



Chair's Report to the 2021 AGM



Here are a few highlights from the club's activities over the last twelve months.

During my third year in the role of Chair, we have, again, faced some "interesting" challenges. Organising events has required a lot of flexibility and tenacity from everyone involved, and the Committee put in a good deal of work to prepare for the easing of the Covid-19 restrictions.

As agreed unanimously at last year's AGM, we have recruited a Schools Development Officer, Connor Smith, and a Club Development Officer, Mary Fleming. Thanks to the Orienteering Foundation for providing funding support for the Club Development Officer role and to everyone who helped to prepare the necessary job descriptions, contracts for service, advertisements, etc. Both Connor and Mary have tackled their roles with energy and enthusiasm, as you'll hear from their reports later.

As you'll be well aware, last few months of 2020 were dominated by the Covid pandemic and the associated ever-changing restrictions. We tried to carry on with mapping, planning and other event preparation work, but in quite a few of our proposed events had to be cancelled or delayed.

We were unable to proceed with Chris Wight's fun Autumn Short Race series because these events share spaces used by members of the public and often involve routes through tight alleyways. We also had to put several training courses on hold, including a follow-up to the SI Managers course, technical "how to do it" courses for aspiring Organisers and Planners, and further First Aid courses. Also put on ice was our traditional New Year Team Score event (which involves lots gathering and socialising) and our Annual Dinner. We will, of course, resurrect these club social activities as soon as it's sensible to do so!

The monthly Zoom quizzes that started during the Covid lockdowns have continued to be popular, and our weekly Tchimes electronic newsletter helps to bind us together.

We were very pleased to put on very successful event at Birk Brow in November and then a fantastic sprint event at the (newly mapped) Coatham Dunes in the run-up to Xmas. It helped that the weather was really kind to us!

Over the winter there was Lamp O series for those of us who could access the relevant areas without breaching Covid rules. One question for you is whether you'd like a Lamp-O series this year, now that we have more freedom to travel.

I'd like to say a huge "thank you" to the very many volunteers on whom we depend. We have continued with our "volunteer entry discount" system, which gives free entry vouchers for the three main officials and half price entry vouchers for all the other helpers. The vouchers are given as credits in the new CLOK Entry System, and we recognise that they're just a token of our appreciation to our volunteers rather than any form of recompense.

While on the subject of entries, I'd just like to remind you that our policy is continue to aim to run our orienteering event programme "in balance", so that the entry fees just cover the running costs for the events and our club over each year.

This new ("temporary"!) entry system has proved to be flexible enough to cope with the changes in the Government's Covid rules and the resulting changes in British Orienteering's guidance for organising events. We've found it really eases the volunteer effort needed on the day of an event, and so we're planning to continue to use it rather than return to taking entries on the day. NN have also appreciated using a clone of the CLOK system for their events.

Anyway, after Christmas we went back into lockdown. At least CLOK members were able to make use of the (MapRun) Virtual Orienteering Courses (VOCs) that we now have scattered about our area. Most of our VOCs are in urban areas – great for winter training – and some are in country parks. We're

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planning to make more use of them in weekly Klub challenges and for the Couch 2 Green course participants.

We've also introduced the concept of Virtual Running Routes (VRRs) – similar to VOCs but with the MapRun app showing the participant's location – to offer newcomers to orienteering a gentle introduction to navigation on the move.

Phill Batts has been taking the lead in setting up VOCs and VRRs in our area, and it's worth mentioning that Duncan Archer has set up some VOCs in Durham for Northern Navigators.

If you're interested in planning a VOC or two, we have loads of scope for more to be created. On a related subject, I should mention that we now have a number of portable computers – installed with all the software needed for mapping and planning – available for loan to club members, plus a couple of very accurate handheld Garmin GPS devices that can be used for mapping and/or defining VOC control sites.

In April 2021, CLOK events restarted promptly after the Covid restrictions were eased, with Kiplin Hall kindly giving us private access to their grounds. We also put on a double header weekend near Whitby, with a Middle Distance event on the newly mapped Aislaby Moor and a National event at Hutton Mulgrave (making use of the planning that had been done for the 2020 JK relays). We enjoyed excellent orienteering, more glorious weather and a great arena for the Hutton Mulgrave event.

