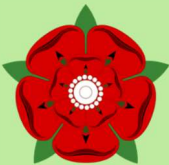


# SROC Newsletter

September 2022

**Red Rose Orienteers**



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## Editorial

Hello and welcome to a new edition of the SROC newsletter, compiled by Julia Preston.

All contributions to the next newsletter are welcomed. If you come across something that you think would be useful for members, or just an interesting read, please forward to Martyn Roome at [Development@sroc.org](mailto:Development@sroc.org)

The front cover photo is of Tom Matthew collecting training controls at Viker, Norway.

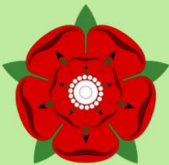
## Orienteering Adventures Far and Wide

### Lakes 5-Days 2022

Many SROC members took part in the recent Lakes 5-Days, and of course we were the organising club for the final day at Helsington Barrows, with an extra big dollop of sunshine and centigrade.

The areas were varied, with two fast open areas to start, then some technical and tough forests, a rescheduled urban event in Penrith if you couldn't bear the thought of a rest day, and Helsington to round off the week.

The class prizes of Cartmel Sticky Toffee Puddings seemed to go down very well, although the cows in the start field appeared to prefer the chewiness of fresh maps in boxes and a delicious start kite. Lucy Todhunter's eco-friendly 'Tree Planted' prizes were also a well-received and innovative idea!



## WMOC 2022, Vieste, Italy

Matt Cochrane

WMOC (World Masters' Orienteering Championships) is an open competition for anyone with an orienteering age of 35 or more. 6 SROC runners took part this year, travelling there by a variety of routes (plane, train, bus and car).

The event is organised with two qualifying races and three finals. They put on as many heats as they need to accommodate all the entrants, and an equal number from each heat are put in the 'A' final so that there are at least 80 in it. The remaining runners are put in finals B, C, and D... etc. until there are no competitors left. These runners inevitably end up "facing the podium" instead of "standing on the podium"!

Vieste is a medieval fishing town at the far end of the Gargano peninsula and is part of Puglia, the province which stretches all the way down the "foot" of Italy on the Adriatic side. The nearest big town is Foggia, and an excellent bus service gets you to Vieste in a couple of hours (a bit more if you've flown to Bari).

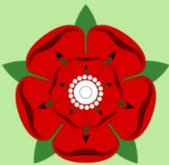


Matt finishing in Vieste

Day one (Sunday) was a Sprint qualifier in nearby Peschici – quite similar to Vieste, with a mix of 20<sup>th</sup> Century apartments and medieval alleyways to negotiate. One wrong turning could set you back a good few positions, but Andy & Karen Quickfall and Miriam Rosen qualified for the 'A' final. Monday's sprint finals were in Vieste – temperature in the high 20s, so it was important to take on plenty of water and then get round as quickly as possible to avoid dehydrating. The course took us round the more recent buildings first before taking us into the older quarter with crowded alleyways - far more intricate.

The many archways were marked in grey, and on my way towards control 8 I encountered what I thought were the parallel lines denoting steps, but which turned out to be a series of regularly-spaced arches that lured me down the wrong alley. Not a serious error, control 8 was just round the corner at the bottom! Miriam finished a creditable 12<sup>th</sup>.

Wednesday was the Forest Qualifier, which sets up the finals for both the Middle Distance final (Thursday) and the Long final (Saturday). All three forest events started from the same arena in Foresta Umbra – a one-hour coach ride Vieste. The transport was efficiently organised, and we all had accommodation a short walk from the bus station. Foresta Umbra is on limestone, and has hundreds of vast depressions formed from sink holes when the ice melted thousands of years ago. Navigation through these was a huge challenge – you really needed your copy of "Which Depression?" Magazine! Without it, relocation took ages and we all suffered. Andy squeezed into the A final, and the rest of us had to make do with a place in B finals. (Nobody in the C final though!)



We were beginning to get used to the area by Thursday and the much shorter courses saw Jill and me reach the top 40 & 30 (although Jill having retired lost on Wednesday was technically unplaced), Miriam was promoted to the Long A final by coming 3<sup>rd</sup>, Karen finished an excellent



18<sup>th</sup>, David 54<sup>th</sup>. One of our number was relegated to the long B final after retiring, but will not be named here. (Except you've already applied a process of elimination and guessed!)

A rest day on Friday to visit the fascinating caves around the coast to the South of Vieste and to explore the town, which is truly excellent. We loved watching the local families promenading down the main street every night from about nine o'clock onwards (and the police towing cars away most evenings to make room!).

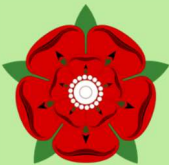
Saturday was busy, with the longest courses and we all had one last chance at redemption. At least for Andy (20<sup>th</sup>), Jill (27<sup>th</sup>) and Karen (29<sup>th</sup>).

