The Southdowner

December 2025 No. 215



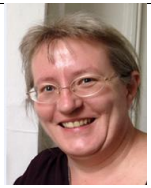
- Ready, Set, Race! The Brighton City Race Weekend of Events
- Mapping with Lidar: From Data to Map
- Defending the Forest: The Battle against the Eight-Toothed Beetle



www.southdowns-orienteers.org.uk

Southdowns Orienteers

Rogues Gallery - Know Your Club Representatives

			
Chairman **Alan Williamson** **chair@southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**Treasurer** **Ian Curtis** **treasurer@southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**Secretary** **Clive Hawkes** **Secretary@southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**Club Captain** **Neil Crickmore** **captain@ southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**
			
Membership Secretary **Samantha Gibson** **membership@ southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**Safety Officer** **Karen Ashworth** **safety@southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**Junior Team Manager & Web Manager** **Anna Chapman** **juniorteam@southdowns-orienteers.org.uk** **webmanager@ southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**Fixtures Secretary** **Steve Jarvis** **fixtures@ southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**
			
Map Printing **Neil Crickmore** **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**
			
Junior Team Assistant **Bea Waters** **juniordev@ southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**Publicity (Web Content)** **David Marsh** **webeditor@ southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**SO Clothing** **Ian Curtis** **kit@southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**	**Welfare Officer** **Clare Lines** **welfare@ southdowns-orienteers.org.uk**

Chairman's Chat - Alan Williamson



I always particularly look forward to orienteering in the Autumn. Not only because of the richness of the colours in the woods, but the happy memories evoked. Like many orienteers of my generation, perhaps, I took up the sport at university. There I encountered like-minded people and was soon drawn in. The University's Athletic Union subsidised mini-bus hire, so we were able to travel to some fairly distant events, as well as (relatively few) more local ones. The annual November Classic, organised by Southampton Orienteering Club in the New Forest, was always a highlight. Perhaps you went to Abbot's Wood earlier this Autumn? We were particularly lucky with the weather and Alan Velecky provided us with some challenging courses. By the time you read this, we will also have had the opportunity to visit Slindon and Worth Lodge. Fingers crossed for good weather!

You will no doubt read of the successes of some of our younger members elsewhere in this edition of The Southdowner. The Junior Squad has had some impressive results. We are lucky to have so many adult members who give so freely of their time to support them.

Editorial – Jane Lambert

Orienteering stands out as a truly unique sport, bringing together people of every age, background, and ability. Whether you find yourself navigating through dense forest, traversing open moorland, competing in an urban event, or taking part in a nighttime challenge, you are part of a wonderful community. Our sport fosters a strong sense of camaraderie, where great friendships are formed and encouragement is always at hand.

One of the most rewarding aspects of orienteering is the opportunity it offers to explore places you might never have considered visiting, often uncovering delightful surprises along the way. Personally, I look forward to returning to Dartmoor to further explore its spectacular landscapes, hopefully in better weather than we faced during the recent Caddihoe event.

Many club members embarked on a journey to Shetland to participate in the Coasts and Islands events. The photographs shared by those who attended showcased not only beautiful weather but also scenery perfectly suited to orienteering. Might anyone have an article lurking around??? On that note, I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed such excellent content to our Southdowner publication throughout the past year. Your efforts have made the publication both interesting and informative, and I am sure I speak for all when I say how much they have been appreciated.

Special end of year thanks must also go to the dedicated committee members and volunteers whose hard work and commitment make it possible for our events to take place. You truly are the stars of the year!

As 2025 draws to a close, I hope you have all enjoyed a fantastic year of orienteering, with few—if any—injuries, and that you can reflect on your achievements with pride and satisfaction. Some of you will be moving up a class in 2026, so I wish you the best of luck, along with good wishes to everyone for another successful and enjoyable year ahead.
Safe running to all!

Jane

Committee Chat – update from behind the scenes

Did you enjoy the recent social event at The Missing Link Brewery, or Ben's Fun Quiz after the Park-O at Oaklands Park? Would you like to have more Social Events?
We are still searching for a Social Secretary……. Please contact one of the Committee Members to volunteer or for more information – this could be a shared and very fun role!

Welcome to our New Members



Samantha Gibson – Club Membership Secretary.

A HUGE and very WARM welcome to all our new club members who have joined/re-joined since September 2025

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!

Kristel Haines	Juan Antonio Molina Dima	Alejandra Teodosio Rodriguez
Phil Surley	Miriam Molina Dima	Zavier Patel

Samantha would like to remind all members it is that time of the year to renew your Southdowns Orienteers membership for 2026 online at www.britishorienteering.org.uk

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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Christmas Dinner 2002 – how many members can you name??

(photo courtesy of Robin Smith)





If you fancy organising some fun events such as this, remember we still have a vacancy for a Social Secretary. See page 20 to discover the fun we enjoyed at The Missing Link Brewery in early November.

Know your club member – Vince Joyce

(M70 rebuilt and running better than ever! – Ed)

How and when did you get into orienteering:

My first orienteering event was I believe a Saxons event at Stanmer Park in December 1976, a 'come and try it' event which was advertised in the local paper. I really enjoyed it and I think I was hooked straight away as I then went to the first SO event again in Stanmer, followed by events at Northpark Woods (part of Parham) and Southwick Hill. By now I had joined Southdowns and was looking to travel further afield and set my sights on the first 'Scottish 6 days'.



Vince on top of the Eiger

Do you take part in any other sports/activities:

I was playing football when I did my first event at Stanmer and carried on playing for a few years until it became difficult to do both football and orienteering every weekend. So from then on it was orienteering and mountain marathons until my ankles started to become painful when I ran due to arthritis. In 2009 I made the decision to find other activities which didn't involve running. I had always wanted to ski and also to do some climbing so now was the time to start. I took to both sports very quickly and I have climbed many of the major peaks in the Alps and my rock climbing log book includes many classic routes around Chamonix as well the Peak District, Cornwall, Spain, Greece, Slovenia, Italy and Croatia. The highlight of my skiing was the Haute Route from Chamonix to Zermatt. Since returning to orienteering in 2022 I have retired from climbing but still enjoy skiing.

What are your most special achievements/memorable moments:

By 1987 I was running elite courses and getting some good results. This was noticed by Frank Martindale who was a member of Southdowns and who also had connections with the Irish national orienteering team. As I was eligible to run for Ireland he suggested going to the Irish Champs which I did and placed second. I ran in a couple of Home Internationals and a World Cup race for Ireland but missed out on a place in the team for the 1989 World Championships .

Being part of an international team gave me the incentive to 'up my game' and domestic success was soon to follow, first a convincing overall win at the Scottish 6-days in 1989 taking 1st place on the first 4 days.

My first British Nights Trophy came in 1995 at Blackwood near Basingstoke. My second BNC trophy came in 1999, probably my most satisfying win due to the complexity of the terrain of Penhale Sands. I topped it off the following day with a win in the Badge event on the same area.

My results had also caught the attention of the England Veteran Home International selectors and I was asked to 'change sides' which I did without hesitation. Thankfully I didn't let them down and helped England to an overall win in the Derbyshire Peak District in 1997 and again in South Wales in 2006.

I was part of the winning SO M35 team at the British Relays in 1989 with Andy Parkinson and John Rix.

My only win at the British Champs came in 2001 on the sand dunes at Newborough on Anglesey.

In 2004 I had my best result to date in the World Masters in Italy coming 8th. Later the same year I won a National Event on Holme Fell in the Lake District, considered to be one of the best areas in the country. In 2005 it all came together at the World Masters Games in Canada where I came away with the silver medal.

When it comes to memorable moments it's hard to beat the Slovenia Open 2007 where I did the M45 2-man (or woman) relay with my partner Christine Jepson and we won by over 30 minutes! What made it even more memorable was that there were very few foreign competitors and they treated us like celebrities!

