NEWSLETTER AWARDS 09 11 14 ~ 16 18 20 23

CompassSport

The Southdowner

March 2025 No. 212





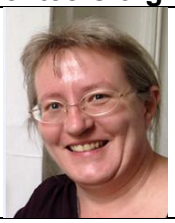


Selected to run for England in the Interland Cup 2025
Go Will, Julia and Emma!

Southdowns Orienteers

www.southdowns-orienteers.org.uk

Rogues Gallery - Know Your Club Representatives

			
Chairman **Alan Williamson** **chair@southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**Treasurer** **Ed Forman** **treasurer@ southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**Secretary** **Bea Waters** **Secretary@ southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**Club Captain** **Neil Crickmore** **captain@ southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**
			
Membership Secretary **Mike Turner** **membership@ southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**Safety Officer** **Karen Ashworth** **safety@ southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**Junior Team Manager** **Will Heap** **juniorteam@ southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**Fixtures Secretary** **Steve Jarvis** **fixtures@ southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**
			
Map Printing **Mike Gammon** **mapping@ southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**Eastern Mapping and Co-ordinator** **Chris Hooker** **mapco@ southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**Land Permissions Coordinator** **Steve Blount** **permissions@ southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**Head Coach** **Rob Lines** **coach@southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**
			
Web Manager and Junior Team Assistant **Anna Chapman** **webmanager@ southdowns-orienteers.org.uk** **juniordev@ southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**Publicity (Web Content)** **David Marsh** webeditor@ **southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**SO Clothing** **Di and Mike Turner** kit@ **southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**Welfare Officer** **Clare Lines** welfare@ **southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**

Chairman's Chat - Alan Williamson



As I write this, it has been a dull and cold month weatherwise, with little invitation to venture outdoors. Lucky for us that we have the sport of orienteering as an incentive. Our Club's recent event at Chailey Common was, I'm sure, hugely welcomed by all those there. It was used as a Junior Training Event – the varied terrain limited area, and plentiful paths make for an ideal location. Chailey Common is part of Ashdown Forest – which gives the phrase "Forest orienteering" a rather different sense of meaning!

As this edition of Southdowner lands in your inboxes Emma Chapman, Julia Jarvis and Will Heap will be heading out to the Interland Cup 2025 in Steenwijk, Netherlands.

Congratulations Julia and Will, with a special mention of Emma who is one of five juniors from the South East Junior Squad selected! Good running to you all.

I, myself, am only just beginning to get around to thinking about events in Spring and beyond. As ever, the Club would welcome invitations to help – even in the smallest capacity. If you are new to the sport, we would give you every support on this.

Editorial – Jane Lambert

Spring – new beginnings, some join a new age class (me included - gulp!), but Spring also brings a great list of O events, local, regional and national. Thank goodness for a sport where you can compete in whichever class you want – running up an age group class or two, to match the age you think (or wish) you were!



I've indulged in a bit of Spring cleaning this past month - sorting out a growing collection of my old O shoes. I tend to keep the one that is less broken in the hope to make a second pair at some point (just throwing away the really broken one!). The photo here shows that my tendance is to be very heavy on my right foot, only 1 right shoe has survived this cull, against 4 left ones – if anyone has a matching right foot, size 5.5, or would like one of my left foot shoes……..!

Huge thanks to those who have contributed to yet another full Southdowner – it is really wonderful and inspiring to hear of your adventures. Wishing you all a Spring full of exciting O events and hoping to see you out in the forests – safe running everyone!

Committee Chat – update from behind the scenes

As previously mentioned, we are no longer including the committee meeting minutes in the newsletter but please contact our wonderful Secretary, Bea (secretary@southdowns-orienteers.org.uk) if you would like these emailing to you, or would like to attend the monthly Zoom committee meetings.



We are still looking for a Social Secretary, please let Bea know if you might be interested this role (secretary@southdowns-orienteers.org.uk).

It would be wonderful to have some new faces on the Committee.

Welcome to our New members



Mike Turner – Club Membership Secretary. Photo Rob Lines

A HUGE and very WARM welcome to all our new and returning club members since December 2024

We hope you enjoy your adventures in the woods, forests, parkland and urban areas, and would really encourage you to talk to any of the club representatives, or volunteers at our events if you have any questions or would like to talk about your run etc – we are all super friendly!

Totally new members

Amy Bevan W21
David Shaw M55
Gail Thompson W55

Returning members

Beau Beames M21	Coral Curtis W50
Lisa Beames W50	Brian Joyce M70
Simon Beames M50	Zeva Stevens W9
Cosmo Culley M14	Hannah Warner-Swann W21



Photo: Rob Lines

Member Discounts:
Don't forget there is a wide range of discounts available to members with many retailers, including GoApe, Sportsshoes, RunnersNeed, Cotswold outdoor, YHA, Car Hire, Airport parking, AA and many more: https://www.britishorienteering.org.uk/discounts

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Volunteering – how can I help?

After our previous articles considering how you can help your club, make friends and feel good by taking on a Volunteering role – there's an opportunity to help out at the Regional event at Houghton Wood on Sunday 27th April 2025. Many hands etc and a great feeling of camaraderie in helping your fantastic Club!

Samantha Gibson is the organiser and can be contacted through our Secretary Bea (secretary@southdowns-orienteers.org.uk)

There are lots of roles available, and it would be amazing if we could have lots of volunteers to spread the tasks.

Whether it be just one hour on car parking duties, helping at the start, collecting controls or anything else, you'll have fun, and you'll still be able to run too!

THANK YOU!!



Photo: Rob Lines

Know your club member



Photo: Tim Hulley

The Johnson Family - Finding our way…

Mark, Oliver and Ian Johnson joined Southdown Orienteering Club in March 2024

How did you find out about orienteering?
Mark: We were staying in Wales (February 2024) and we went out for a walk in the Forest of Dean where we came across strange looking orange and white markers with numbers on the top. We kept walking with some interest on what they were and then started seeing runners going to those markers. A runner, who later told us he was 80 years old, was in the race. He stopped and asked us "Are you interested, would you like to have a go?". He then started talking to us about it and said "I better hurry off and finish my race". He later met us, took us to registration and set us off on a yellow course with daddy huffing and puffing behind – it was great. He told us about Southdowns being a great club and we should join, which we did!

What was your first time out with Southdowns Orienteering Club?
Oliver: We went to Oldhouse Warren and all the people were really welcoming. We did our run and at the end dad said I could jump in the puddles and get as muddy as I like.

Tell me about a part of orienteering you really enjoy
Mark: After orienteering I like waiting for the results, sitting down on the sofa with daddy looking at the positions. I look at the time where we were slower and those where we were faster and what place we came at the end.

What equipment do you use and how do you get ready for the race/what do you wear to go orienteering
Oliver: I wear weatherproof trousers, a nice breathable top, thermals and walking boots. We also wear bright yellow coats so dad can see us when we are running by ourselves. I have a compass – first a baseplate and then I went on to a thumb compass. We learnt to use a thumb compass during a coaching session before a race. The training was run by really kind people who helped us learn.

Mark: Daddy, why do you always get lost at orienteering?
Ian: I used to do scouting as a boy and thought I knew how to read a map, but applying this knowledge to orienteering I found I couldn't always think fast enough when I was concentrating on the map. I would get out of breath and then make big mistakes or go the wrong way. I did this several times, before realising that every time you leave a checkpoint, you must use your compass to make sure you are going in the right direction and also look out for the landmarks to hone in on the controls.

Mark: Daddy, why did you keep missing check points?
Ian: Trying to do better than I am able to do! I get out of breath and then get confused which checkpoint I am at. Several times I missed a checkpoint, or even did it twice, as I couldn't remember if I had already done it! By practising I learned that part of the skill of orienteering is balancing my running effort with leaving enough oxygen in my brain to think!

Oliver: Daddy, which courses have you been doing?
Ian: I started shadowing the boys doing the yellow course and quickly realised this is something quite fun that I also wanted to do and could actually probably do reasonably well. So, I ran a few green courses but kept on making big mistakes but that was part of the learning. I was very grateful to the kind approach from so many club members who dealt with my naïve questions before or after a race. And I say thank you to you all for making us so welcome and that's been a feature of the Southdowns Club – just how kind everybody has been.

Tell us about how you once got lost on an important race
Mark: So, I could easily find the first checkpoint and then I don't know what happened, but I just couldn't find the second one. I went right off the map and these kind dog walkers came past and I asked them for help. They spoke to dad on the phone and brought me back on the course where dad came to me. Oliver had one more checkpoint to go and then also got lost!
Oliver: This is how it happened. Dad was following me and said, I'll leave you here to finish the course. I found them all, except the finish and accidently ended up at the start from where I found my way through the carpark to the finish. But I still got a medal – I never give up!

Mark: Mummy, what is your favourite part of running with us?
Laura: My favourite part about orienteering generally is that it is such a nice thing to do as a family. We get to spend time in some really beautiful forests that we otherwise wouldn't get to see, challenging ourselves in the fresh air - it's just really nice. I usually shadow the boys a bit on the yellow course or wait for them at the finish. Then while Ian is doing his course, they boys and I go on to do the orange course together. Mark and Oliver are learning and also teaching me the hardest skills. We usually take our time and enjoy it together.

Are you talking about orienteering with anyone else?
Oliver: One of my friends at school seems very interested in orienteering and he really wants to come. I've been telling him all about orienteering and how to read a map.
Mark: I have done a 'show and tell' to the class about orienteering and they were quite interested in it. I have been talking to one of my good friends about it and he seems quite interested in spending time in the forest and having a fun time.

