



Chair's Report to the 2023 AGM



Introduction / Overview

Since the last AGM we have put on 23 orienteering events, notably including a UK Urban League event using the new Darlington Town map and the Classic Distance event on the Sunday of the White Rose Weekend.

Organising and planning our extensive and comprehensive range of orienteering events has required a lot of flexibility and hard work from all our key officials and volunteers. The results have been worth all the effort, though, and given us all a chance to enjoy navigating our way around some fun courses!

CLOK members are still working through our success in previously winning about £7,000 worth of grant funding. This is helping us to update and extend the local park mapping throughout our region and to set up new permanent orienteering courses (POCs) and virtual orienteering courses (VOCs) in 14 areas. See Paul Taylor's Mapping Report for more details. As promised at the last AGM, I haven't sought any new funding this year. That will be deferred until we've completed our backlog. Though a couple of landowners (Flatts Lane and KirkLeatham Museum) have approached us to update their maps and/or courses so we have dealt reactively with those requests.

This is all part of setting up the infrastructure that will enable us to facilitate more local community involvement in orienteering and to encourage families into our sport. Overall, a significant amount of improvement work is being done across the heart of our Teesside communities. Once that's complete, we'll need to ensure that the new maps, POCs and VOCs are used and, importantly, maintained.

Note: 90% of the grant funding goes to club members as expenses for doing the mapping and course design work, with the remaining 10% going to club funds to help pay for OCAD licenses, insurance, etc.

Club Development Project

Our Club Development Officer, Mary has been busy encouraging us to get out and do more orienteering, arranging more training activities and 'orienteering games'. Things did, however, slow down a bit this summer when Mary has, understandably, given priority to completing her Masters degree dissertation).

Many thanks to the Orienteering Foundation for their continuing funding support and also agreeing to support a third year – that is next year. Also, thanks to all the club members who helped with the successful completion of another two Couch2Green (C2G) courses and the Track2Green (T2G) course last year. We're now planning on switching to running this annually in Spring, as that has always been the more popular timing for courses. See Mary Fleming's Club Development Project Report for more details.

We wish Mary Fleming every success with her new environmental consultancy career. I'm pleased to report, though, that she'll be supporting us through our transition to a new CDO.

Schools Development Project

Many thanks to Phill Batts, who has taken the lead through this transition period and has also completed a significant amount of mapping. The idea that Mary Fleming could take on some of the SDO work didn't turn out to be possible, as she simply didn't have the time.

Anyway, there continued a healthy cashflow coming through from the Schools Development work, especially as Phill ensures we get paid up front avoiding us having to chase up some unpaid bills!

The great news is that Mark Davis has agreed to take on the SDO contract. There's already a decent backlog of tasks up for him to tackle before he can proactively look for any more work. In September, the SDO activity delivered an 'orienteering activity day' for about 120 primary school pupils at Flatts Lane.

Event programme

Our very full event programme over the last twelve months included:-

- Our Acorn National Event at Silton.
- Our normal monthly programme of Regional Events, which continued through all weathers
- Chris Wright's Autumn Series of short races.
- Our annual New Year team score event now at Cowpen Bewley (with easier access for NN and NATO teams).
- A winter mini-series of night events, including a very sociable night event at Romanby golf course
- Joe Trigg's Summer Series of evening events.
- The UK Urban League event on Dennis' newly mapped area in Darlington (and Darlington Borough Council has invited us to make this an annual event!).

We also supported EBOR with their iconic White Rose Weekend by organising the Classic Distance event on the Sunday.

So, it's been a very busy year. It's been great to sustain our normal event programme whilst encouraging many folk to take on apprentice Organiser or Planner roles, which should help to spread the load in future years.

By the way, I'd like to say 'thank you' to the staff in the office of the Tees Valley Mayor, who – with the Mayor's support – enabled our South Gare event to take place by arranging for us to get access permission without having to pay the prohibitive cost of getting a solicitor to draw up a formal legal agreement.

Looking forward to next year, EBOR has invited us to join them again in running the White Rose Weekend next year (if their nominated area is suitable). If so, do you want to? Your views are welcomed. We'll come to that later in the agenda.

Also, next year NEOA has volunteered to run the 2024 British Orienteering Championships (in the Mulgrave Estates). Duncan Archer has volunteered to act as Coordinator, the key officials are appointed and preparations are well under way.

And we (CLOK) have also volunteered to organise the Compass Sport Cup Final in 2025 at South Gare. Parking will be the challenge!.

Achievements

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 June, Duncan Archer became the overall OMM Lite Long Score winner over a weekend in the Lakes.
- At the White Rose Weekend, Isla Simson, Rebecca Mayes, Livia Wright and Joan Selby all came first in their age ranges.
- 2023 JK podiums included Eileen Bedwell (again 😊), Duncan Archer coming 2nd and Ann Cranke 3rd.
- In the British Championships, Duncan Archer was the M45L Champion and Ann Cranke came second in her age class. Also, with congratulations to the CLOK team of Charles Mayes, Rebecca Mayes and Duncan Archer for winning the Mixed Adhoc class.
- The Green family won the 2023 New Year Team Score event (successfully defending their 2022 title 😁).