After an absence of 12 years from the sport I made a come back in 2022 following two ankle replacement operations. At first just walking around the courses then as I learned how to run again I was surprised how quickly I started to get good results. I was back on the sand dunes at Braunton Burrows winning M70 at the Caddihoe Chase in 2024.

I am lucky to have had some success at my sport which I really enjoy but it's the friends that I have made along the way that have made it so much more. Karrimor partners, team members and club members that have made my journey a real pleasure. And of course I met my long term partner at orienteering and we have shared so many wonderful experiences at home and abroad. Chris knows well why there is another reason why Penhale Sands is my favourite area...

What is your favorite type of orienteering/favorite area:
Any area with good contour detail like Penhale Sands, Newborough, Braunton Burrows and Holme Fell and doing them in the dark makes for an even better challenge.



Do you have a pre-race procedure:
I try to drink plenty of water before I run to avoid the risk of dehydration which can lead to a lack of concentration.

What advice would you give to newcomers:
Go to the SO Club coaching sessions and read as much as you can about techniques to improve your navigation. Careful map reading is the key to success.

Which skills would you advise a regular orienteer to work on:
No matter how long you have been orienteering it is the basic skills that need to be used: careful map reading, accurate bearings, good attack points and catching features.

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Get your orders in now for a smart new Club Top!

Ian, our Kit Officer, offers SO vests and singlets (£18 each), mesh T-shirts (£25), and a limited number of Club jackets (£38) and long-sleeved tops (£28).



Regular T-shirts (£25) are available in Large and XL for both men's and women's cuts (Ian suggests choosing one size up). He can bring items to events for you to try (pre-run) before buying. Child sizes (140 and 150) are also available as an alternative to the Junior Squad design.

Ian intends to place a new order for the limited items early next year based on demand—contact him soon if interested, as prices may rise with future orders.

Please get in touch with Ian at kit@southdowns-orienteers.org.uk if you are interested or would like more information.
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This year's Brighton City Race weekend will be bigger and better than ever!



- 3 national ranking events
- 2 newly drawn (and one updated) maps
- 1 spectacular night out in Brighton
- All events easily accessible by public transport

The 2025 Brighton City Race is a National Event which means there will be courses for all ages, abilities and levels of fitness. It will also be the final round of the UK Urban League - which should increase the fun by attracting runners from clubs across the country.



Assembly will be at the Brighthelm Centre; a new location for the race in central Brighton. It's a larger venue than the usual one, with better facilities and is just a 2-minute walk south from Brighton Station.

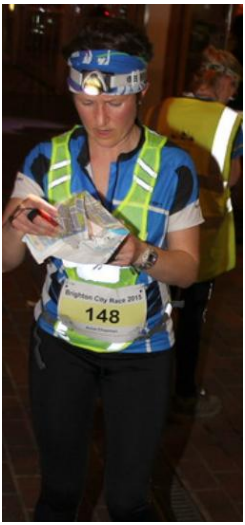
The weekend of 20-21 December 2025 kicks off Saturday lunchtime with a **Sprint race in Preston Park**, **Brighton. Starts from 12:00 – 13:30**. Participants can then head into the city for a bit of Christmas shopping or refreshments before...

..... the **City Race with starts from 17:30 – 18:30**. Prize giving at 20.00.

On Sunday morning, the competition moves to Stanmer Park, Brighton for a **Middle Distance race with the start block initially 11:00 – 12:00.**



This year's Brighton City Race is a one-off special edition to tie in with the UK Urban League. Starts will be at 1-minute intervals rather than the traditional mass start. The atmosphere though will be just as festive with even more runners out and about in the Laines.



Planners Neil Crickmore, Alan Velecky and Edward Lines are now all on board. The 3 former British and JK Champions have more than 100 years of orienteering experience between them, so we're set for a great weekend of top-quality orienteering.

Brighton is packed with attractions, so how will you spend your free time: the Brighton Pavilion; the i360; the world's oldest aquarium; or Christmas shopping and meatballs in the new city centre IKEA?

Register your place on RaceSignUp NOW!

Know Your Map, by Chris Hooker
Part 6
Mapping Southwick Hill

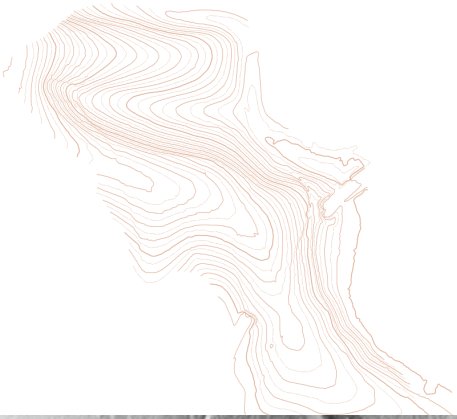


Southwick Hill was quite a challenging area to map due to all the thickets present. There were a lot of decisions to be made about what to map and how to map it to produce a clear and easy to interpret map. I thought I'd take you through the process of how I produced the map.

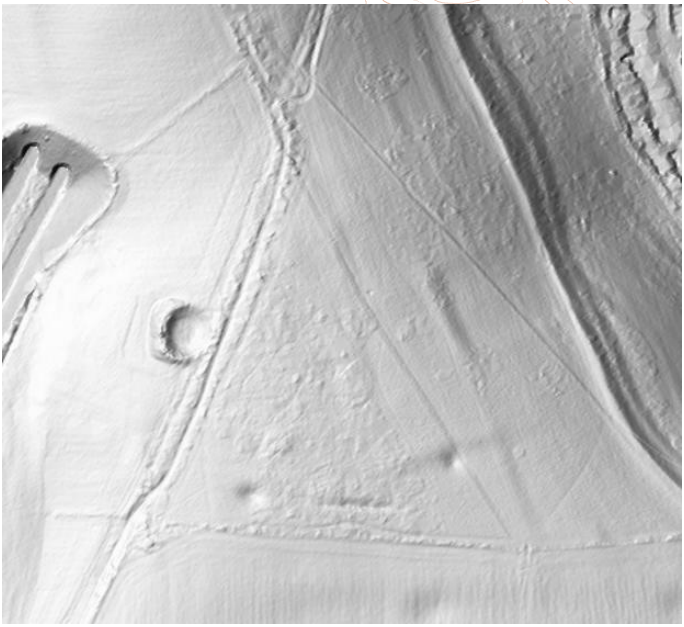
Data Collection

There was plenty of data available, so I grabbed an old map, a satellite picture, and lidar data which I then ran through our software to produce contours and some hill shading images. The following show what I started with.

i) 5m contours (with 2.5m form lines) generated from lidar data



ii) Surface hill shading which is a bit like a monochrome satellite image



iii) Terrain hill shading, which removes buildings, vegetation and anything placed on the ground to show the shape of the ground. Depressions, gullies, earth banks and well-established paths show clearly, as does the Southwick tunnel.