Tell us about the progress you have made in orienteering so far?
Mark: At first dad would shadow us on yellow, each time from further away, until I got to do it all on my own. Sometimes mummy watches us from a hilltop.


Photo: Rob Lines

How confident are you now doing a yellow by yourself?
Oliver: Well, I am quite confident. But everybody gets lost some time! It is knowing how to find yourself again or when to ask for help.
Mark: Me too, but you can make mistakes. If you make a mistake, always go back to the last checkpoint – if you do paces and you feel it's been more than you needed then you're too far, check you map for landmarks and consider going back.

What is your next ambition?
Mark and Oliver: We are going to JK 2025 and hope to see you there!

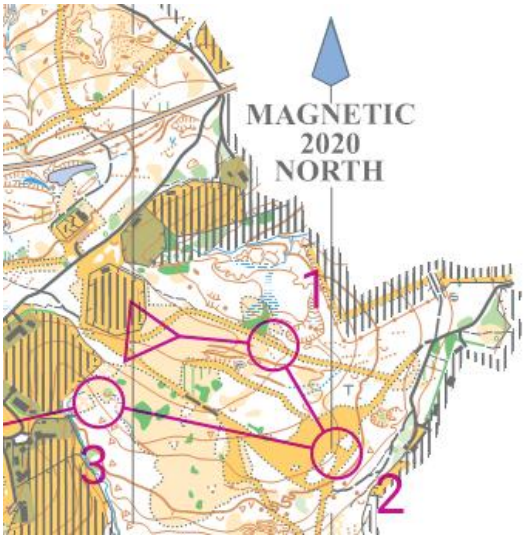
Kit Recommendations - Too late for your Christmas 2024 list but maybe a good one for 2025! Look what the Johnson family use after muddy events – what a fantastic idea, and on a very cold day at Ditchling Common, they had filled it with warm water! This is a mobile cycle pressure washer – other, similar, ones also available online





Roughing it - How to speed up. Steve Blount looks at taking rough compass bearings





ROUGHING IT

In its simplest form a compass is a needle that lets you know where to find north. So why do we, as orienteers, want to know where north is? Well, we know that orienteering maps are aligned to magnetic north, so it follows that we could therefore use our compass to orientate a map. To do this we simply turn the map until the top points the same way as north on the compass needle.

Control 1

Once our map is orientated to the ground, we are ready to set off to the first control. Looking at the map above we can see that our first control is to the east, but it looks like the going will be easier if we head north east up the ride. We look at the compass needle, judge where northeast is (45°) and set off along the ride. As we are running along, we check the compass needle again and we can see that we are moving in a north easterly direction. After 75m the ride begins to bend round to the east, a quick glance at the compass needle confirms that we are moving round to the east (90°). A little later we glance at the compass needle again and it confirms that we are now moving roughly east. After another 100m we can see a control, a glance at the compass needle confirms we are still heading roughly east. We head over to the control, check the code, punch, glance at the compass needle and head off roughly east towards the next control.

Control 2

Another glance at the compass needle confirms that we are still moving roughly east. After 200m we come to a ride junction, looking at the map we can see we need to head southwest (225°). Keeping the map orientated using the compass needle, we turn ourselves to face southwest. We can see the ride heading off in front of us and a quick glance at the map and compass needle confirms that this is the way to go. We set off down the ride and glance at the compass needle to confirm we are heading roughly southwest. After 75m the ride opens out, this is where we plan to follow the vegetation boundary that heads roughly south (180°). We turn south to follow the vegetation boundary, glancing at our compass needle to confirm we are travelling in the right direction. After 50m we look at our compass needle to see where west is (270°), on looking west we can see a control. We head over to the control, check the code, punch, glance at the compass needle again and head off roughly west towards the next control.
For the remainder of the course, we continue to check the compass needle to keep track of our rough direction of travel.



We finish the course and congratulate ourselves on successfully “Roughing It” but we can’t help wondering what all those lines and numbers on a compass are actually used for?

Know Your Map
by Chris Hooker



Part 3
Different Orienteering Maps

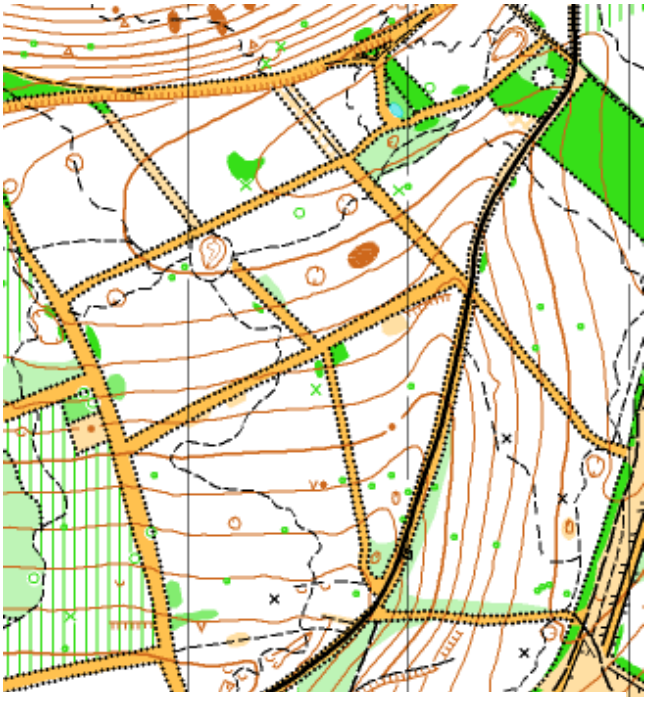
Since the birth of orienteering in Scandinavia some 100 years ago, as with many sports, the discipline has diversified as folk look to combine it with other interests. There are now a surprising number of orienteering disciplines, each with its own map style.

For example, there are forest maps, urban/sprint maps, school maps, street maps, Ski-O maps, Bike-O maps, Equestrian-O maps and Kayak-O maps, and I wouldn't be surprised if Radio-O and Phone-O have their own mapping peculiarities! There are probably others too!

Each have either their own specifications or at least some guidelines. If you put these maps side by side, you would notice a lot of differences and that is because each orienteering discipline focuses on different features and skills.

A forest map shows everything that is visible and bigger than a specified size while a Bike-O map puts the emphasis on the rideability of paths and minimises the forest detail. Ski-O and Equine-O maps are more along the lines of a Bike-O map focussing on the available routes. Then you have urban, sprint and school maps which are large scale and show a huge amount of detail. And I expect you can guess what a Kayak-O map looks like!

Some examples of maps:



Forest



Park/Sprint



Urban/Sprint



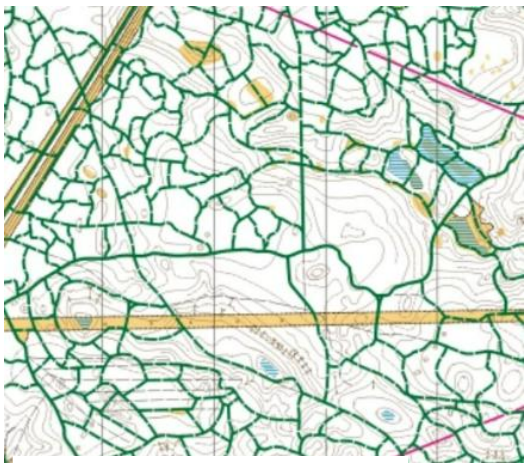
Street



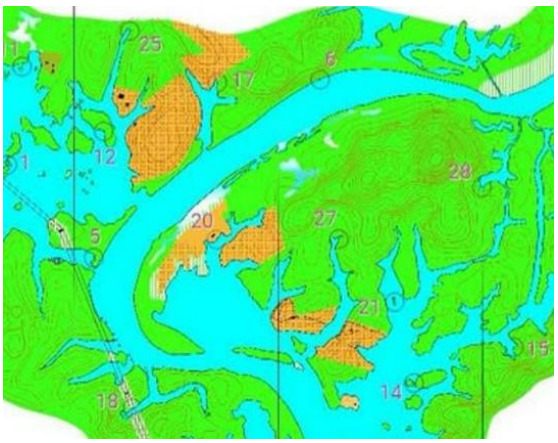
School



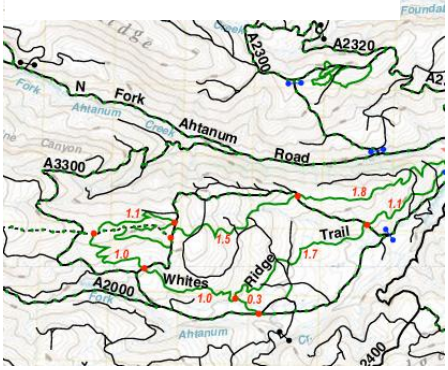
Mountain Bike



Ski



Kayak



Equine

Next time I will say a little bit more about mapping

BAOC Henley Gate Blue Course in which Little Dave considers the question:

"Would you rather a good clean run or a faux result?"



Photo: Rob Lines

I am fortunate to now have numerous coaches assisting with my orienteering. From the moment I emailed Mike Turner a couple of years ago asking questions about the mysterious O I have found nothing but help, assistance, and enthusiasm from many people within SO and further afield. I am surrounded by knowledge and grateful to all those people who willing assist me on my O journey.