Awards

The Paul Thornton Awards – which go to the male and female Juniors (male and female) who have made the most contribution to the sport and the club over the previous year – are presented tonight, as is the 2022 Joe Wright Trophy.

Training

Duncan Archer led an Introduction to Coaching course, whilst Phill Batts led several Mapping and Planning Courses, and Paul Taylor and Ray Snaith led a n NEOA (Planning and) Controllers Course on 7th January.

We continue to provide support to our CLOK Juniors, with training led by Neil Hunter, ably supported by Charles Mayes and other orienteering parents. See the Juniors Report for more details.

The club also sponsored juniors to attend some training camps. Rebecca Mayes enjoyed her Junior Regional Orienteering Squad (JROS) training camp on Deeside,

Permanent Orienteering Courses and Virtual Orienteering (MapRun) Challenges

We continue to improve our best 30 or so Permanent Orienteering Courses (POCs). Thank you to the club members who have volunteered to adopt their local POCs and check the maps and markers several times a year.

It's worth keeping the POCs in good shape, as about a thousand of our POC maps are downloaded from British Orienteering's 'Go Orienteering' portal each year.

Several landowners have now repaired or replaced their markers, and the maps are much more up-to-date, although there are still a few more to be sorted out. If you would like to help with this maintenance process, please let me know. Vacancies are available, particularly as one of our key POC adopters has had to stand down recently. The POC checks also help to inform and prioritise where the next mapping and course upgrades are needed (though we do need to finish off all the grant-funded work first!)

We've continued developing further MapRun courses, which are used for the weekly Klub challenges and for the Couch2Green courses. They're also being published on British Orienteer's 'Go Orienteering' web site so that they're available for community groups, members of the public, etc.

First Aid course

In February 23, Richard Rigby ran a First Aid course for people whose certificates were expiring, and he's planning to run another course later this year.

Safeguarding policies

Thanks to Carolyn Rigby for overseeing our Safeguarding policy and practices. She also produced a policy on photography and filming at our events and activities, and has been encouraging us all to understand these by completing the relevant BO e-course on safeguarding – recommended for all Committee members and key Officials.

Club Image

It's been really great to continue seeing our club jackets and O-tops out and about at various events, and we're still getting lovely comments about the design.

We're using elements of the design – particularly the colours and the “landscape of silhouettes” – to provide a consistent identity across our web site, social media, maps and other publicity materials.

Showing off our smart club image is really great when helping out at Family Fun Days and at School events

Committee business

We've continued to hold regular monthly Committee meetings via Zoom, as it's so much more time-efficient and avoids us wasting fuel and generating CO₂ emissions. On that point, we're still interested in finding ways of further reducing our sport's environmental and climate impacts. (Please bear in mind that you can use the WhatsApp or Facebook members-only chat functions for making arrangements to share transport to events.) The Committee is still working on further developing our club's environmental policy. If you have any suggestions, please let us know.

Social activities and communications

The monthly Zoom quizzes that started during the Covid lockdowns have continued to be popular, while our weekly Tchimes electronic newsletter continues to let us know everything that has been – and is – going on and to bind us together.

We found that night events based from a pub or café were great fun and have been trying to obtain access permission for another couple of interesting golf courses for a family-friendly winter night series. In November we are going back to Dale Town Moor (with the High Paradise Tearoom) and Joan Selby has gained us access permission to the Cleveland Links in Redcar.

Volunteers wanted!

I'd like to say again a huge 'thank you' to the many event officials / volunteers on whom we depend. We have continued to operate our "volunteer entry discount" system, which gives free entry credits for the four main event officials and half price entry credits for all the other helpers. These are given as credits in the Racesignup entry system, and we recognise that they're just a token of our appreciation to our volunteers rather than any form of recompense. We also appreciate several people stepping forward to be trained up and mentored in the Organiser and Planner roles.

Speaking of which, we now have next season' events programme mapped out ready for you to step forward and volunteer to take on those key roles!

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

I 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 have stepped forward to take on new roles this year. It's really good to have some key posts filled again though we always have space for a few more volunteers in various roles!

Looking forward

Looking forward, we think the biggest challenge for the club continues to be attracting new members, especially families and 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 continue to experiment with a variety of approaches to achieve that objective. On that subject, an important task for the coming year will be to find another Club Development Officer to work on finding ways to attract families into our sport.

In conclusion

Please stay safe, keep active and enjoy the orienteering events that we and other clubs put on. I look forward to seeing you enjoying some of them.

Caroline Mackenzie
CLOK Chair