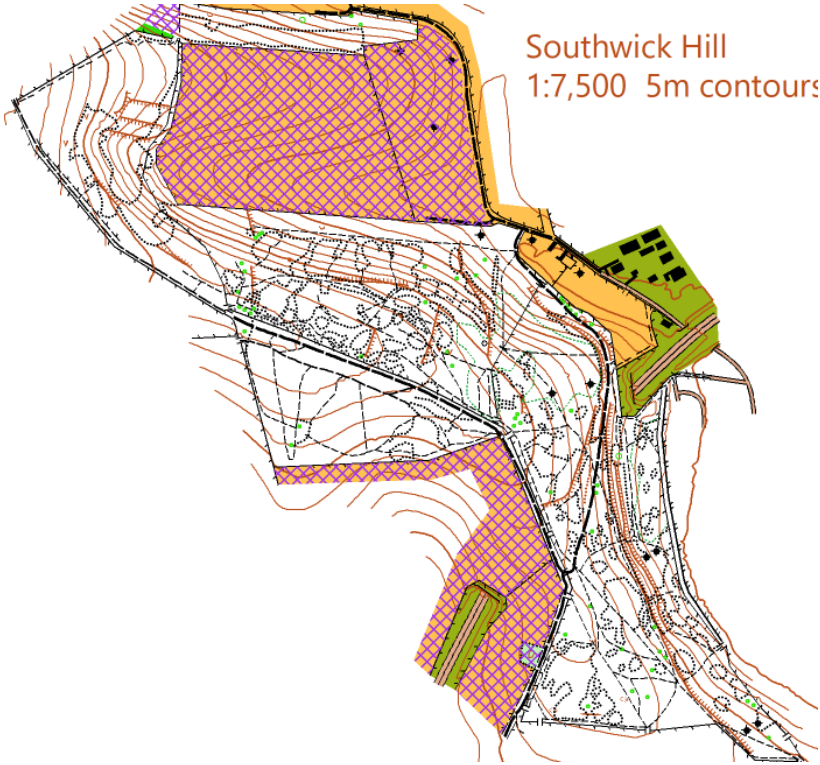
iv) A satellite image of the area



Drawing the Base Map

I then loaded all this into the OCAD map drawing software. They sat on top of each other, although the satellite picture had to wait until I'd drawn in some obvious features such as paths, fences and pylons, giving me something to line the image up with.

Then followed 7 hours of analysis and drawing to generate my base map. I started with the boundary before filling in the paths, pylons, buildings, fields and thickets using the hill shading images. I also used these to find other features such as depressions, gullies and earth banks, etc. Then I overlaid the satellite image to see if I could find any other obvious features, which turned out to be a few more paths and some thickets. The following image shows what I ended up with which was now starting to look like an orienteering map. It would be possible to orienteer using this map and would make a fun evening event! I say this with confidence because I had to go out there and identify all the features during the field surveys. I'm always surprised and amazed when I go out with a new base map and find that it makes sense!
Southwick Hill base map with form lines removed



The Field surveys

Then followed the meaty part of the whole process, the field surveys. These were done with 1:5000 maps. (The regulations stipulate the scale at which surveying can be done at and state that if you can't map something clearly at that scale then don't map it. That's when you have to figure out how best it can be shown.)

My first survey was of the northern part before working my way round the map. Whilst out I marked everything that I saw in pencil on my copy of the map. I had some codes too so that I could identify the features later. I did try working in colour once but found it too faffy so black and white it is! I also don't use any satellite tracking for features as I don't trust my watch sufficiently for that (I know a lot of other mappers are happy to use satellite tracking, but I'll probably remain 'old school' as I know it works well enough, and I trust it).

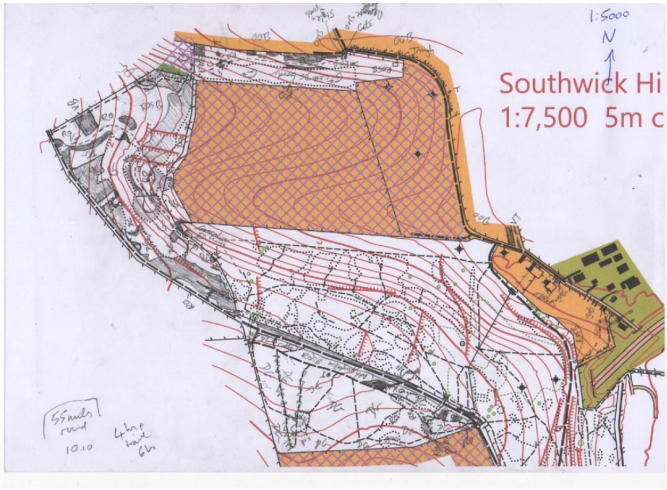
Whilst out on my first visit I found the area to be much more overgrown than previously, prompting the question 'Can we actually orienteer here now?'. I've had similar thoughts in the past about other areas, so my response was to take a walk around the area. I found that it's still not great, but I'd started in the worst part! And I knew that we'd held many successful events in areas that don't look very inviting so it's going to rely on the planner being creative.

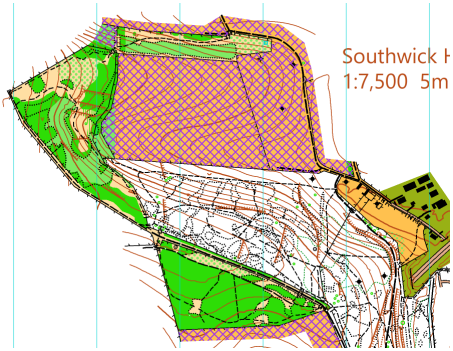
I also started to formulate a mapping style for the area now that I'd seen it 'in the flesh'. The large thickets that I'd identified on the base map were generally obvious, so I kept the vegetation boundaries around them. There were a lot of very thick (waist deep) bramble patches, and it looked like most of those would be solid dark green, so I decided not to mark boundaries on those. That should help to distinguish between the shorter and taller 'fight' vegetation. There were areas where the smaller thickets were well spaced so they could be marked individually, but where they were quite close together (and not really of navigational value) I'd use the 'rough open with scattered bushes' symbol. I also decided that all the tracks needed to be marked using the various path symbols. I find that these stand out much more clearly than orange trails and the narrow ride symbol, especially on a rough open background.

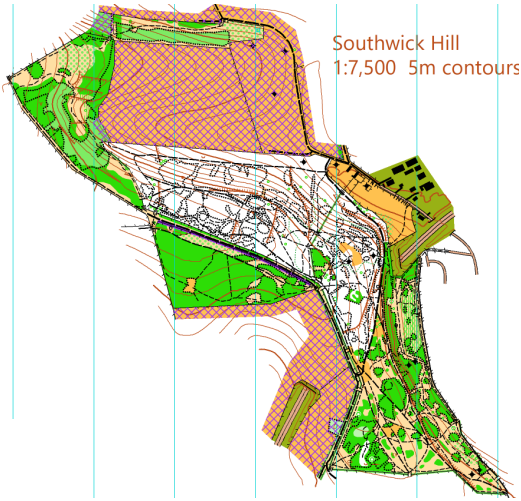
On the third visit I completed the east side of the map and then looked at the remaining 'thicketfest' with a degree of trepidation, especially as the paths that I had identified made little sense on the ground! I was more hopeful that the thickets would make some sense so I decided that a full path survey of the final section would be the next step. With the aid of the identified thickets, contours and earth banks (some of which were too small to leave on the final map but were great mapping aids), about 5 hours later I had a path network that made sense! That then meant that the final 2 visits were focused on filling in the vegetation and adding or deleting any other features found (or not found!).

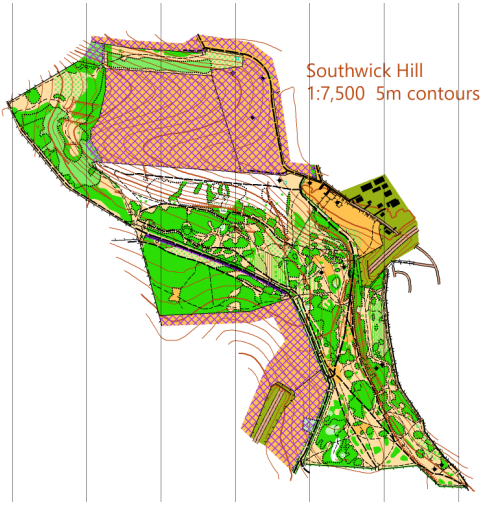
My notes from the first survey are shown below.