My most recent coaching session involved the coach asking what my weaknesses were currently with my O. After about three and a half hours of constant discussion, I also added to the long list of my weaknesses that I am extremely competitive. My straight-talking coach immediately retorted "You don't need to worry about that Dave, currently you are not competing in any competitions that are important." I took this as a massive positive that my coach believes one day I will probably be running in the world championships or something.

But I am competitive. This characteristic is sometimes voiced as a negative, but I have always found it as something that is actually a positive. The competitiveness drives me to keep going, to try and be my best, to never give up. I have seen the negative side of competitiveness but that is more to do with sportsmanship and perhaps other people's integrity. No matter how competitive I have been I like to think I am humble. The competitiveness can be a distraction. The feeling that the last control has just ruined all chances of getting a good result but I am working hard on the mindset of forget the last control, it's done and dusted, only to be re-lived over a beer and banter later. Never ever give up.

O is also a great metaphor of life. There is nothing you can do about what has happened, it has happened. We can allow the past to negatively affect us or we can use it to drive us forwards, don't repeat the same mistakes. Concentrate on the present, predict the future accurately, by inventing it.

I also love O because it is many competitions within a competition. Each leg is timed and scored. The results are produced and appeal to my inner nerd, basically an excel spreadsheet, ready to be data analysed and absorbed. OK, I was last overall but look at control 5, 9, and 12, I was third fastest, if I had kept that up throughout the competition I would have podiumed! This faux glory is also what keeps me running hard for every control. Never give up. Imagine missing out on a position by one second? If only I had kept pushing myself. It's the magic of O, never ever give up.

A couple of weeks ago at another BAOC event I questioned myself… "Would you rather a good clean run or a faux result?" The answer eluded me but back home, reading some old O reports and enjoying a beer I was reminded of some ancient O wisdom... Don't think of the competition as a race. It isn't, it's a time trial, you against your own weaknesses.

I have also constantly thought that I should approach the BAOC events as training events, don't worry about the event, think about basics, work on the weaknesses whilst maintaining the strengths. I have recently been doing the longer BAOC courses for this reason but today was the Spanish Score Champs so there was no Brown course. Score courses are far too grown up for me. I am finding it challenging enough to find the next control that has been identified on my linear course, ain't no way I am going to organise multiple controls into an order. I have tried doing them numerically and that was just ridiculous. So today I entered the Blue course, 6.5km and 45m climbing.

In the June edition we will discover how Little Dave gets on ……

Junior Section - Junior Squad Report
from Anna Chapman (Junior Team Assistant)
SO Junior Autumn Season



It's been great to see some of our juniors venturing out into regional competitions and some of them even winning medals. It' a great way to gain experience.

A number of our younger juniors will run the yellow course competitively and if there's time and the maps available then go and try the orange course. This is a great way to keep their interest, because they can be competitive on the yellow and challenged navigationally on the orange course. Always download after each run if you're going to do this and make sure the SI team know you're going on a second course.



Photo: Rob Lines

Another good way for juniors to start to orienteer independently is to look out for 'white' courses at Regional events (sometimes organised by neighbouring clubs). White courses are planned to have a control at each decision point and are easier than a yellow course, so are great for giving children the confidence to navigate on their own. You can find the list of wider events underneath our list of club events on the website. We've run several coaching sessions and there are more to come (generally one a month). These are open to all and a great way to learn more skills. The best way to find out about these is via the Spond App which is available to all parents or carers of junior members. Contact Anna Chapman on webmanager@southdowns-orienteers.org.uk if you want to join.

Autumn SOG Series

We've just come to the end of the Autumn series of SOG's. It's been great to see some new names cropping up on the results. Each of these juniors will receive a certificate in the next few weeks:

Yellow M	1st Lucas Waters 2nd Oliver Johnson 3rd Christopher Warner	Yellow W	1st Elsie Smale 2nd Lizzie Nichols 3rd Sophia Reed
Orange M	1st Tom Cottrell 2nd Mark Johnson 3rd Oliver Johnson	Orange W	1st Harriet Nichols 2nd Jessie Lawman 3rd Millie Lawman
Short Green M	1st Otis Roberts	Short Green W	1st Emily Waters
Green M	1st Algie Mahon	Green W	1st Emma Chapman
Blue M	1st Thomas Duncan	Blue W	1st Emma Chapman

*Certificates are awarded to the top three boys and girls on yellow and orange but only first on the longer courses

SE Middle Distance Champs

Congratulations to everyone who took part at the SE Middle Championships which were held on 22 Dec 24 at Newlands Corner. There was a festive feel to the event with lots of competitors wearing tinsel or festive outfits and the top three were awarded with medals. SO had another successful event with 6 junior medalists, including some first-time medalists.

Gold	Silver	Bronze
Lucas Waters M10 (Yellow) Emma Chapman W14 (Lt Green) Ben Chapman M16 (Blue)	Mark Johnson M10 (Yellow) Emily Waters W14 (Lt Green)	Oliver Johnson M10 (Yellow)

SE Long Distance Champs
Congratulations to all SO members who took part at the Blackheath and Farley Heath SE Long Distance Champs in the Surrey Hills on 2nd February 2025. We had another six medalists:

Gold	Silver
Mark Johnson M10 (Yellow) Emma Chapman W14 (Light Green) Ben Chapman M16 (Blue)	Oliver Johnson M10 (Yellow) Lucas Waters M12 (Orange) Emily Waters W14 (Light Green)

Scout League
The results of our first Scout League are in and Crawley District topped the table this time, followed closely by Horsham and Mid Sussex.
1st Crawley
2nd Horsham
3rd Mid Sussex
4th Chichester
5th East Grinstead
The aim of this league is to encourage participation from juniors and adults in the Scouting movement. We had two events where large numbers of member from the Scouting movement took part. In November, 32 teams of Cubs and Scouts from Chichester District Scouts navigated their way around Slindon Woods and in January, 8 teams of Explorers from Crawley District spent the evening tackling the Tilgate Score course.
Remember, Orienteering can be used as the Physical element of the DofE and has a huge advantage when it comes to expeditions. We have club members who can sign off DofE records for those that are interested.



Photo: Rob Lines

South East Junior Squad and Tour Selections
Currently we have four SO juniors who are full members of SEJS (Emily Waters, Emma Chapman, Ben Chapman and James Curtis). SEJS is aimed at juniors in the 14-18 age groups who want to improve their orienteering, train regularly with other juniors, have fun and make new orienteering friends. They meet once a month and sometimes have weekends away for training or competitions. Membership is by invitation and the main criteria are to be a good orange standard, successfully able to complete light green standard course and to be regularly competing at larger events (national and above) both within and outside the SEOA region.

Recently a number of SO juniors have been selected to try out SEJS for the first time including Maya, Zoe and Katarina Hill and Otis Roberts.



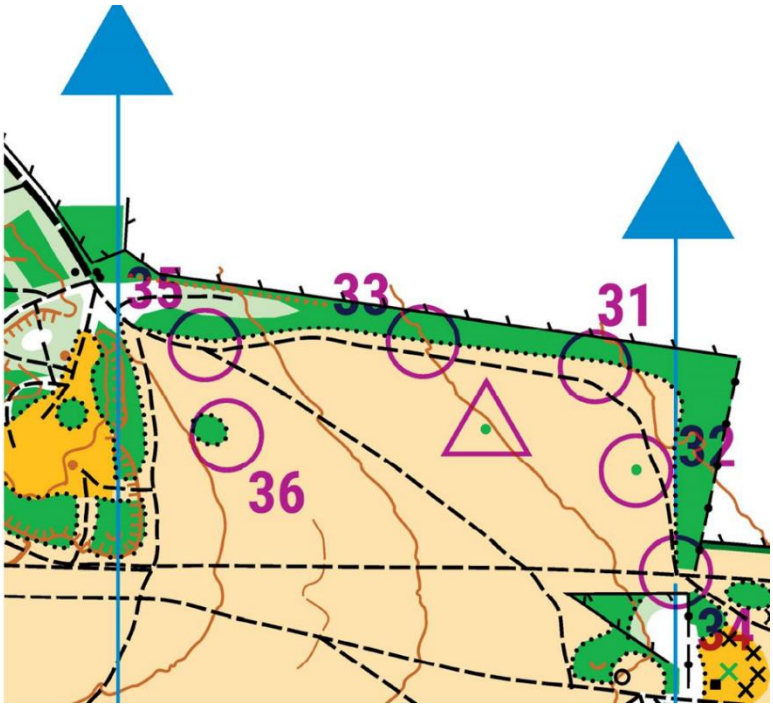
Ben's trip to Hawkshead, Lake District for JROS training in November Each year Junior Regional Orienteering Squads (JROS) organise a training camp based at Hawkshead in the Lake District for M/W 16's from across the country. It takes place in November and invitees are regular members of their Regional Orienteering Squad. This year, as a member of SEJS, Ben got to go, along with 4 other juniors and 3 coaches. The weekend coincided with Storm Bert. They got there OK by train, then the snow started, so they spent Saturday morning in YHA Hawkshead learning about leg planning and playing orienteering games. As the temperature rose and the snow melted, they

were able to move onto Dale Park for some exercise in misty snow. The night sprint race around the Youth Hostel was entertaining as usual.
On Sunday, we had more exercise on Colonel's Drive and finished with vampire-O, racing with other squads on the area. The journey home is best forgotten. Well done to Ben, Bors, Charlotte, Luke and Rory for maintaining enthusiasm and focus in challenging conditions. Thanks to Aimee, Brendon and Carol for bringing everyone home safely, eventually.

