

Shire Oak event 25.10.11

I have been quite involved in Shire Oak for about 6 months.

The 2008 Peel map had not previously been made available to the public.

I had mapped all the nature trail posts and decided on the location of another maximum 15 posts.

5 were to fill in gaps in the nature trail where I felt a post was needed at a decision point, but the rest fell into the 'tricky' category. A few odd objects were also used, giving a grand total of 37 controls.

The 15 posts were installed mid August by the rangers and I, funded essentially from the fire claim insurance.

Colin, the ranger, contacted me and suggested an event there during half term. This was a bit awkward as I was already heavily involved at Lickeys, but we agreed a date. Throughout the period I have been correcting the map; every time I go there I found a bit more which wasn't quite right, a path, a thicket, easier runnability or contour feature. I will make a few further corrections following the event feedback.

Lickey planning took priority, but I got the maps to Colin a week before the event. He was promoting a beginners family event so I had sent him the JPEG files for white, yellow and orange courses. Unfortunately I used a too low resolution and the maps he produced, somehow at about 1:6000 scale, were rather flooded with green and the majors paths, sprint style, difficult to read.

Publicity was quite good; in the quarterly booklet, 'Watsonwalsall', on the Walsall websites and in the press. The Walsall Chronicle gave it a paragraph, the Walsall Advertiser, which goes weekly to all 300,000 Walsall residents again gave a good feature and picture on page 3. The Express & Star gave a quarter page with picture, but unfortunately the day after the event. Perhaps Colin will invite me to a photo-shoot one day. As I don't think he had the maps at that time he is actually pictured holding up a Rough Wood map with the title blanked out!

Colin had put up a notice in the car park and I put another up using the excellent BOF Skelton notices. The area is on the edge of a housing estate I felt would be receptive to such activity.

Booking for the council event was via the Council booking service, so I'm not certain if the 25 pre-entries knew what they were letting themselves in for. Colin was to deal on the day with them. I offered some to the club runners to mentor them, but he felt they would not be CRB checked, although no children went by themselves. He took about 10 out initially and then came back and took another 8 out, and patrolled round the area.

The white was a fairly simple loop on the paths and the yellow essentially the nature trail backwards.

I think everyone enjoyed themselves, and some went out to do a second course. Most filled-in a council feedback questionnaire and all had signed my form to say they had read the instructions and were competing at their own risk.

15 Orienteering club members also came, so I was kept busy. The area is quite small so I had two courses back to back using all the tricky controls together with some path

junction controls. It was often best to approach via paths rather than going direct through the medium green. I think competitors found it testing.

I expect competitors on the night event on January 5th will find it equally testing!