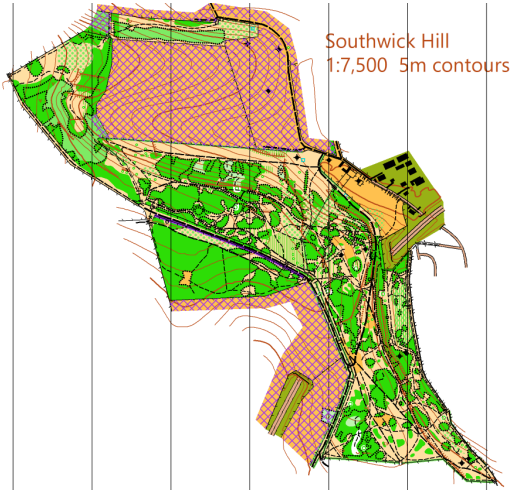
After each survey, I scanned my work and positioned it under the main map. I then traced the day's survey onto the map. Gradually the map took shape.




Southwick H
1:7,500 5m


Southwick Hill
1:7,500 5m contours


Southwick Hill
1:7,500 5m contours


Southwick Hill
1:7,500 5m contours

Final Touches

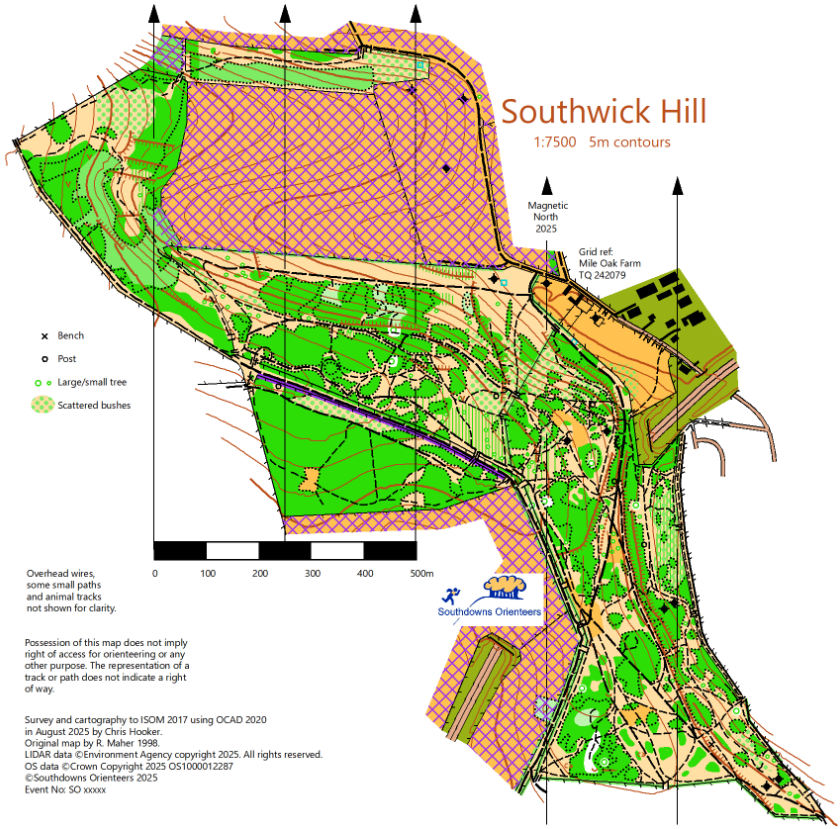
Once the field surveys were completed and transferred to the map, the final touches were added to get it ready for competitive use. This involved cutting contours and north lines wherever the map looked cluttered and scrutinising the map to see if clarity could be improved in any other way. Then a scale bar, north arrow and various bits of wording were added to produce the final map.

Having completed the map, I loaded it into Purple Pen and this raised an interesting conundrum, the map didn't quite fit in either landscape or portrait view! After a little thought I identified 4 possible solutions:

- Reduce the map to 1:10,000 scale
- Remove the top part of the map
- Rotate the map through 30º to give diagonal north lines
- Don't frame the map so that the planner can choose which part they wish to use.

I decided to go with the final option as I could see various issues arising with all the others.

This map took about 70 hours to complete (including all the travel, surveying and drawing) and below is the final version.



Highlighted by David Wilson - The Spruce Bark Beetle, or Ips Typographus



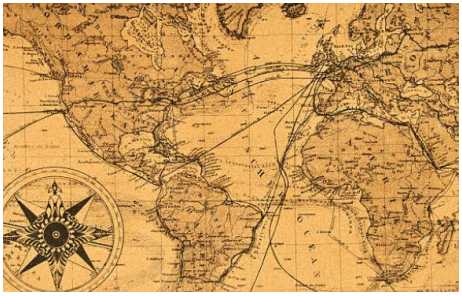
These hairy bark beetles, smaller than a fingernail, have already affected Southdowns orienteering at Eartham. Three years ago, we were told to avoid planning courses which would encourage competitors to run through a patch of spruce; now it's a requirement to disinfect footwear. Already some spruce forests in Denmark and other European countries have already been decimated and it is believed to be one of the biggest single threats to the UK's forests.

Lots of interesting information, and photos, including how they came to the UK and what we are utilising to try and eradicate this destructive beetle can be found at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/clyr8yml9rro

If anyone is out and about and sees sniffer dogs inspecting woodpiles or drones flying overhead, this is what it's about.

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British Library – Secret Maps Exhibition
Open 24th October to 18th January 2026



This looks a fascinating exhibition at the British Library for any Map fanatics. Information below taken from the website: https://events.bl.uk/exhibitions/secretmaps

"Step into the shadows at *Secret Maps*, a major new exhibition revealing the stories hidden in some of history's most mysterious maps.

Maps have always been more than just tools for navigation – in the hand of governments, groups and individuals, maps create and control knowledge. In *Secret Maps*, we trace the levels of power, coercion and secrecy that lie behind maps from the 14th century to the present day and uncover the invisible forces that draw and distort the world around us.

Some of the maps on display reveal hidden landscapes, offering insight into places long forgotten or erased from official histories. Others are purposefully deceptive, designed to protect treasures, mask strategic locations, or reshape the way we see the world. This exhibition uncovers each of their individual secrets, revealing their hidden purposes and power.

Discover the maps you were never meant to see."
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Junior Section – Southdowns Junior Squad Report from Anna Chapman (Junior Team Manager)



The Autumn season is now in full swing, and we've seen lots of juniors taking part in some great events. This season we're picking up on the progress juniors are making towards their SEOA cloth badges. These are awarded for colour coded courses between white and black. You must complete three courses per colour within 150% of the winning time or in the top 50% of competitors. If you would like to know your progress towards any of these badges, please contact Anna Chapman (juniorteam@southdowns-orienteers.org.uk).

Coaching
We're in the process of setting up a wider range of coaching sessions for our juniors and also adults. Over the next couple of months, we have some trainee coaches running a series of sessions which we plan to roll out over the coming year. Our coaches in training are Bea Waters, Ed Lines, Anna Chapman, Kasia Nichols and Ian Curtis. The coaching we are offering comprises of:

Beginner skills for yellow
Yellow to orange
Orange to light green
Skills and techniques for adults

Do let the coaching team know if you'd either like to become a coach or take part in some of these coaching sessions. Email Rob Lines coach@southdowns-orienteers.org.uk

Skills – control descriptions
When juniors start running the orange, they should be making sure that they know what the control descriptions symbols are, ready for when they move up to light green. There are some fun games to play on this link here. We're sure they won't be sad to be told to play on a computer whilst learning the control descriptions!
https://www.southdowns-orienteers.org.uk/info/junior-squad/skills

Goffs Park Finale Brings Summer Park-O Series to an Exciting Close
The final event of this year's Summer Park-O series took place at Goffs Park, Crawley, on Saturday 13 September, providing a fitting climax to the league and determining the final standings. Despite an ominous forecast, the driest two hours of the entire weekend coincided mercifully with the time participants were out on their courses. This was in stark contrast to the downpour endured by the control-hanging team of Emma and Ben just beforehand.



