

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE 2013 CLOK AGM

The State of the Club in 2013

I have decided to write a longer Chairman's report to the AGM this year, which looks back over changes in the last ten years and highlights challenges we face in the future. There are so many people who give a lot of time to make the club exciting and successful that I won't mention them all by name. You know who you are, so give yourselves a hearty pat on the back. If you want to do more, give me a call, because it is always good to spread the load.

Background

Orienteering nationally has undergone some big changes in the last ten years. On the downside, membership has fallen, especially in the 20-40 year old age range. More positively, electronic punching has been embraced, along with a whole range of new types and times of event (sprints, urban, mid-week evenings, Saturdays) and this has made it possible to use a lot of smaller areas.

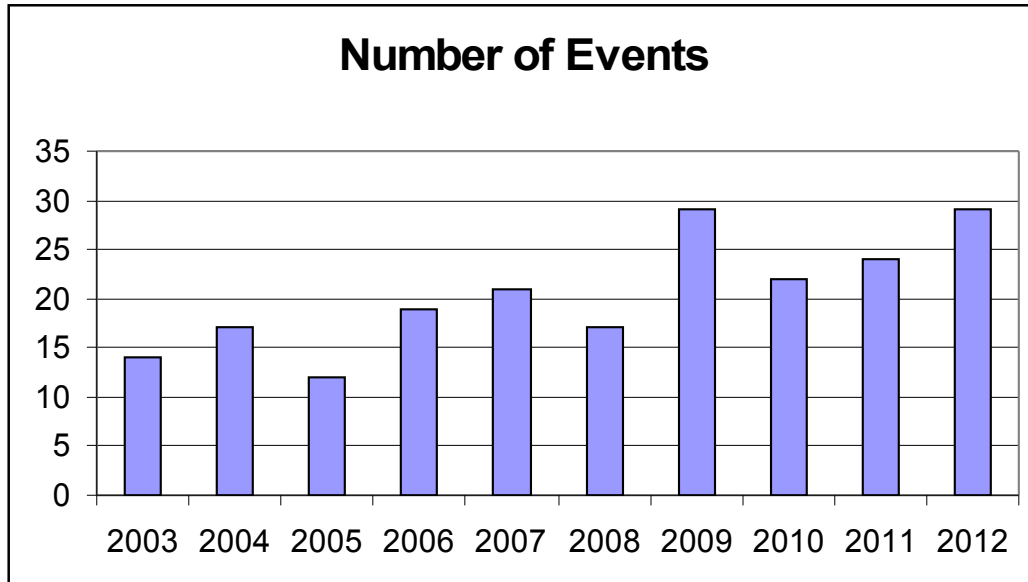
This report looks at those changes and many others, sets out how CLOK has responded to them, and looks ahead to what challenges are still to be overcome in the future. The report is based on a lot of information collected at the end of 2012, and if anybody wants to see more of it, let me know.

Although the club has much of which to be proud, it must not become complacent. It must innovate, copy what works well for other clubs, and above all give people the opportunities to enjoy themselves.

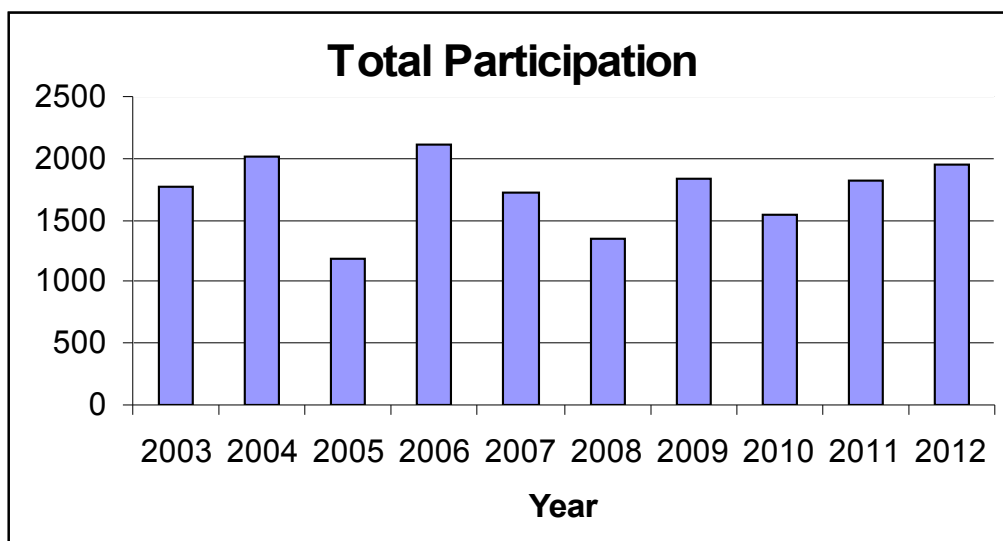
Areas of interest:

- **Membership:** Membership levels are a difficult figure to get a grip of. Everybody who joins the club stays with us until the end of the calendar year. Not everybody re-joins straight away, so the best time to compare figures is not clear. It has also been affected by changes in BOF rules which no longer cater for family membership. Because juniors do not get any benefit of a reduced entry fee at events, some families have not bought membership for their young children. This is quite understandable, but tends to hold down membership levels. So here is what appears to have happened:
 - Membership levels fell from 2000 until 2009 (along with the national trend), when it stood at 213.
 - Several initiatives have been put in place since then and the decline has been stemmed, with membership levels remaining constant for the last few years.
 - Latest figures for 2013 are 190 members, but as mentioned above these are not directly comparable with previous years. Hopefully the membership rules will stay the same for a few years to enable a reliable trend to be determined.
- **Events:** By far the biggest change for competitors in recent years has been the number and type of events available to run locally. CLOK put on 14 events in 2003 and 29 in 2012 (see chart below). In addition there are more events hosted by neighbouring clubs and the local Army League. Instead of just having events in forests or moorland on a Sunday morning, small woodlands, urban areas and

seaside locations are now being used also, with many events on Saturdays and weekday evenings. There has always been a large number of events available on other clubs areas, but for those people not wanting to travel long distances, choice has greatly increased.



