

Officials' Comments – SN Bagshot Event – 10 January 2015

Organiser's Comments:

The weather was fairly kind to us with rainy bits, sunny bits and windy bits, the wind causing some concern to the tent helper-team as their tents tried to take off a couple of times.

We had several large school/scout groups early on which kept our registration and computer teams busy – we hope none of you had to queue too long.

A little reminder – if you are renting a dibber (SI card) you must ALWAYS go to the computer tent after registration/payment as we need to capture your details on the computer. If you own a dibber, you can go straight to the start once you have registered and paid: this is because we already have your details on the computer (providing your dibber is registered with BOF).

To all novices and newcomers that ran today – Bagshot is a testing introduction to orienteering with its complex network of convoluted tracks and paths, not made any easier by new tracks appearing after frequent motorbike endurance races on the area.

We had an enormous turnout at this event, possibly the largest SN Saturday Series ever – we ran out of pre-printed maps on all courses and had to recycle maps. Thank you to all competitors who finished their runs and handed back their maps giving others the chance to compete: about 30 – 40 maps were recycled.

Gill Sharp, Organiser

Planner's Comments:

Bagshot is a complex area at the best of times, with its numerous vehicle tracks and other paths. In the weeks leading up to the event (including during the Christmas and New Year period) there were several off-road motorcycle events which created some brand new and very prominent tracks. It was too late to include these on the map after courses had already been planned. Apologies for the added confusion this caused in some areas.

I printed the maps at a scale of 1:7500 in order to retain some clarity whilst not making the scale too large for this type of event. The unfamiliar scale may have caused some to misjudge distances, and we should have reminded you of the unusual scale more obviously in the pre-start area. I can see from the results that many of you persevered for a long time to complete your courses, and there were also a larger than usual number of non-finishers, particularly on Light Green. Due to a number of late starters we did delay the collection of controls by about 10 minutes, but some of you were not able to fully complete your courses before the course closing time of 1230 when we started to collect in the controls – sorry for curtailing your fun.

The courses were designed to provide a navigation challenge in line with the British Orienteering guidelines for technical difficulty. I may have underestimated the physical difficulty which perhaps contributed to a higher number of non-finishers on Light Green, and mistakes were sometimes costly in terms of energy as well as time.

For those of you who did find this month's event harder than usual, please reflect on your experience and think about how you might approach things differently next time. Nearly all the control features in the northern part of the map (where most of the costly mistakes seemed to occur) were very near, and often visible from, one of the major gravel tracks. If you look at the split times in the published results you can see how quickly some people get from A to B. That's not just because they run fast – it's also because they successfully follow a chosen safe route (not always the shortest) without making mistakes.

We do encourage you to progress through the different levels of navigational challenge posed by Yellow, Orange, Light Green and Short Blue courses – they are not just longer versions of the same thing. As you progress you can expect to do more detailed map reading, coupled with route planning and concentration. We want you to enjoy yourselves and complete your courses with a sense of satisfaction, knowing that you have used your skills to meet the challenge set by the course planner. There are nearly always experienced club members at the event who would be more than happy to discuss your trials and errors (we've all been there!), and then help you to improve next time, so do please ask.

Finally if you do have any comments about the Bagshot courses (positive or negative) that you would like to share then I would value your feedback. Were they what you expected/wanted? Too difficult? Too hilly? An enjoyable challenge? E-mail me at paulffox@aol.com.

Paul Fox, Planner