The event planning was led by **Emma Chapman**, ably assisted by her brother **Ben**. Emma enthusiastically began drafting course ideas soon after taking on the planner's role, determined to make the most of what is, on paper, a relatively small area. Goffs Park, however, offered an unexpectedly rich mix of terrain: open grassland, woodland pockets, intricate paths, and changing vegetation.

Emma and Ben produced three courses: Yellow, Orange and a longer Sprint. The junior-friendly Yellow and novice-oriented Orange were designed to be clear and achievable. The Sprint, however, was another matter. Emma's aim was to keep runners thinking hard from the moment they punched Start, right through to the finish, a tough challenge in a compact area with abundant open space.
To achieve this, the Sprint used a double-sided map, and both it and the Orange featured butterfly loops, an unusual but effective choice for a Park-O. Although the Sprint may have ended up a few hundred metres longer than typical for the series, feedback from competitors was overwhelmingly positive. Many complimented the technical challenge and intelligent use of terrain.

This event was also a special opportunity for local Scouting groups. We invited Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, and Explorers from across the Crawley District, and were delighted by the enthusiastic response.
The dry window held just long enough for the series prizegiving, attended by the hardy few who braved the conditions to the very end! Several positions in the league table were so close that all was hanging on this event's results.

Congratulations to all the medal winners across the series:

Sprint		M	W
1	Gold	Ben Chapman	Emma Chapman
2	Silver	Daniel Duncan	Emily Waters
3	Bronze	William Grainge	Harriet Nichols

Orange			
1	Gold	Lucas Waters	Harriet Nichols
2	Silver	Mark Johnson	Iris Alden
3	Bronze	Christopher Warner	

Yellow			
1	Gold	Finley Carrington	Lizzie Nichols
2	Silver	Kai Bowers	Annabelle Carrington
3	Bronze	Henry Wright	

British Sprint Champs
The British Sprint Champs was staged around the complex architecture, aerial walkways and stairs of University of East Anglia in Norwich at the end of August. Many competitors struggled to figure out which level their control was on, but got a bit more into the map after the heats!

Congratulations to Emma W14 who held her nerve on two really challenging Sprint Orienteering courses to claim Silver at the British Sprint Champs. Also, a shout out to Harriet W12 who was just 12 seconds off the Bronze medal!

Ward Junior Home International 2025
Another England cap for Emma - this time representing England at the Ward Junior Home International. JHI is an annual competition between England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. A team of four athletes is selected in each of these categories M/W14, 16, 18. This year it took place on tricky terrain in South Wales. The individual was on Merthyr Common and the relay was on Clydach Terrace.



Emma competed in the W14 individual and the relay. She had a great performance in the individual and came away with 3rd place podium position gaining valuable points for the England team. England won overall - just beating Scotland on count back. Emma enjoyed the whole weekend and was particularly pleased with the result on the individual day.

Junior Inter-Regional Champs
The Junior Inter-regional champs (JIRCS) took place in September. This is the annual competition between the twelve junior regional squads in the UK and a great opportunity for all the juniors to get together.

Four SO juniors are members of the SE junior squad and made the trip up to the Lake District, by coach, along with the rest of the squad. They made an overnight stop at Brocton Village Hall to meet up with the West Midland Junior Squad, before continuing on to the Lake District. Ulverston High School was the base for all the squads over the weekend, including the traditional Saturday night ceilidh where all the squads get together and have some fun.

The weekend races were an individual at Torver Back Common on the Saturday and relay races at Haverigg Sand Dune on the Sunday. The South East Squad were pretty consistent and came fifth overall in the individual races and the relay races. This resulted in a final placing of 5th out of the 12 regions.

SEJS Training Weekend in the Dunes of Merthyr Mawr
For their annual training camp, the South East Junior Squad travelled to Wales on 8 November 2025 to join a full day of coaching at Merthyr Mawr, organised by the Orienteering Foundation. From SO, James, Ben, Emily and Emma took part.



The morning saw the juniors split into two large groups. One group headed to the north of the area, tackling a mix of flat open dunes and steep, wooded slopes. The second group took on the southern part of Merthyr Mawr, famous for its intricate contour detail. After lunch, the groups swapped so everyone experienced both types of terrain.

The day ended with a mass-start race up and down The Big Dipper, a towering sand dune!
After a days' training many juniors headed straight on to the Western Night League event at Briton Ferry Woods before well-deserved dinner and nights' rest at their accommodation at St Brides Major Scout Lodge, Bridgend.

Sunday saw them return to the dunes to run at the event organised by SBOC at Kenfig Burrows before driving back home.

A big thank you goes to all the coaches and volunteers who made the training possible. Their time, enthusiasm and expertise give our juniors the chance to experience new terrains, develop their skills and grow in confidence - opportunities that make a real difference to their orienteering journeys.

South East Night Champs
The South East Night Champs took place at Puttenham, near Guildford, in November. Night orienteering is fantastic practice for daytime orienteering. It really changes the focus and makes you simplify everything. Several juniors donned their headlamps and headed out into the woods. It was a lovely evening for it and the following juniors came away with South East medals.

Gold	Silver
Emma Chapman W16- James Curtis M18	Emily Waters W16-



South East Middle Distance Champs
Back at the same venue near Guildford and the junior squad picked up more medals!

Gold	Silver
Emily Waters W14 Emma Chapman W16 James Curtis M18	Lucas Waters M12

The Highs and Lows at the World Masters 2025 by Roger Maher



None of what happened in this, and over the past years, would have been possible without the support of long standing friends. At 87, going on 8 years old, I'm lucky to be able to manage most things in life, but doing all the entries, flights, accommodation, travel arrangements and bussing to events is a big ask. And with Spain this year having forecasted temperatures in the high thirties, even my friend Sarah Rollings was thinking it was no go. But things changed at the National event at Hambleden when Jas and I were at the point of leaving for home, Sarah came by and said, " I'm thinking of doing the Masters." My reply was instant, "Stick me down!".

Now you may wonder why Sarah would bother to cart me all over the world? It comes down to one thing **Preferential Parking** and there you have it!

The other member of the team this year was Nigel Bunn whom we caught up with at Stanstead. And yes - arrival at Barcelona was hot, hot!

Our base in Girona was well situated, close to the river and having air con - a must in the heat.
The following day we travelled to two different model sprint mapped areas where we all added a few more circles on the maps to increase the interest. Model maps for the two forest events were also in our welcome envelope with our race numbers as well as a carrier bag containing a bottle of local wine!
In the sprint qualifier, I had the first start of the day at 8.30. Also a first for me, I was the first runner in, through to download knowing I had checked all the control numbers and had a clean run. However, the first printer started then stopped, so they indicated to try the other one. No sooner done and the first printer burst into action - I saw **MP** followed by my splits! My reaction was, "Ah well, yet another B final."I totally accepted it without question.

About 20 minutes later, a number of runners were coming in and saying there was a problem with control code 88. Woo Allen looked at my splits, and marched me back to download where I got a thumbs up. It was a program error.

In the Sprint Final next day I had a clean run again with just one small back track towards the end, but home with a fair time. At download no splits just a thumbs up. I hung around watching the big screen until I saw Sarah come in. She didn't know how she had faired either. To our delight, later on we found out that Sarah got the Silver and it was a Bronze for me - in the **Sprints** of all things!



Sprint Final results:

Gold, Helmut Conrad Germany
Silver, Toshie Onoye Japan
Bronze, ME!!