As good as those events were, I think the highlight of the last twelve months' orienteering events has to have been the extremely successful Junior Inter-Regional Championships and October Odyssey weekend – a “double, double” – at South Gare. It was a superb showcase of what our club can achieve. A huge support from our very experienced volunteers meant that juniors from across the country and orienteers of “more mature years” could really enjoy orienteering in some extremely challenging terrain. Many thanks to everyone involved!

It's been really great to see our new club jackets and O-tops out and about at events, and especially at the Scottish 6 (or “2 x 3”) days. We're still getting lovely comments about the design. Well done, Livi. We're now using elements of the design – particularly the colours and the “landscape of silhouettes” – to provide a consistent identity across our web site, social media and future posters.

We've decided to continue to hold Committee meetings via Zoom, as it's so much more time-efficient and avoids us wasting fuel and generating CO2 emissions. We're still interested in finding ways of further reducing our sport's environmental and climate impacts. Maybe we'll become comfortable using our WhatsApp lift sharing group again some time? Perhaps we can make more use of trains to get to those enticing multi-day orienteering events in Europe next, and I'm sure that over time more of us will travel to events in electric vehicles although they'll need to have the range to get us back from those woods, moorlands, muddy fields that have no charging stations in sight.

We're continuing to try to improve our best 30 or so permanent orienteering courses (POCs). Thank you to the club members who have volunteered to adopt your local POCs and check the maps and markers several times a year. It's worth keeping the POCs in good shape, as approximately a thousand of our POC maps were downloaded from the British Orienteering portal during the last twelve months. Several landowners have now repaired or replaced their markers and the maps are much more up to date, although there are still quite a few to be sorted out. We're hoping that Stockton and Darlington Borough Councils will be able to come up with some funding to enable us to upgrade their POC maps and set up some more virtual orienteering courses (VOCs).

We continue to provide strong support our CLOK Juniors, with training led by Neil Hunter, ably supported by Charles Mayes and other orienteering parents.

CLOK members have produced some excellent individual sporting performances this year. I'm not going to try to give a comprehensive list, but I'd like to mention just a few outstanding results.

- In the Northern Championships, Evan Jones came first in the M10A class and Eileen Bedwell came first in W90.
- Ann Cranke was recently crowned as the W65 British Long Distance Champion.
- In the British Sprint Championships, Ann Cranke won the silver medal in W65, while Aidan Rigby came 4th in the Men's Open and Thomas Aspin came 4th in M20.

Looking forward, I think the biggest challenge for the club continues to be attracting new members, especially young adults in their 20s and 30s. We really do need to excite a whole new generation to become involved in our sport so that we can sustain our club over the next decade and beyond. We'll be experimenting with a variety of approaches to achieve that. For example, our Club Development Officer is currently running our first Couch 2 Green (C2G) course. Modelled on running's "Couch to 5k" initiative, our C2G course aims to get non-orienteers to the stage where they can tackle – and enjoy – Green courses. It's very positive that 15 participants signed up for our first C2G course, which is taking place in the Darlington area.

I do think it's healthy to have some turnover of people on the Committee and in the club's other volunteer roles. As well as avoiding overloading our willing volunteers, it brings fresh ideas about how to evolve and improve the club. In that context, I'm very grateful to those members who are willing to take on new roles this year. It's really good to have some key posts filled again though we always do still have space for a few more volunteers in various roles!

We do miss those who are retiring from some posts, though. We wish Mike Hardy well on his retirement from CLOK and thank him for his contributions to the club – especially his prodigious work in schools orienteering over several decades!

And, on a personal note, I'd like to thank the CLOK committee nominating me for the British Orienteering Volunteer of the Year award. The fact that I won is really a reflection on the CLOK volunteers as group rather than on me as an individual. Many thanks to everyone. I also really appreciated being chosen to receive the 2020 Joe Wright trophy – my first ever sports trophy!

Finally, please stay safe and enjoy the orienteering events that we're able to put on as we continue to make the best of the situation despite a number of challenges. With just a little bit of luck – and a lot of hard work – I'm sure we'll have a full calendar of events next year. I look forward to seeing you at some of them.

Caroline Mackenzie
CLOK Chair