Emma to represent England at Interland 2025
Congratulations to Emma Chapman on her selection to run for England at Interland 2025 in March. Emma was selected, having performed well at the November Classic in the New Forest, and at the Junior Inter Regional Competition at Mallards Pike in Gloucestershire. We wish her lots of luck.

What have our younger juniors been up to?
Coaching sessions led by Karen Ashworth

Club Coaching Sessions – an insight into the fun that can be had, alongside learning to improve your O skills



The December training for the younger juniors was ‘Can you orient your map well enough to walk towards a control?’ where the controls were Christmas stockings with chocolate coins for those who found them successfully.

Unfortunately this Saturday was the windest/wettest day possible but still our tough juniors turned out for training – huge cudos to them all!

Karen says, “we looked like drowned rats by the time we finished!”

She also mentions receiving a lovely thank you email from Ian J afterwards saying “Despite the conditions, Mark and Oliver were full of the fun they had had chasing down gold coins, loved your outfit and even managed to polish up their compass skills,”

Well done Karen – another fabulous session!

Do look at the Club Website for details of upcoming Coaching Sessions – the fun isn’t just for the Juniors; we cater for adults too!



How to follow International Orienteering by Sue Crickmore

2003 in Switzerland. Standing in a very hot field with many, many Swiss orienteers and many, many cow bells we were spectating at the World Championship relays. No big screen, no tracking, no instant splits on your mobile phone; we had watched and cheered as the British team performed well on the first 2 legs and then were still in contention with the Swiss for Bronze as the third leg runners ran through on the way to a final loop. The Swedes and Finns appeared in Gold and Silver positions and then we waited, tension rising, eyes straining to see who would appear out of the forest next; the Swiss around us were poised to go mad with the cow bells…then the GB top appeared and raced to claim the Bronze medal to the sound of about 20 very excited Brits and hundreds of disappointed Swiss.
Following international orienteering these days is much easier, with live split results, GPS tracking and TV coverage. There are, however, an awful lot of initials flying around which can be confusing so here is a simple guide.



World Championships (WOC)
These are the pinnacle of international orienteering and are now annual, but alternate between Forest orienteering and Sprint Orienteering.
Countries can generally have between 1 and 3 competitors in each competitor
Last year Edinburgh hosted WOC24 consisting of Individual Sprint, Knock out Sprint and Sprint Relay; this year WOC25 will be in Finland, but will consist of Middle, Relay and Long forest races.

World Cup Races (WC)
The World Cup Races are a series of competitions each year in which orienteers score points with a winner at the end of the season. This time countries can have more competitors in each race (up to 9) so the competition can be even harder than at WOC
World Cup 1 consists of forest races and will be in Sweden in June
World Cup 2 is part of the European Championships in August
World Cup 3 is in Switzerland in September and consists of sprint races

European Championships (EOC)
This year these are in Belgium at the end of August and again are sprint based, with sprint relay, knock out sprint and individual. Again, countries can have up to 8 competitors, so competition is particularly tough.
You might be confused when looking at results from EOC to find non-Europeans such as Australians and New Zealanders competing, however as they also often count as a World Cup round other nations can compete but obviously are not eligible for the European medals.
If you have seen some of our top juniors racing, then you might want to watch the Junior international races:

European Youth Orienteering Championships (EYOC)
This is for M/W16 and 18 and will be in Czechia in July and is used as a useful stepping-stone for developing juniors.
Junior World Orienteering Championships (JWOC)
At the end of June in Italy. This is the pinnacle for junior orienteers M/W20 and below who compete in the full range of sprint and forest races.

How do you follow them? IOF live https://orienteering.sport/live/

This has links to live results and GPS tracking which are free to access or to TV broadcast with commentary in English for which you have to subscribe. (Note that after a time the TV broadcasts do become free to watch on IOF Youtube)
It can be very frustrating following the GPS tracking in real time, as the person you are following starts running round in circles, taking a bad route choice or even missing a control out, but there is something very reassuring in seeing that even the best orienteers can still make the most basic of errors!

Stockholm Indoor Cup 2025 by Simon Fitzpatrick

ABBA, IKEA, Volvo, Bjorn Borg, meatballs - all things you'd associate with Sweden. But did you know that since 2013 Stockholm has also hosted the world's largest indoor orienteering event with around 3,500 competitors including six intrepid Southdowners?



Mo, Sue, David, Simon, Penny & Jane

Turn back the clock to October 2023 where Sue did a presentation all about the event at a Southdowns training day and handed out the maps from that year. There were six floors and 20 controls…..BUT all of the controls were on floors 1 & 2. Corridors had one-way arrows in places, stairs had tape running down the middle and there were lots of pink lines blocking the obvious route choice. Quite clearly the other floors were there for a reason. This is orienteering but not as we know it!!

Mo decided she definitely needed to give it go so her, Sue & Jane went to the 2024 event which takes place on the first weekend in February. She came back home with rave reviews and utter frustration. Day one took just shy of two hours to get around a course that according to the control description was 1.2km and 3 controls were to blame for 1hr 25mins of her time! She faired better on Day two taking just 1hr 26mins to complete the course. I took a look at her maps and sat there for an hour trying to work out the route to just one control!

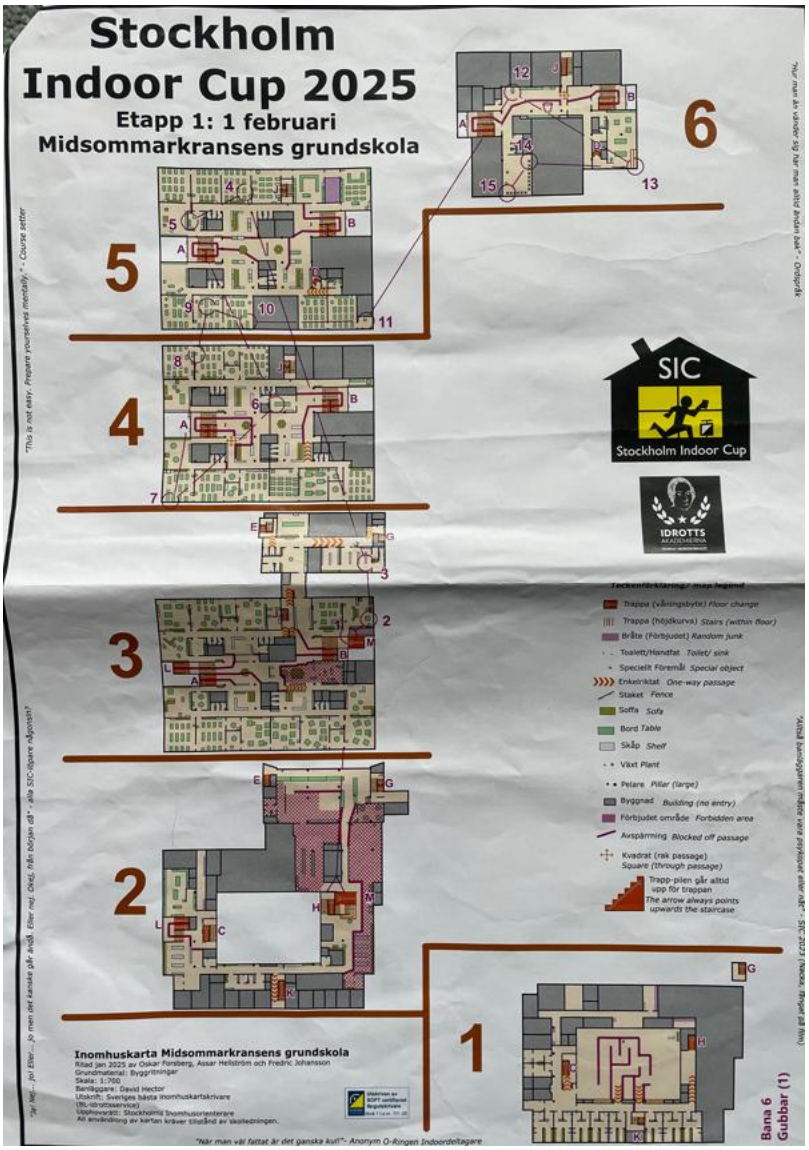
Fast forward to November 2024 and I wanted a piece of the action. The entry process is akin to getting Glastonbury tickets – sitting there with baited breath on multiple devices waiting for entries to open. But an hour or so later Mo had managed to get us both in. She had to go through the same process the next day for Day two. It's a painful process but well worth it.

A week before the event I dug out maps from 2023 & 2024 to get in some practice. The organisers had also very kindly shared the maps from when the event was last held in Midsommarkransens Gymnasium (aka school) in 2016. Again, I struggled to see the routes and was a little worried about what I had let myself in for. I'm not a great orienteer at the best of times! But I persevered and eventually got my head into the game. I managed to find some YouTube videos and even some notes from a competitor that had been in 2024. I was going all-in preparing for this event! However, the organiser's notes posted on the website 48hours before the event stated we had a 10-15mins walk to the start so all my homework studying the building might prove fruitless. I was resigned to spending a few hours out on the course with low expectations of even finishing but content knowing I might get a coffee & cinnamon bun at the aid station (yes there are refreshments half way round).

We all flew into Stockholm on Friday evening and had a good chat about the tactics for the race over some meatballs. The term split staircase had been mentioned and our expert (Sue) suggested simply going to the top or bottom if you were stuck. Also, if you can't work out a route just move to where you know you can go and see what happens. Both of these tips were to prove invaluable.