Middle Distance *(final map shown)*

Drama at the Middle qualifier as our pre-start had been sited where the start was placed, so we were all 20 minutes late starting and as I was first off again, it was all a bit fraught, with my tried and tested start process in tatters. I forgot to check the map scale and it was 1:5000 so I was over shooting the controls but managed to qualify for the final.

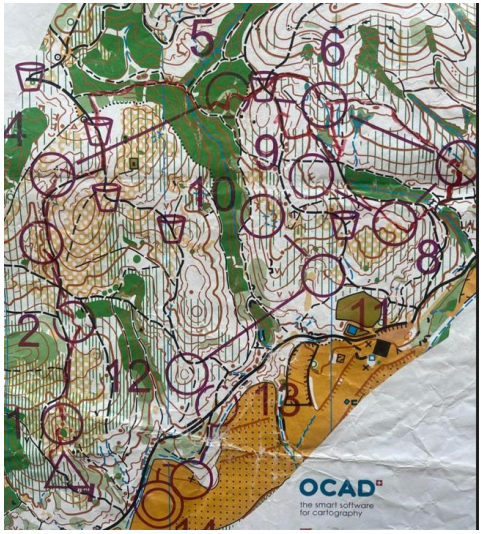


In the Middle distance final, my route choice to the first control could have been better but thereafter a steady run saw me home in third place again.

Congratulations to:
Helmut Conrad 1st.Germany Gunnar Osterbo 2nd Norway.

Long Distance *(final map shown)*

Next up was the Forest Long race and controls 1 to 5 all went to plan, mainly in off the track and back out again. Navigating to 6 went well, hitting the control clean with control code 94. However a quick check on my description sheet and I read 79 so I thought it must be further down the re-entrant. Unfortunately what had happened was my description sheet had got buckled up on my arm and I had read the wrong code! Meanwhile further down the re-entrant the terrain worsened and by now I had hit a track at the bottom. It was then that I realised that 94 was my control! Not knowing whether SI had picked it up or not I made my way back up hill and by the time I re-punched 94 and got to number 7, 20 minutes had gone by. Control 8 was ok, but by now the heat and a lack of concentration had kicked in and 9 was a magical mystery tour! Control 10 was ok but **11 don't ask!** The vegetation was such that if you were not dead on line, you were unable to see the kite. 12,13,14 and the finish no problem.



Yes I was disappointed with my navigation so later on I walked back into the area to the hill top at 12 to take a couple of pictures of the undergrowth to show how easy it was to pass by a control site.

On the day, I ended up 12th finisher in the A final with 3 competitors not finishing.

Congratulations to Gunnar, Helmut and Toshie.

For my close friends, Sarah Rollins a Silver in the Sprint. Woo Allen a Silver in The Forest Middle Distance race

Club Social at the Missing Link Brewery and Tap Room
AKA - A Humorous Challenge in Soggy Conditions
Organised by SO member and Brewer (who knew!) Will Heap *(photos Bea Waters)*

It all started with a Club email – "Come and have a fun social evening alongside your fellow SO members with a run around the beautiful Chiddinglye Estate followed by a Pie in the Brewery taproom".



Will was keen to remind everyone that a sense of humour was essential for the evening's activities. The weather had been unpredictable, with rain coming and going throughout the day, leaving the ground thoroughly soaked.

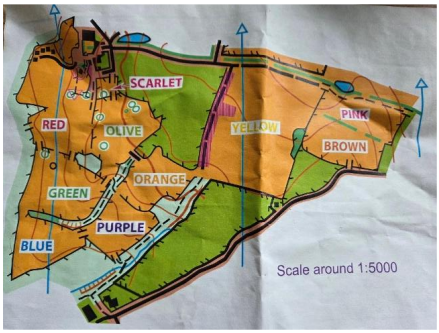


Fortunately, as the briefing began, the rain held off, giving hope for better conditions.

Will outlined the rules of the event: participants would run to the starting point, where a stake marked with the colour of the next field awaited them.

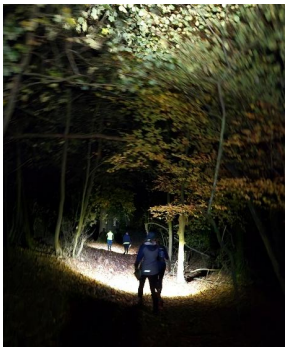
In each field, there would be three stakes, but only one displaying the colour leading to the subsequent field. This process would continue until the end, when Will would require a list of the fields visited in the correct order.

With Lucas Waters conducting the countdown, everyone set off —just as the rain returned, becoming heavier as the evening went on.



Despite the persistent dampness that lingered throughout the evening, spirits remained high among all participants.

The group embraced the challenge with enthusiasm, and the sense of achievement was palpable as the course was completed.





Afterwards, the reward was well worth the effort: members gathered in the welcoming taproom to savour a selection of delicious pies, which proved to be a huge hit.
The fantastic array of beers on offer, expertly curated by the brewery, added to the convivial atmosphere.
For dessert, the generous portions of enormous brownies provided the perfect sweet finish to the evening, ensuring that everyone left thoroughly satisfied! **THANKS WILL!**



No Particular Place to Go – Steve & Jill Blount



With its quiet roads, stunning scenery, cheap campsites, good food and warm weather, France is a cycle touring paradise.



Rolling off the ferry in Dieppe at the beginning of June to grey skies and a nippy breeze was not in the plan. After an evening in which we needed to wear all the layers we had with us. We headed south in search of warmer climes. It was not long before we found them, with the Loire Valley wrapping us in its warm embrace.



On a bike you are immersed 24/7 in the environment you are travelling through. Every day brings a surprise, be it Hoopoes & Bee Eaters, a "Bon courage" from a passing motorist, swathes of wildflowers in the verge or a Pine Marten stopping in the middle of the road to have a look at you.



Food plays a big part on a cycle tour, and it is not long before finding a good boulangerie becomes the paramount task of the day. Boulangerie Linares in Aurillac is worth a visit. Its streets are also decorated with umbrellas as there is a 139-year-old umbrella shop nearby.



The best part of cycle touring though, is the scenery and you can view it all from the comfort of your bicycle seat!





Little Dave – My life of O, Birth to 2023



It's hard to believe but Little Dave only started orienteering in December 2020. Since his first tentative O steps, he has kept a detailed diary of each event, how it went, lessons learned and loads more.

Here (in a much-edited form) he kindly shares a few of those humorous lessons from his first two years in the forests:

Saturday, 12 December 2020 Blackland Farm 12/20 Green SOG3
first time at competitive orienteering, lessons learnt.
Being able to see the map helps.
Slow down to go faster
miles of smiles. Course planner route 3.7km, I went all imperial to make it 3.8miles

Saturday, 26 December 2020 soggy SOGL4 Hurst Meadows (1st attempt!)
Orienteering, the thinking gentleman's sport. Probably why I struggle with this sport. I got back to the start, had a think, thought... Why didn't I go to Control 7? Because I am an eegit

Saturday, 25 September 2021 Knowlands Wood SOG A2 Green Course
Took a few controls to tune into the map before starting to get the hang of it only to completely lose it for Control 15 and build up to the grand finale....
What sort of eegit sprints past the finish dibber but doesn't dib? YEP me!

Wednesday, 9 February 2022 BAOC QECP MLS Blue
Retirement planning...
Orienteering in the Army is classed as individual military training. Civilian competitors are responsible for their own personal safety and for assessing their own abilities to complete the course.
That ability was questioned massively searching for control 3. Lost 13 minutes I reckon, not angry, just disappointed

Wednesday, 20 April 2022 Barossa BAOC Blue Practising for retirement with some Wednesday Orienteering
Started OK but went banana shaped with control 4, which I believe is wrong on the map (more on that later). Disagree with mapping around Control 5 too. So basically in retirement I'm going to be a miserable old git moaning and complaining....
Just let it lie... Had to go back and revisit Control 4
Unhappy with my Major (rtd) muckup at control 4, went to investigate.
Back to 4 for another visit and met the angriest man in orienteering, who was spitting feathers over the map. Returned to download and spoke to course planner and map editor who agreed that the map was wrong but then said you could see the flag so it didn't matter. Pointed out the flag was in the pit and couldn't be seen. Smiled politely and thanked him, then warned him that Mr Angry from Berkshire was on his way up for a 'discussion'.

