

The First Year

Humberside & Lincolnshire Orienteers (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.

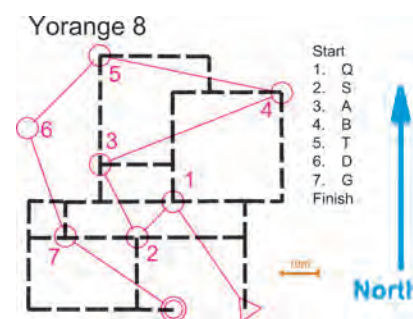
However, one of the problems is that the area is nearly 2000 square miles, much of which is agricultural with very few large centres of population other than Hull. The other problem is the River Humber, which divides the area into two distinct parts and the Bridge costs £5.40 return in tolls. In the 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 much of its efforts on a particular locality and that it would try and establish a regular Club Night on Monday

activities for existing members whilst also catering for newcomers of any age. This model continued for the rest of the year with a mixture of fitness work, fun 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 have 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 shop and the "What's On" section in the Council's monthly newspaper. Sadly, no-one yet has turned up as a result of the promotions in schools. Publicity is obviously one of the keys to attracting new members and it is something that

Each term has concluded with a competition planned by one of our members (not the coach) 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 at the beginning and the end of the evening for this.

In the first year there were 39 participants in total (16 members and 23 non-members, 7 of whom subsequently joined the Club, with between 10 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.



One of the Club Night exercises

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 eagerly awaited following extensive publicity in 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 a club 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



One of the competitors at the School Championships

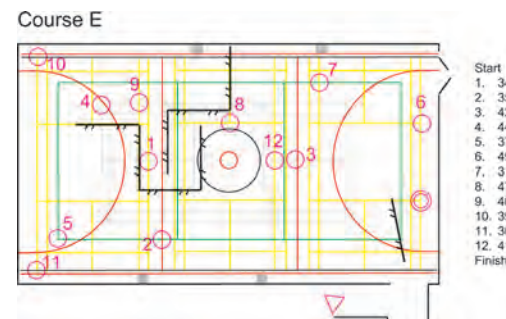


A Map of the Schools Grounds

needs doing constantly, which is not easy when you rely on a small number of volunteers.

As an East Riding Council accredited club we have the use of the School, which has excellent facilities, at a discounted rate. There is a large sports field with sets of buildings on either side of it, both of which can be run round giving good scope for planning courses, etc. A gate from the school field leads to the Westwood – a largely open area but with two technical woods – which we use from time to time. We also have access to one of the gymnasiums which is particularly useful in the winter months. The court lines have been mapped and this has provided a splendid resource using SI boxes and "benches for fences" to provide mini-courses.

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



One of the Gym exercises

2-1-5 Series

Many of the newcomers were amazed at how far orienteers travel at weekends to pursue their favourite sport. Recognising this, we agreed that we needed more local events and we are now providing at least two events a month on Saturdays afternoons from 1 – 3 pm, one on the North Bank and one on the South. There are white, yellow, orange and technical courses on offer as well as a maze which is always very popular.

Feedback

Four of our regular juniors were asked what they liked (if anything) about the Club Nights, so we could find out how to appeal to more juniors. Emma loved the running; Joe thought they were just awesome but he liked learning about bearings and running around the mazes; Yasmin also liked the maze. George thought they were fun and liked learning to read maps, but he especially liked the end-of-term feasts! They all liked meeting new friends.

Grimsby Club Night

An equivalent Club Night has now been established on the South Bank at the Oasis Academy in Grimsby on Wednesday evenings. It started in July and is run by the Club's Coaching Officer, Brian Slater, who has established a good partnership with the School, having mapped the site and offered after-school orienteering



HALO has worked hard to gain Clubmark accreditation

sessions. The school is keen to promote orienteering and are very accommodating regarding the hire of facilities.

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 take an accurate bearing to get to a point, you don't need to as you know 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 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. Accurate bearings then become a necessity to find a small control on a large field in the dark.

We normally finish off with some sprint courses in the school gym. Although it is designed to be a fun end to 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 then using MT software we can quickly check who has completed their course correctly. We have also had circuit training evenings and sessions on course planning.

The Next 12 Months

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

NOTICE BOARD

Date
The 2011 Coaching Conference will take place at Littlethall over the weekend of 4th - 6th February 2011. The main focus will be on coaching development workshops and seminars. Further details including the programme and costs are on the British Orienteering website.

A new orienteering book written by Carole McNeil has now gone on sale



Don Mair (78) and Peter Leake (71) from LEI were nominated for awards at the counties 'Oldest Athlete Celebration Event' for their commitment to sport and competition.

Date
The Outdoors Show is for everyone with a love of the great outdoors and a spirit of adventure. It takes place from the 13-16th January at the ExCel, London. British Orienteering members receive a discount on tickets. Please quote code BO1 at www.theoutdoorsshow.co.uk to receive 1 ticket for £12 or 2 tickets for £22. Children aged 15 and under are free.

Manchester and District Orienteering Club (MDOC) start their weekly club night from January on Monday nights from Hazel Grove High School.

In the New Year British Orienteering will be launching a "Year in a box" which will be 12 months worth of club night coaching activities and resources that will help club nights get started and provide varied weekly sessions throughout the year.