This year it was a straightforward 15mins metro journey from our hotel and a 10mins walk to the Gymnasium. We arrived with plenty of time to pay for our entry fees, take a look at the O-Shop and find ourselves a room for all of our stuff – bearing in mind its -6°C outside but quite balmy inside. Unfortunately, our start was a 10mins walk away and most of our warm layers had to be left in the room. They are a hardy bunch these Scandinavians!!

Not long now until our start times with the usual 4mins call up. Lined up in a corridor, I was as ready as I could be and excited to finally get going. There was a pre-start instruction that informed us of a curtain wall that could not be lifted so I wrote it down on my scrap of paper to ensure I would recognise it when I got there. Another great tip for first timers is to take a pen & paper so you can write down the route on the difficult legs.



3, 2, 1…..and I'm off. It's a two-sided A3 map and there are six floors. There are staircases to get between the different floors and all are marked with a letter (A through to M). I take a minute to get my bearings (not literally as a compass is not required – and probably not much help apart from the ones that have a magnifying glass!). Up M from floor two to three I find controls 1, 2 & 3 with no problems. However, we were informed that the hardest leg was 3-4. So, I held off punching 3 whilst I calculated the next leg as there was kudos to be had in getting the quickest time on the difficult leg (what was I thinking!!). Control 4 was on floor five and there was only one route out from 3 which took us down to floor two. From there I took L back up to floor three and wriggled through the corridors to J which took me up to floor six. Down B and I should be able to get through to 4. But there was a piece of tape in the way that I could not cross….aaaaarrrgggggghhhh….how can this be! On review I had somehow gone down two floors instead of one. Luckily it was a quick fix and I went back up a floor and found 4. It had only taken me 15mins and I thought wow that was quick! I found 5-12 without too many problems but number 13 took me 11mins. I saw Mo & Sue had already finished as I dibbed 16.

I found the rest of the controls without too much fuss (including the curtain wall ones I had written down earlier). I nervously downloaded, with fingers crossed I had not mispunched, and hooray I got the all-important OK status and a time of 60:08. Wowzers I wasn't expecting that. It was about half the time I'd anticipated and I had stopped for refreshments which disappointingly was squash & wafers (not coffee & buns). Serious stuff this! I had a chat with the others about their races and all three had done really well (Sue – 37:44, Mo – 41:07 & Jane – 44:17). Penny & David Marsh started later so we saw them start but not finish but found out afterwards they had struggled. The general consensus was that it was much easier than last year, so I was expecting a tougher day on Sunday.

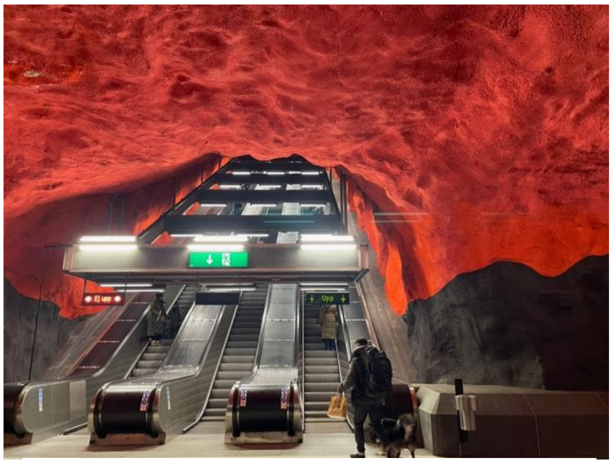


Day One - Contemplating stairs



Day Two - Through a window

We went our separate ways for the afternoon and agreed to meet up for dinner at 6pm. It was a glorious sunny, crisp day so Mo & I wandered around the old town (Gamla Stan) and rode the metro once the sun had set as some of the stations are tourist attractions in their own right. Over dinner we discussed the earlier race and contemplated the second race the next day agreeing it was likely to be tougher.



Solna Centrum Metro Station

After a hearty breakfast on Sunday we headed back to Misommarkransens ready for the second race. This was to be a tale of two halves as the front of the map was a shiny new building and the back was the original building complete with a dreaded spiral staircase. The first section went well in a time of 34:07. However, the second section saw some big time losses through poor route choices as I tried to navigate the spiral staircase to the top. The good news was that I'd completed every leg in under 10mins but my overall time was 73:26. Sue retained her title of overall Southdown winner placing 27th & 33rd overall. Again we went our separate ways in the afternoon with Mo & I wandering around the small island of Skeppsholmen in the biting cold wind before heading back to the airport for an evening flight home.

We'll almost certainly be back next year to challenge our 3-D maze solving abilities and I'd definitely recommend it as a great weekend away in a beautiful city.

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Culpeper's Dish by David Wilson



Did you go to Wessex OC's Regional Event at Affpuddle on February 2nd? The event publicity contained the following intriguing information:

The event will take place in the most intricate part in a compact area on a ridge of heathland and forest studded with more than sinkholes. There will be a feel of Scandinavian forests and Slovenian sinkholes about this one. These Dorset dolines (or sinkholes) are depressions formed by subsurface solution of chalk, covered by a thin cover of sand. They take the form of small, circular or elliptical depressions that have formed when the surface sediment has collapsed into hollows formed by the dissolution of the underlying chalk. Some are so large that they are 90 metres wide and up to 12 metres deep. However, most are only 10-20m wide and 4 metres deep. Most have trees in the bottom and a covering of leaf litter, but some are active.



A shake hole near Culpepers Dish

To a chemist there's nothing surprising about rainwater becoming sufficiently acid in its passage through sand to dissolve the alkaline chalk below. The mystery is why this particular ridge has so many, and such large ones, too. It certainly added extra interest to navigating!

(from https://www.wessex-oc.org/events/event/dorset-delight-affpuddle-tbc/).

One sinkhole, called Culpeper's Dish is so deep that mature trees growing in the bottom of it only just have their top branches level with the surface. The 'Culpeper' according to local legend was a Royalist who successfully hid from the Roundheads in it.
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A Canary Islands Epic
Velecky and Leitch's volcanic adventures on the GranGuanache
Part Two

We left our trip at the halfway point in terms of both number of days of riding and distance covered (4 days and about 400k). As we progressed from East to West from island to island, the terrain grew less rocky and barren, and more lush and tree covered – this should probably have been obvious to us, but the change was due to our increasing distance from the continent of Africa (it took a bike shop guy to point this out to us). So far, we have encountered spectacular and incredibly varied scenery, brutal climbs, ferry heartbreak, roosters with faulty body clocks, and we've eaten a lot of fish. Fatigue is accumulating, but the bikes and their riders are all in one piece, and our spirits are high. Fuerteventura almost broke us, but we survived its rocky embrace and attempts to suck every drop of moisture from our bodies. Would we also triumph over the beast of La Palma, the brooding Mordor / Mount Doom-like presence that increasingly tugged at our peace of mind, threatening to lure us to our destruction?

Kenny takes up the story…

D5 - 21/9/24: Gran Canaria to Tenerife
113km/70 miles
3,075m/10,089 feet climb
8h 10m moving time
12h 53m total time





The alarm goes off at 6:20am, knowing we have to be off at 7:30 to give us a fighting chance of catching the 12:30 ferry to Tenerife. We quickly discover that there's no cutlery or crockery, so we eat granola, milk and yogurt from paper coffee cups, using 2 wooden stirrers as chopsticks to shovel our breakfast down. The first improvisation of the day comes early!

It's a wonderful ride this morning. Still a fair amount of climb, but also a huge amount of descent, as we travel westward, mainly on deserted gravel roads, through steep pine forests. This afternoon's destination, Tenerife, comes into view, with the dominating shape of Mt Teide, the highest point in Spain, clearly visible. We'll get very close to that tomorrow.

All is going tickety boo until Al notices his back tyre is soft. After a few failed attempts at pumping it, we decide that we need to get cracking to have any chance of catching the ferry. Al's got an insert in his rear tyre - effectively a foam tube that means he can ride temporarily, even when the tyre itself has no air in it. He just needs to be a bit more careful, especially off-road and going round bends. I think this counts as the second major improvisation of the day!

As we ride, I'm convinced we'll miss the ferry. Then I'm quite hopeful. Then I think it's unlikely. And this we will/we won't continues most of the way to Agaete, where the ferry sails from. We can see the yellow ferry coming across the blue water as we make our painfully slow progress along the rocky coast. Will we make it?

Then we have a route choice master stroke…a decision to take a section of brand new road tunnel, rather than the mountain-hugging, hilly old road where our Garmins are directing us. We aren't sure if bikes are allowed…but there are no signs saying they aren't! So with improvisation no.3 and the benefit of a flat, fast 2km+ tunnel, we arrive at the ferry terminal at 12 noon, purchase tickets, and we make the 12:30 sailing 🎉. The boat is a bit late, which helps, and the ladies in the ticket office seem to actively want to help us make the

ferry, and pick up the pace to get us in the queue in good time – a somewhat different attitude from the one we encountered on Fuerteventura!

We've spent precisely 29 hours on Gran Canaria, and Tenerife, our 5th island of the trip, awaits us this afternoon. We have to store our bikes down on the car deck on these big ferries, so Al has another go at reinflating his tyre before we move upstairs, and we'll see how his tyre is doing when we get reunited with our bikes in Santa Cruz de Tenerife.
We're getting quite used to the Fred Olsen ferry experience by now - when we need to show passports, when to walk and when to ride our bikes near and in the boat, where bikes get stored onboard, and, most importantly, what's on the food and drinks menu.