Sunday, 25 September 2022 Harter Fell Gallopen Brown Course
Just as you begin to believe that your O skills are improving you get smashed down to reality. Today was that smashing day.
I am WOW, finished at last (Worst Orienteer in the World).
Jog back to download to be greeted by the Organisers anxious over cut off time. It's a bit different from Sussex ain't it Dave...
Probably the most challenging course I have done in my short O life but I finished!

Saturday, 5 November 2022 Chailey Common Nightmare O Green Course
Sometimes life sends you signs... As usual I'll ignore them.
Maybe I should have just driven home...
I dreamt about O the night before, I say dream but it was more of a nightmare of relocation, maybe this was a premonition.
The mizzle drizzle made conditions challenging in as much as I couldn't see my map, the light was reflecting back on the rain droplets and I struggled...
Not my most successful night out (not my worst by a long way) but a whole lot of fun
A great course and £1 entry, bargain night out

Saturday, 12 November 2022 Greentrees & Cowdray SOG Blue Course
It was going so well right up to #9. Complete meltdown heading towards #9 when I stopped and asked a small child where I was! After being shown, he looked at me and said "good luck", he totally understood my pain...
#10 was shoddy, #11 was just a mystery, I would have been more successful blindfolded.
Somehow managed to pull total disaster out of a bag and salvage some self respect for the rest of the course.
Once again lots of lessons taught but I doubt I'll take the learning to the next event.
Loved the course and adventure.

Saturday, 26 November 2022 Broadstone Warren. Southern Night Championships Blue Course
I promised I would try not to let my legs outrun my head. So I was slow.
There are elements of O I do not like...
I do not like working hard to discover a Control to telegraph it to the others who are wandering around lost so I run away from control, in an uncontrollable fashion...
I do not like following people so I change my plan to take my own route to a control, not always the optimum plan.
Tonight I realise that my little 'habits' can be quite detrimental to the master plan.
I can barely do this in daylight... what chance at night.
As I arrived at competition it started raining, I am visually impaired, when it rains I am visually impaired and a bit useless, it's an excuse and a bit weak.
15 minutes later I'm wandering around a forest, dislocated like a broken man. Eventually I knock on the door of a residence to ask advice, cup of tea and three hobnobs later they send me on my way to #5. 16 minutes to move 200m. I would have just returned to download and gone home except I didn't know where download was...
It got better. For a few controls I actually felt like I knew what I was doing but the curse soon struck again. Even the final leg to the finish was a nightmare!
Disappointed cause I thought I was better than the pretty much average performance tonight, maybe I'll do better tomorrow in the daylight, or maybe not
O dear, it's really not good when you can't even find your car
The walk of shame trying to find the car park and locate your vehicle. As I got to the third car park I started crying and thinking I'd be walking round Ashdown Forest all night until the O starts tomorrow. Fortunately I recognised a vehicle pulling into car park 3, where have you come from I pleaded, it's a bit of a walk, and a bit muddy, but I don't suppose you care.
I really don't care, i just want to get to my van, I'm cold and miserable, please just give me directions....

Sunday, 27 November 2022 Hindleap Warren, Ashdown Forest SEOA Short Brown
Slow down to speed up plus other lessons learnt...
After last night's epic this actually reads a bit dull. Did an O and did OK.
Cautious start and reasonable to first road crossing. Tried to mess up #9 with dodgy pace count….
Out on my own enjoying ducking, diving and weaving through the trees searching for the dreaded 'platforms' but happily nailing them with bearings. Couple of 'exciting' river crossings, waist deep (so about 12 inches), probably a few too many river crossings which I'll claim as optimum line but in my head I was using it to throw the dogs off the scent...
Just as it's going well I lose a leg upper thigh deep in a bog, manage to pull the leg out to take a step and see the other leg disappear. Realisation that I have wandered into a boy eating bog. Lying on my belly to drag

my legs out, there is no solid ground anywhere... Back in the stream for a wash. Over the stream via the rope crossing (it's really tricky trying to balance on such a thin rope.
Taking safer longer path route as now starting to panic that I haven't been totally lost yet today. Panicking that rapidly running out of opportunity to mess up so took a strange route to avoid the string course but pleased that I managed to not be distracted by all the sensible runners jogging along the path to the final control and finish.
Think we'll take this as a success especially as I managed to find the car today (once turned around and pointed in the right direction)

Every photo tells a story… Photo Caption Competition



With a bumper lot of entries received for September's photo (on left), choosing the winning entry was a **very tough** decision (thank you to everyone who entered we had loads of fun reading your entries!). After much deliberation of all the creative and witty captions entered, the winning caption, chosen by the panel, was submitted by Samantha Gibson:

'Shall we dance? I've been working on my American smooth'.

Samantha, please let me know which prize you would like to receive, a whistle or bar of chocolate.

December's photo is another fantastic picture from Rob Lines
Get creative and come up with a caption – I look forward to receiving your ideas!



Email your caption to the editor by 16th February 2026
editor@southdowns-orienteers.org.uk

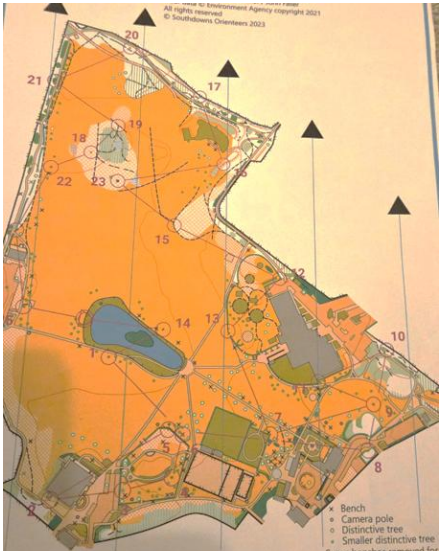
Note the deadline for content for the next Southdowner edition (March 2026) is 17th February

Please send your contributions to
editor@southdowns-orienteers.org.uk

I am always looking to improve the Southdowner. Please let me know if there are any additional features you would like to see. Your suggestions and feedback are most welcome, as they help to make the Newsletter engaging and informative for all members.

Thank you!

Club nights – what really happens!



This was the whole map that we never got to see!

Every Tuesday at 6:30pm, our Club Night Group gets together at different locations around Mid-Sussex.

Each week brings a new theme, so the activities and challenges are always changing, and you can count on having a good time, staying active, and testing both your navigational skills and your mind.



For instance, at a recent club night Euan Marsh organised a Horsham Park Map Memory event.

25 controls were set across the park in clusters. At each cluster, participants memorised a small map section showing the few next controls to find.

This format proved to be not only enormous fun but also excellent practice for simplifying maps and honing compass skills. The social aspect was a highlight as well, with many of us forming small groups to tackle the challenge together.

As mentioned, a new activity is planned every week. During the autumn and winter months, events typically take place around the streets of Mid-Sussex. In the spring and summer, we make the most of the stunning Sussex countryside.

There's no need to worry if you're coming on your own; while some prefer to complete the challenge solo, most people choose to team up in small groups. There is never any pressure to run—participants move at their own pace, with some choosing to walk. The main aim is simply to enjoy yourself while completing a light navigational challenge.

Check out the club website for the forthcoming events and bring a headtorch and sense of fun!