- Big events:** In addition to expanding the range of local events in the last few years, CLOK has also played a major role in regional events (October Odyssey every three years and Acorn each year and often controlling the White Rose and other events outside CLOK) and National Events (providing planners and organisers for the JK in 2009 and British Championships in 2014).
- Participation:** Participation at CLOK events has stayed fairly constant over the ten years (see chart below) at around 2,000 competitors per annum. It is slightly higher in years when we host the October Odyssey (2006, 2009, 2012) as this involves two larger events. When set alongside there being more events each year, the constant level of competitors implies a reduction in the number of competitors per event.



- **Officials:** There are a lot of club members who have taken on the major roles at events (planning, controlling, organising). However, some have now “retired” after many years of active service. The current number of practising officials is about 25 planners, 16 controllers, 15 organisers and 10 SI managers, with some people starring in more than one role! So, in order to maintain our current level of events people are having to officiate at two or often more each year. Hence the urgent need to develop more club members to be able to step up to doing the main jobs.
- **Coaches and coaching:** The club has invested a lot of resources in developing coaches in recent years, and currently has 16 practising coaches. Many of the coaches are either helping to run local weekly training sessions or the regional junior squad. This enables a number of key things to be achieved:
 - *Beginners* (mainly juniors) can learn to read maps and get the confidence to go on a course. Some of them are keen enough to join the club and bring the rest of the family along!
 - *All ages* can improve both map reading skills and fitness levels and so enjoy the sport even more – and help get success at inter-club competitions.
 - *Top orienteers* can gain selection for national and international squads.
 - *Inter-Club competitions* yield more success, and everyone gets a “feel good factor”.
- **Equipment:**
 - *Electronic punching* has revolutionised the sport in a number of ways:-
 - By checking that controls are visited in the right order, it has allowed smaller, more accessible areas to be used, or for planners to make greater use of the best parts of the forest
 - It provides instant access to split times and allows competitors (especially juniors) to compare their results with friends.
 - It assists with safety as it enables more accurate checks to be made of who has set off on a course.
NEOA and CLOK have both invested heavily in SPORTident electronic equipment. A number of other items have been acquired to support the electronic punching – generator, battery, computers.
 - *New tents* have been purchased. These have provided a better environment for helpers at our own events, and made for an enjoyable social occasion at large multi-day events.
- **Orienteering Development:** By far the largest effort in the last ten years has gone into developing orienteering in schools. Hundreds of schools have been mapped and introductory coaching sessions given to pupils. Thousands of pupils have taken part in inter-school competitions. Dozens of teachers have been trained to introduce orienteering to yet more pupils. A lot of work has also gone into introducing orienteering to people of all ages with disabilities.
- **Areas and Maps:** The introduction of electronic punching has allowed many small areas to be viable for holding events, and there has been an explosion of maps. There are probably about 100 areas mapped and more added to our stock each year. Most of the work has been done on a voluntary basis and we all owe a great debt to the mappers. The maps cover a wide range of areas from traditional forest

and moorland to public parks, beaches and urban areas. Some are best suited to holding low key informal events and others are good enough for National Championships. There are currently about a dozen maps being upgraded, extended or opening up completely new areas each year.

- **Successes:** During the last year CLOK has had a lot of successes. We have several JK, British and Northern Champions; success at junior relays, most recently at the Peter Palmer relays in September; and several seniors and juniors selected to compete at international level. The club qualified for the finals of the Yvette Baker Trophy and CompassSport Cup.
- **Links with British Orienteering:** For more than 10 years CLOK has received a lot of financial support from British Orienteering. This has enabled the club to carry out the extensive development programme in schools, participate in training courses and support club nights.
- **Clubmark:** This is a Quality Club Accreditation, which shows that a club provides the right environment to ensure the welfare of members and encourages **everyone** to enjoy sport and stay involved throughout their lives. It is recognised as a safe, rewarding and fulfilling place for participants of all ages as well as helping parents and carers know that they're choosing the right club for their young people. We should be proud of CLOK being awarded Clubmark in 2000 and this has continued every four years and currently runs to 2016.

Challenges for the future:

So, what are the two big challenges for the club in the coming years? The following is a personal view and sets out what I see as the two biggest challenges. I also believe they need to be tackled urgently.

1. **Membership:** Despite the good work that has been done in the last few years to stabilise the membership, we have to keep on attracting new members. As the age profile of existing members increases, more people will leave the sport. There is also an increasing number of alternative attractions for people of all ages. I believe we have a good product to sell, but we haven't yet found the best way to market it.
2. **Volunteers:** CLOK is fortunate at the current time that there are a lot of members who carry out a lot of jobs helping to put on events, coaching and just keeping the club running. The challenge is to broaden the base of willing and qualified helpers at all levels.

Peter Archer
October 2013