Day 5: Welcome to Tenerife 🐝

Fully lunched up, we find our way out of Santa Cruz de Tenerife port, onto the promenade, and I immediately get stung by a wasp on my lip. Little b*****d 🐝 I'm almost finished my 3 year wasp sting desensitisation course, so I know I won't have a really bad reaction…but it still bloody hurts, I know it'll swell up, and I need to take antihistamines. I carry Piriton for this very situation, so I down a double dose to quickly ensure everything is under control. We find somewhere to stock up on water after a km or so, and I'm already looking like I've been given a good punch in the mouth!

Anyway, on we go - a flat coastal 8km or so, then a relentless road climb gaining 850m. Al's tyre situation is unchanged - he's riding on his insert - but he still disappears up the road in front of me and off into the distance. I'm finding this climb incredibly hard and just don't seem to have any oomph. I'm eating and drinking but this doesn't make a difference. Al waits near the top and then we soon come across a cafe where we stop for more food and drinks.

I know I have some accommodation admin to sort for the next few nights, but I just don't have the mental energy to face it, and remark that all I can think of is lying down and going to sleep. Then it dawns on me that the double dose of Piriton is the issue - doh! Piriton is great for insect bites…but its major side effect is daytime drowsiness, don't operate heavy machinery, etc. A double dose, followed by a 850m climb, isn't a great combination. The good news is my face is looking a bit less deformed.

The rest of the route is tough going. I gradually begin to feel better and stronger, but Al is moving in the other direction. He eventually has to give in with his tyre insert and give up on being tubeless – we have 4 tubes between us, and we stop to put one in his rear tyre. It's amazing that he's been able to ride so far today with just the insert and no air in his tyre. When we take off the tyre, the insert has almost completely disintegrated into flat mush.

It's dark when we get to our accommodation and it's been a very long day - the problems with a long ferry trip during the day, are the amount of cycling time that gets "lost", and the dissipation of any momentum generated from the morning. Having 7 ferry trips in 8 days creates a set of dynamics and consequences that are a lot harder than we anticipated.

However, when all's said and done, we are two privileged middle-aged, middle-class men on a nice cycling holiday. As we near our accommodation in the twilight, we encounter streams of very black Africans, mainly men, walking along the road in the same direction as us. As we crest a hill near the airport, it becomes clear why – we are very close to a big camp for migrants and refugees. Our media often gives the impression that the UK is the only country with a small boats problem, but the Canaries, being Spanish territories and therefore part of the EU, and so close to Africa, clearly have a significant issue of their own to manage.

Spirits are low (particularly Al's) – he's muttering glumly about needing a day off the bike and his back hurting, and we're both feeling a bit broken… but now is not the time to change plans or make decisions. Now is the time to pop out for a few beers and something to eat! 😊

D6 22/9/24: Tenerife South
98km/61 miles
2,182m/7,159 feet climb
5h 49m moving time
9h 25m total time



We're in fabulous accommodation - the room and facilities are great, and the breakfast is superb. The sun is shining, Mt Teide is looking resplendent, and there's even a hose for a much-needed washing of our bikes. The world is a much better place this morning.

Lots of climbing in the first half of today. We go up through pine forests on gravel and road to our high point of around 2,300m. We see lots of Sunday mountain bikers out early on, but as we climb, the sight of another non-motorised bikes becomes rarer and rarer. Surprising since Mt Teide, being at altitude, hosts many training camps for the professional road teams. Finally, we see a cyclist in front, and we're closing him down quickly. Al says that it looks like he's riding a Brompton…and sure enough, we pass the guy on his folding, small-wheeled, city bike. Very odd but he gets a big thumbs up from us!


Day 6: Ridey Teide (spot the paraglider)

The climb takes us from below the cloud, through it, and then above it, where we stay for several hours. Looking down on thick fluffy cloud, with Mt Teide high above in the distance, is quite magical. As we emerge from the cloud into the bright sunlight, we see quite a few paragliders launching themselves into the void and slowly disappearing from view. Rather them than us!

The descent off Teide takes us on a maze of forest roads through a National Park. It's exhilarating riding, high speed, and unfolds in a twisting, turning flow for mile after mile. Then we have another rare encounter with a bike, and meet Lukas, a 30-ish year old Swiss guy, who's deep in the forest, with his aluminium road bike and 23mm smooth road tyres (ours are 55-60mm wide and knobbly) 😳 Not surprisingly, he has had a couple of punctures! We help Lukas for 20 mins or so and patch up his tyres. Not only is he somewhere he shouldn't be with a bike like that, but he's not got the basic equipment to fix a puncture. He insists he knows how to get back on a tarmac road, so we wish him all the best and we head off.

Several miles of forest gravel follow, and then we are back in the cloud, with a 20 minute hike-a-bike into the mist, clambering down one side of a deep ravine and up the other, to join up two sets of forest roads. We then have several more miles of gravel before we hit a road, and almost immediately stop at a busy roadside restaurant for all sort of sugary delights - this is our first refuelling of the day. Several times during this last section, we mention Lukas and wonder whether he's actually going to make it out of the forest today.


Day 6: Lukas part 1

We stop for around 45 minutes, ride through the town, Vilaflor, that we were on the outskirts of, and then there's Lukas, at the side of the road, trying to fix another puncture! We stop and assist again…but it's a lost cause. It sounds like he's come down the same route as us with his road bike, he's just got here, and his tyres are beyond repair. He's staying 10km down the mountain and says he's going to ride home to his long-suffering wife and baby with a flat tyre, and that he'll sort out the damage tomorrow! We say our goodbyes again, and remark to each other that this is like our "David from Maine" LEJOG encounters all over again. Surely we won't see him again…?!

Leaving Lukas, we have 15 miles/24km downhill all the way to Los Cristianos. It's very fast with a great road surface, but windy and low visibility, with lots of hairpins. Even so, I comfortably set a 10 mile bike PB…even though I'm on my loaded-up MTB.

Courtesy of Lukas, we're now on the later ferry to La Palma tonight, arriving 11pm. However, it's not an issue as we've decided to invoke our contingency day tomorrow - a chance to recover, fix what needs fixing, and set ourselves up for our final two days of the GranGuanche on island no.6, La Palma. We are again reminded of the real world of economic deprivation and hardship as we watch long lines of migrants (again mainly very black African men with Red Cross blankets over their shoulders) being shepherded along the quay as we sip our beers waiting for our ferry. Apparently, the benign weather has led to arrivals soaring in recent days.

23/9/24: Rest day, La Palma

It's nice to have no need to be up and at it, after a number of days of relentless activity. Today is about getting our kit, bike and ourselves ready for a huge day out tomorrow.

When we arrived last night, disappointingly, but unsurprisingly, our food package hadn't made it. Today is Monday, so I hold out some hope that it might appear today…and sure enough, around lunchtime I get a message saying it has been signed for, downstairs. 🎉 We both wash our bikes in the shower in our hotel room (Al would like to point out that this was done consecutively), which involved holding the bike vertically on the back wheel with the front wheel resting against the wall, and using the shower head to clean the bike, while trying to keep the flappy nylon shower curtain in place to minimise the amount of water flooding all over the bathroom floor. Have we just invented a new cycling discipline?

Al has been sorting his rear tyre and is happy(ish) with the tube situation as-is. This, alongside our day food being sorted, means we don't have any shop visits to do, other than to get breakfast for tomorrow.

We have a lovely lazy day - nice lunch in one of the pretty squares, a wander round Santa Cruz, a few hours back at the hotel snoozing and writing up, and then out for a pizza in the evening.

We're all set for our planned 6:30am start tomorrow, for what will be our hardest day. 💪

D7 24/9/24 D7: La Palma North

121km/75 miles
4,182m/13,720 feet climb
10h 01m moving time
15h 30m total time
Start 6:48am, finish 10:18pm!!



We know we've got a huge day ahead, so we're off early, and the first hour is in the dark. The first (and only) refuelling stop before our big climb is in Puntallana, about 20km and 800m climb away on our route.

We see the sunrise in front of us as we ride NE, climbing up at first, and then dropping back down to the sea, moving through sprawling banana plantations, before rising back up again, on road, to the Puntallana Spar at 8:30am…and 2nd breakfast!



Day 7: Full gas at the top of the big climb on La Palma (Teide in the background across the ocean)

After this, it's a relentless climb to the high point of the day, mostly off road – 18k @ 8.2% gradient, climbing 1490m. However, unlike Gran Canaria, where the big climb had lots of very steep ramps and was generally in direct sun, this climb is in the shade, through lush forest, and is at a remarkable steady gradient. The climb takes us 3.5 hours and we

top out on road, at 2,288m, having come all the way up from sea-level. That's comfortably the biggest climb either of us have ever done on a bike.

As we stand taking photos, looking up to the observatories at Roque de los Muchachos, and down to the coast and ocean, far below, it dawns on me that one of the unique things about riding here is that you do go all the way from sea-level to summit. Elsewhere in Europe, it'll be from the valley floor to summit, and you rarely get the full Monty climb and descent that we're experiencing.

Back on the bikes and we're immediately off-road, descending steeply on switchbacks through more beautifully scented pine forest. A few stretches of road and some more climb, and we get to our only other food stop of the day at the quirky El Reyes restaurant at Roque del Faro.