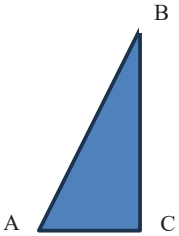


Let's get SO Quizzical

September's answer - The Killer Pit (set by Ed Forman and he has provided the answer below)

As I write, I don't know whether David Wilson entered the puzzle, but I hope he enjoyed his break and will return to set us more delightful and tricky posers in the future. Mine was based on a real observation, runners having a tendency to start looking too soon for a control at the top of a steep slope.

All the answers I have seen (anonymized) were correct and impeccable, many of them illustrated, so Jane will select the winner from a random draw process as usual, and I hope they enjoy their free SOG.



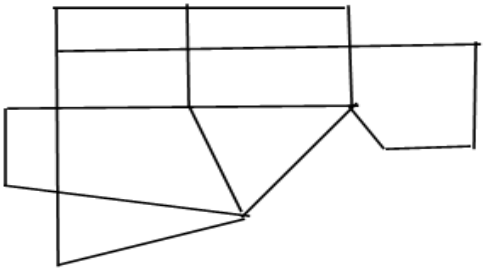
The puzzle brings us back to Pythagoras, and the fact that a map is a two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional reality. This seldom makes any difference to a normal orienteer in normal terrain but if a slope is really steep and really long then the difference between the distance on the ground and the distance on the map could be significant, leading to an orienteer thinking that they had covered the required distance when they hadn't.

Distance as it appears on the map = A-C
Distance to be covered on the ground = A-B, considerably further.

As most readers know, I am in the process of moving (back) to Bristol when my wife Debbie retires, but I will retain my affection for (and associate membership of) SO. Thank you all for letting me be a member of your family: what's not to love about an orienteering club which gives – apparently with a straight face – as a safety bearing: 'Head towards the cathedral spire and ask for directions to Chichester College'?

The winner pulled from several correct answers is Karen Ashworth. Congratulations Karen, please contact Neil for your free SOG run.

December's Problem by David Wilson
A Track Traversal Challenge



This is a map of the tracks in a fictional forest, but inspired by a map of Shaves Wood, an SO venue in 1977 surveyed by Steve Jarvis and Kevin Robinson.

Is it possible to run round all the tracks without running over the same track twice? And if so, where do you need to start and finish?

Tie-breaker – where is Shaves Wood?

All entries to editor@southdowns-orienteers.org.uk by 15th February please

SOUTHEAST LEAGUE
Dates for your diaries!

Every member can help add points to keep SO the holders of the SE League trophy.
SE League Events still to take place for League 2025/2026



4 January 2026 Epping North (CHIG)
18 January 2026 South Ashdown (DFOK)
8 February 2026 Egypt Woods (HH)
15 February 2026 White Downs & Ranmore (MVOC)
4 May 2026 Winterfold (SLOW)
10 May 2026 Sunny Sussex Weekend (SO)

Major/Local Events – looking ahead:

SOG series

The Autumn SOG series comes to a head with the final two events in January, Friston Forest West on the 3rd and Chailey Common South on 17th. Points will then be tallied to determine our series champions. The league tables are then reset for the start of the Spring SOG series, which commences at Buchan Park, Crawley on 31st January.

Club nights

Our Club night shenanigans are highlighted elsewhere in the Southdowner. These low-key, fun events are a great opportunity of meeting other club members and exercising.

Each run starts at 6.30pm and lasts around 60 minutes. Event details can be found on the club website.

British Night Championships

Open to all British Orienteering members, yes **YOU** really can take part. The date for your diary is 7th February 2026, location Burnham Beeches – this could be your year!

Check out KNC (Kent Night Cup events are listed on the Saxons website. These provide weekly night events, Urban or Forest).

Stockholm Indoor Cup (SIC)

At the time of going to press its thought that (unfortunately) the SIC will take place on the same weekend as the British Night Champs, so if you prefer your orienteering in the light, then how about a trip to Stockholm.

A very entertaining article written by Simon Fitzpatrick, who attended SIC for the first time in 2025 can be found in Southdowner No. 212 (March 2025). He can attest to how much fun and what a great challenge Indoor O is!

SouthEast League (SEL)

This annual competition continues into 2026 and is takes place between the member clubs of the SEOA.

The league is based on events approved by SEOA and individual runners score points for their runs. **See previous article for 2025/26 diary dates.**

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

A few events at a glance, December to March
(check club websites to confirm details and for more information and see BO website for a full list of many more events)

Date	Event Type	Location	Organising Club
Sat 6th Dec 2025	SOG	Selhurst Park	SO
Sun 7th Dec 2025	**Regional**	**Highwoods Country Park**	**SOS**
Sun 14th Dec 2025	**Regional**	**Buchan Country Park**	**MVOC**
Sun 14th Dec 2025	**Regional**	**Black Park**	**BKO**
Tues 16 Dec 2025	Evening Street Score	Ashtead	MVOC
Sat 20 Dec 2025	**Regional Brighton City W/E Sprint**	**Preston Park**	**SO**
Sat 20 Dec 2025	**National/UKUL Brighton City W/E Urban**	**Brighton City Race**	**SO**
Sun 21 Dec 2025	**Regional Brighton City W/E Middle**	**Stanmer Park**	**SO**
Sat 27 Dec 2025	Elizabeth Brown Score	Eartham Woods	SO
Tues 30th Dec 2025	**Regional**	**Alice Holt**	**SN**
Wed 31st Dec 2025	**Regional "Nick Bateson"**	**Long Valley North**	**BAOC**
Sat 3rd Jan 2026	SOG	Friston Forest West	SO
Sun 4th Jan 2026	**Regional "Michael Brandon Mitre"**	**Epping North**	**CHIG**
Sun 4th Jan 2026	**Regional**	**Penn Street & Common Wood**	**TVOC**
Thurs 8th Jan 2026	KNC Evening Score	Tilgate Golf Course	SO
Sun 11th Jan 2026	**Regional**	**Kings Garn Gutter**	**SOC**
Sun 11th Jan 2026	**Regional**	**Langdon Hills**	**HAVOC**
Thurs 15th Jan 2026	KNC Evening Score	Holmbush & Buchan	MVOC
Sat 17th Jan 2026	SOG	Chailey Common South	SO
Sun 18th Jan 2026	**National SEL/SEIL**	**South Ashdown**	**DFOK**
Tues 20th Jan 2026	Evening Score	Esher	MVOC
Sat 24th Jan 2026	**Regional UKUL UKOL Urban**	**Concorde Chase Weekend Woosehill**	**BKO**
Sun 25th Jan 2026	**Regional UKOL**	**Concorde Chase Weekend Star Posts**	**BKO**
Sat 31st Jan 2026	SOG	Buchan Park	SO
Sun 1st Feb 2026	**Regional**	**SE Middle Distance Champs Scratchwood**	**LOK**
Sat 7th Feb 2026	SOG	Angmering Park SW	SO
Sun 8th Feb 2026	**National SEIL/SEL/UKOL**	**Ace of Herts Egypt Woods Middle Distance Egypt and Hangings Woods**	**HH**
Sun 15th Feb 2026	**National\SEIL/Sel/UKOL**	**SE League White Downs & West Ranmore**	**MVOC**
Sat 21st Feb 2026	SOG	Coates Common	SO
Sun 22nd Feb 2026	**CompassSport Heat/National**	**Chobham Common**	**GO**
Thurs 26 Feb 2026	KNC Evening Score	TBC	SO
Sat 28th Feb 2026	**Major/UKOL British Champs Long Distance**	**Carreg Goch**	
Sun 1st March 2026	**Major/British Relay Champs**	**Margam Country Park**	

SOUTHDOWNER is the official journal of Southdowns Orienteering Club. Views and opinions expressed in SOUTHDOWNER are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors, the club committee or Southdowns Orienteering Club

Southdowns Orienteers