteering as a ‘2010 Participation Club’ which enabled us to attract greater interest in our activities which we are sure would not have been available. We have also made full use of the Print Portal to produce quality leaflets and posters.

We realised that if the Club Nights were to be successful we would need more coaches and with British Orienteering’s support we ran a course in November which resulted in 19 new qualified coaches in the club, making twelve in all.

We were also encouraged to obtain Clubmark accreditation which we achieved in the summer.