The not so good news is that Al's back tyre has lost air, so he replaces the tube with a 2nd one, while we're at the stop. Through a combination of slow service and bike faffing, we're stopped for 1.5 hours so it's time for us to get moving. We still have 50km and 1,400m climb left in the day, but it is only 4:15pm, and we both quietly harbour hopes of finishing around sunset at 8pm.

20 mins later, and tube no.2 is flat. This is a little worrying now. We thoroughly check the tyre, rim tape and wheel to make sure we're not missing anything obvious, and then fit one of my 2 spare tubes. Thinking that the previous tube had suffered from a pinch puncture (when the tyre gets fully depressed and the tube gets pinched on the wheel rim, which can happen on rocky ground if the tyre is not inflated enough), we inflate this one pretty hard. 5 mins later, it's flat again. 😱

This is now a big problem, mainly because we don't understand why it's happening. Al goes back to the first tube he replaced at El Reyes, as that seemed to only have a slow puncture, whereas the other 2 are completely flat. His hope is that, with a few stops for pumping, he can nurse this tyre to our overnight stop. We have one more undamaged tube and repair kit for the punctured ones…but we don't want to go down either of these routes just yet.



Day 7: Sun sets on the Queen Stage with 1 puncture still to come

The tyre holds as we head south, still well above 1,000m, hugging the mountainside, with the track rising and falling with the shape of the land. We're in vineyard territory now, way above the banana plantations below. We're making good progress, until just before sunset and just before we start to descend, when Al's tyre is flat again.

We decide that we need to use the final new tube, pump it hard, and Al has to nurse the bike down putting as much of his weight as possible onto the front of the bike until we hit road. It's now dark, so we have our lights on, and Al's Garmin has packed in, so I'm leading us off the mountain. It's a far from ideal situation, but there's no panic and we're safe - we can stop and repair the damaged tubes if we have to, it's warm, and we have plenty of unused warmer clothing and 2 bivvy bags, for the worst case scenario. The nature of a trip like this is that unplanned stuff will happen, and you have to be able to deal with it, stay safe, and hopefully find a way to move on.

It's a twisty, turny, very steep descent to the first road, which we negotiate safely. The back tyre has held up, and we're confident it'll be fine until our overnight stop, as we're now on road all the way. We make contact with our respective wives Julie and Emma, so they know not to worry, and then it's an unpleasant descent in the dark down quite a busy road to the seaside, and then a slog back up to Tazacorte, where our apartment is.

While all this has been going on, I've been exchanging messages with Carmen, the woman who is to going to meet us at the apartment, and who has been wanting to know our arrival time! 🤷 My phone dies as we get to Tazacorte, but Al has the name of the place and looks up directions on Booking.com. What we quickly realise is that Tazacorte is built on a steep hillside, and is full of steps, alleyways and dead ends. Al tries to navigate using Booking.com/Apple Maps, and we have several aborted attempts at getting close to our destination,

always ending in no way through. It's basically like the worst urban night-O event you can imagine, with an inaccurate map you can't rotate, carrying a heavy bike up steps in state of exhaustion, running the gauntlet of irate locals telling you to go back the way you came, and avoiding dogs that want to kill you! We know we're getting close and we ask someone at a window, and then we find Carmen, who has heard us asking for directions. What a lot of faffing at the end of a long bike ride! We reckon we lost around 2 hours messing about with the tyre, and then a good 30 mins trying to find the apartment. We probably would have made it in daylight without the puncture problems…but we didn't!

For once we're too late for food, but there's a bottle of wine in the apartment…so we share that for our evening meal! Epic day, we're both fine, and we'll see what tomorrow brings and what we can do with Al's rear tyre.

D8 25/9/24: La Palma South
39km/24 miles
1,444m/4,738 feet climb
3h 27m moving time
6h 01m total time



Despite our very late arrival last night, we're out as planned at 8:30am. There's a bike shop in Los Llanos (on our route) that opens at 9am, so we're heading there. Success! The guy who runs the shop is happy to covert Al's rear wheel back to tubeless, and also ends up replacing the rim tape, valve and tyre and adding sealant…meanwhile we go to a cafe up the street for breakfast, and by the time we've finished, the bike's sorted, and we're on our way.

It's a relentless, rampy climb this morning, through banana plantations and then vineyards, before these give way to pine forest, and the ground gets more and more volcanic. The steep sections are punishing, but doable…however, when the uphill track turns to soft back volcanic sand, we have to push – not an enjoyable experience, as within a few steps our shoes are full of black grit. Although unpleasant to traverse, the landscape is amazingly spectacular – black ash and sand from the 2021 eruption of Cumbre Vieja covers every centimetre of the ground, resulting in an other-worldly, almost lunar, landscape.



Day 8: Ashes to ashes

Despite a rejuvenated bike, Al is feeling the effects of the previous days exertions, and is not on a good day. We have a decision to make near our highest point, and we decide to forego a final 15-20 mile loop to the south of the island. We have to catch the 5pm ferry from Santa Cruz to Tenerife (the only other option is the 3am one 😳), and we don't how long the loop will take, given the ash-covered trails we've experienced so far. We're both happy with this decision - we've already managed more today than we thought we would, given yesterday's punctures and late night finish.

From here we climb a little higher on road and then rejoin our original route for the long and fast descent to Santa Cruz and a couple of celebratory beers. 🍻



Day 8: Job done ✅



The MTB GranGuanche has been a tough and amazing experience - 785km/488 miles cycled with 18,800m / 61,680 feet of climb, 8 days on a bike, 7 ferries, and 6 beautiful, contrasting islands.

Big thanks to my cycling buddy, Al - we pushed, challenged, cajoled, laughed at, empathised with, and above all, supported each other throughout. This was not a route to be undertaken alone - as well as making it much harder, the route is too remote to be by yourself if something goes wrong…as demonstrated on D7! We trusted each other's capabilities and decision making, and neither of us got stressed when the curve balls inevitably got thrown.

Loved it!

Now, what are we going to do in 2025… 🤔

Alan concludes: It certainly was an epic, and I think took our experience of bike packing to another level because of how different the landscape was, how remote some of the terrain was, and how hard the climbing was. Big thanks to Kenny, logistics wizard extraordinaire… we are well matched in our physical abilities, albeit with our different physiologies (20kg weight difference) providing endless interest and amusement / frustration as we negotiate different gradients and terrains (a 9% gradient is when Kenny's lighter weight becomes an advantage, and there were plenty of slopes steeper than that on this trip!). We are also well matched in our enthusiasm for this kind of challenge, and it's testament to the partnership working well on and off the bike that we're both considering what's next.

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Photo: Rob Lines

It's always wonderful to see the next generation of orienteers at our local events!

I'm forever on the lookout for fun photos and articles – the deadline for the next edition (June 2025) of Southdowner is 16th May

Send your contributions to editor@southdowns-orienteers.org.uk

Thank you!
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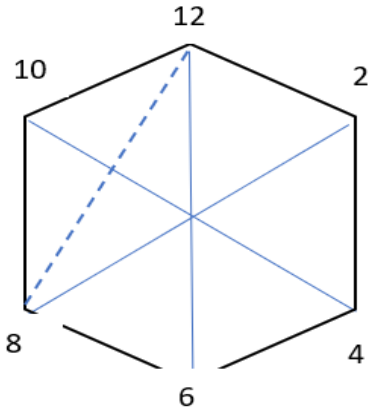
Let's get SO Quizzical by David Wilson

Circle Wood - Who had the longest course and how long was it?
Winner pulled from all the correct entries – Chris Hooker (congratulations Chris, please contact Neil for a free run at a SOG of your choice)

Answer to December's question:

The trick is to forget the circle and to realise that the orienteers are running between the vertices of a regular hexagon, and that regular hexagons can be seen as a series of equilateral triangles. In this case, each triangle has a side 1 km long which corresponds to the diameter of the wood being 2km.

The distance between an adjacent pair of clock points 12, 2, 4, … is the side of one of these triangles or 1km. The distance between diametrically opposite clock points is twice this at 2km. The distance between two non-adjacent clock points (the pecked line) is found by taking each of the smaller triangles as a 90-60-30 triangle, with the ratio of sides 1: 1/2: $\sqrt{3}/2$ (or if you prefer, the latter is 1 x sin 60^0. The whole length of the pecked line at double this is therefore $\sqrt{3}$ or 1.732.



Alf's course (12 – 2 – 8 – 12 o'clock) = 1 + 2 + 1.732 = 4.732 km
Betty's course (12 – 6 – 8 – 10 – 12) = 2 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 5.0 km
Sammy's course (12 – 4 – 8 – 12) = 1.732 + 1.732 + 1.732 = 5.196 km

Thus Sammy had the longest course

This editions Quiz: OVER THE HILL? By David Wilson

Alf, Betty and Sammy, our friends from the Mathematicians Orienteering Klub (MOK) were chatting over the classic O-ring problem – go over the hill or round the bottom of it?

"First", said Betty, "you need some figures for how fast you can run uphill and downhill. Suppose we take a mathematically ideal hill, 0.5 km up to the ridge and 0.5 km down again."

"Fine", agreed Alf, "I reckon I can manage 6 km/hr going up and 12 km/hr coming down. That's an average of 9 km/hr over a distance of 1km, a nice easy calculation, so it would take 1/9 of an hour or 6⅔ minutes to complete".

"But I think in minutes per km", replied Sammy, "those are easier to match up with O-ring courses specified in km. So that's 10 min/km going up and 5 min/km coming down, or 5 minutes plus 2½ minutes, total 7½ minutes."

"Hang on", queried Betty, "you can't have different running times just because you are measuring your speed in different units!"

Whose calculation was correct, Alf or Sammy, and why?

Please send your answer to editor@southdownsorienteers.org.uk by 17th May. Remember the great prize is free entry to a SOG of your choice.

Major Events

Looking ahead: This month we have the British Middle Champs at Holmbush and Buchan Country Park, followed by our SO National Event at Worthlodge. Then it's the JK to look forward to over Easter. The JK is a fantastic combination of three days of racing, all of which are World Ranking Events, culminating in the Relays on Day 4.

Additionally, Days 1 and 2 will see TrailO competitions taking place within a short distance of the main Arenas. JK25 will also feature a range of activities open to both competitors and spectators, including biathlon orienteering and a climbing wall! All this excitement takes place around Sheffield with the relays a little further North.

On 10th and 11th May the British Long Distance and Relay championships take place in the Lake District and at the end of May there's the great SinS – Springtime in Shropshire, always a wonderful way to spend a Bank Holiday.

Club nights

At last, the evenings are getting lighter which means our Club Night runs will shortly move from the streets out into our beautiful Sussex countryside. Neil and Euan come up with routes that take us on super adventures. Each evening starts at 6.30pm and lasts between 60 – 90 minutes. There's always a shorter route for those who prefer to walk. Do think about joining an event or two. Event details are on the website, usually a week in advance.

£1 gets you a map, or you can print your own from the Club Night section of the website. You can use MapRun to log your run - details of how to download the app can be found here: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=au.com.fne.maprun7&hl=en_GB

SouthEast League (SEL)

This annual competition between the member clubs of the SEOA runs over the autumn/winter/spring season. The league is based on events approved by SEOA and individual runners score points for their runs.

Limpsfield Chart 19th January

This event:-

Position	Club	League Score	Match Points
DIVISION 1			
1	SO	2155	6
2	SAX	1809	5
3	DFOK	1110	4
4	HH	233	3
5	SN	223	2
6	GO	150	1

Total after 5 events:-

Position	Club	Match Points	Position change
DIVISION 1			
1	SO	28	-
2	HH	19	-
=3	SN	18	⇓1
=3	DFOK	18	⇑1
5	SAX	15	-
6	GO	7	-

COMMENTS:-

In the 1st Division SO won again with SAX in a strong second place.
MV won in the second division ending SLOWs unbroken run of wins this season.
Only 4 people exceeded their target speed possibly due to the hilly terrain.

The top 5 scorers were:-

Jill Blount	SO	W65	112.3
Sarah Howes	SAX	W65	110.2
Neil Crickmore	SO	M60	104.9
Simon Errington	HH	M60	102.0
Ian Ditchfield	MV	M65	99.4

Philip Gristwood
SEL Co-ordinator

Blackheath 2nd February

This event:-

Position	Club	League Score	Match Points
DIVISION 1			
1	SN	2985	6
2	SO	2782	5
3	SAX	1414	4
4	GO	1299	3
5	HH	1293	2
6	DFOK	1005	1

Total after 6 events:-

Position	Club	Match Points	Position change
DIVISION 1			
1	SO	33	-
2	SN	24	⇑1
3	HH	21	⇓1
=4	DFOK	19	⇓1
=4	SAX	19	⇑1
6	GO	10	-

COMMENTS:-

SN triumphed in the 1st Division with SO not far behind. SO well ahead overall.
SLOW won again in the second division cemeting their lead.
40 people exceded their target speed.

The top 5 scorers were:-

Sarah Rollins	SN	W45	127.2
Melanie Slade	SN	W55	121.2
Kenny Leitch	SO	M60	115.8
Thomas Rollins	SN	M18	115.5
Stephen Keyes	SN	M60	114.6

Philip Gristwood
SEL Co-ordinator

Balcombe (Simon Greenwood Memorial event)

This event:-

Position	Club	League Score	Match Points
DIVISION 1			
1	SO	3146	6
2	DFOK	1427	5
3	HH	779	4
4	SAX	707	3
5	SN	529	2
6	GO	384	1

Total after 7 events:-

Position	Club	Match Points	Position change
DIVISION 1			
1	SO	39	-
2	SN	26	-
3	HH	25	-
4	DFOK	24	-
5	SAX	22	⇓1
6	GO	11	-

COMMENTS:-

SO won in the 1st Division by a large margin.

At their home event MV just beat SLOW in the second division.

9 people exceded their target speed.

The top 5 scorers were:-

Jill Blount	SO	W65	123.8
Sarah Howes	SAX	W65	120.3
Neil Crickmore	SO	M60	112.9
Christine Jepson	SO	W65	109.1
Jasmine Bennett	SO	W70	108.6

Philip Gristwood SEL Co-ordinator

Two more events to go: 2nd March at Ashridge and 16th March at Worthlodge

More information can be found here: https://www.seoa.org.uk/info/orienteering-competitions-within-seoa/south-east-league

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WHEN THERE'S NO LOCAL EVENTS …. By David Wilson



… what's an orienteer to do on a beautiful sunny day? If there's snow on the Downs, there's no question but to go and enjoy the scenery. Global warming seems to have made snow events in the south rarer so it was a matter of grabbing the chance before the snow melted. I have seen a 19th century Guide to Chichester, though, which claimed that Chichester was the least snowy place in Britain, protected from northerly winds by the Downs and warmed by the influence of the sea to the south.

Us weather watchers had been following the progress of Arctic air and snow down from Scotland and were not surprised when it petered out somewhere near the M4, often referred to unofficially as the M4 Snow Barrier. However, the cold air continued southwards and in the end had a tussle with mild air over France, the classic situation for Sussex to get a snowfall.



I heard that Brighton and Lewes were badly affected as the gritters waited just a little too long before the rain turned to snow. Here, further west, it was no more than sleet on the coast, but the lower temperatures on the top of the Downs meant that there was a good covering there.

Butser Hill, just over the Hampshire border, is the highest point on the South Downs at 270m, so it was the place of choice even after a slow thaw had been taking place for a couple of days. And, indeed there was a cm or two up there, enough for kids to go sledging and even build a couple of snowmen. The snowline on Saturday 11th was about 220m on south-facing slopes and about 170m on north-facing ones.



So, once round Butser Hill summit, and then to make a decent walk of it, down to Meon Springs, the source of the River Meon. You never know what you might find – ponies, owls, even a couple of llamas who, alas! were not feeling photogenic.
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Events at a glance, March to June
(check club websites to confirm details and for more information)

Date	Event Type	Location	Organising Club
Sat 1 March	SOG	Waterhall	SO
Sun 2 March	**National/SEIL/SEL**	**Ashridge East**	**HH**
Sat 8 March	SOG	Selhurst	SO
Sat 8 March	**Regional/SEOUL/UKOL/UKUL Sarum Saunter Day 1 Urban**	**Gillingham**	**WIM**
Sun 9 March	**National/UKOL Sarum Saunter & Southern Champs**	**Great Ridge**	**SARUM**
Sat 15 March	**Major/UKOL British Middle Champs**	**Holmbush & Buchan Country Park**	**MVOC**
Sun 16 March	**National/SEIL/SEL/UKOL**	**Worthlodge Forest**	**SO**
Sat 22 March	**Regional/SEOUL/UKUL Icenian Weekend Day 1 Sprints**	**Trumpington**	**CUOC**
Sun 23 March	**Regional Icenian Weekend Day 2 Urban**	**Huntington**	**CUOC**
Sun 23 March	**Regional incorporating Yvette Baker**	**Knole Park**	**SAX**
Sat 29 March	SOG	Great Walstead	SO
Sun 30 March	**Regional OK Nuts**	**Pasture Wood and Leith Hill**	**SLOW**
Sat 5 April	SOG	Eartham	SO
Sun 6 April	**National Chiltern Challenge**	**Hambleden**	**TVOC**
Sat 12 April	SOG	Friston Forest West	SO
Sun 13 April	**Regional**	**Belhus Woods**	**HAVOC**
Friday 18 April	**Major/UKOL Day 1 JK**	**Sheffield City Sprint**	
Saturday 19 April	**Major/UKOL Day 2 JK Middle Distance**	**Tankersley**	
Sunday 20 April	**Major/UKOL Day 3 Long Distance**	**Warncliffe Woods**	
Monday 21 April	**Major Day 4 Relays**	**Middleton Park**	
Sunday 27 April	**Regional/SEOUL Urban**	**Warminster**	**SARUM**
Sunday 27 April	**Regional**	**Houghton Forest**	**SO**
Saturday 3 May	SOG	Oldhouse Warren and Cowdray Forest	SO
Sunday 4 May	**Regional**	**Ightham**	**SAX**
Saturday 10 May	**Major UKOL British Long Distance Champs**	**Grizedale Forest**	
Sunday 11 May	**Major British Relay Champs**	**Bigland**	
Saturday 17 May	SOG	Selhurst Park	SO
Sunday 18 May	**Regional**	**Bloom Wood**	**BKO**
Sunday 18 May	**Regional/SEOUL**	**Maldon**	**SOS**
Saturday 24 May	**National Springtime in Shropshire (SinS) Day 1**	**Ludlow Evening Urban**	
Sunday 25 May	**National SinS Day 2**	**Rorrington & Stapeley**	
Monday 26 May	**National SinS Day 3**	**Titterstone Clee**	

SOUTHDOWNER is the official journal of Southdowns Orienteering Club.
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