Jill & I then spent the afternoon back in Vieste, collected our luggage from the apartment we had rented and waited for the bus to Foggia, where we stayed the night before catching trains to Milan and then Paris. Followed by another day on Eurostar and Avanti North West, but that's another story. Suffice to say that we were well-acclimatised by the time we reached England and found the heatwave almost bearable.

Takeaways from the trip: Vieste is a wonderful place to stay. The event was superbly organised, with only a minor niggle over where to find the start lists for the next day (usually buried somewhere on Facebook). We were quite lucky with the weather – in the 30s a lot of the time, but the forest races were at well over 2000 feet, so we had temperatures in the mid-20s, and plenty of shade.

See you in Slovakia next year?





## Italian 5-Days 2022

John Taylor

The Quickfalls, Rosens and we (the Taylors) spent a great week in July in and around Madonna di Campiglio competing in what appears to have become an annual series of multi-day events in the Dolomites area. Jo and I were really looking forward to it as we had postponed our entries the two previous years due to Covid-related issues. We have become slightly addicted to multi-day events in Italy and Switzerland, which both offer orienteering in fantastic mountain terrain, and we usually combine them with a week’s walking. Like a lot of the overseas multi-day events, the event was a mix of sprint (Day 1 in Madonna itself), medium (3 days) and long (1 day) courses. Two of the days were in mostly runnable forest at relatively low altitude (~1600m) and two of the days were mainly above the tree line in wonderfully runnable but complex alpine terrain at 2000m.

We started off with a downhill sprint starting on the outskirts of Madonna and finishing in the main park in the centre of town. The photo of me at the finish suggests a lack of people and indifferent weather, neither of which was the case. There were over 2000 at the event and the atmosphere at the finish each day was always lively and generally noisy. The weather leading up to the event and on the first few days of competition was fantastic, possibly even too hot for running being in the upper 20s°C.



*John displaying a rather pedestrian technique at the Sprint finish*

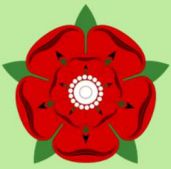
The only disappointing day of the whole trip was the day we were looking forward to most, the first alpine day and the only long course in the competition. One of the features of summer weather in the Dolomites is that possible electric storms are forecast most days but generally don’t materialise in “your” area. Unfortunately they did on that day despite the good early conditions! One of the bonuses of alpine orienteering is that



*Karen and Andy chilling at 2000m before the storm arrived*

getting to the area normally involves a cable-car ride, the cost of which is included in the entry fee. The Finish for both alpine courses was at the top of a cable car, where there were superb facilities (in contrast to an upland Scottish or Lake District event). The storm arrived incredibly rapidly. One moment conditions were perfect, as you can see from the photo of Karen and Andy, with only a hint of dark cloud in the distance, but within 30 minutes we were in a full-blown electric storm with torrential precipitation. Soon afterwards the day’s event was cancelled. Thankfully everyone who had started their courses got back safely, with Karen actually managing to complete hers despite the weather. One of the added drawbacks of electrical storms is that the “lift system” is shut down due to the possibility of lightning strikes. On the day in question there was a

fortuitous weather window around mid-afternoon that allowed everyone to get off the mountain by cable car. A few years ago, Jo and I (along with all the other competitors) had to walk down a Swiss mountain under similar conditions when no such window materialised.

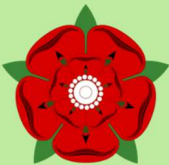


The Finish area for the alpine courses and a shot of David heading for the finish control.

Happily, a few days later we returned to the same alpine location in better weather and enjoyed great medium courses that were mainly on the morainic terrain but also dipped in and out of areas of scattered vegetation. All-in-all it was an excellent event and mountain holiday more generally. The organisation of both the Italian and Swiss events is excellent these days. Don't let my stories of wild storms put you off. We are already planning our next trip – the Swiss Orienteering Week (July 2023) that combines a multi-day public event with the World Orienteering Championships.

And finally here's an image of my 5.1-km long course that I very sadly didn't get to start. It looks complicated even at 1:7500. Who would not want to have a go at getting round it? Notice the M80s were expected to get round it too! Amazingly, it claimed to be only 50m of climb but as we all know that depends on your route choice and making no errors. The reason for the negligible climb despite the abundance of contours was that it was essentially a down-hill course, but an unfortunate corollary of that was the climb to the Start!





## NWJS Norway Tour 2020, version 2022

Ben Todhunter, Cate and Alex Matthew, as well as coaches Sue & Martyn Roome, Julia Preston..and not forgetting Tom Matthew... made it out to the forests of Norway for the long-awaited North West Junior Squad tour!

Here, **M14 Tour Champion Ben** (a fact which he has modestly omitted from his report) gives us the low-down on his trip.

My time in Norway was one of the best experiences of my entire life. The memories and the friends I have made will never be forgotten. Before I left I was pretty nervous because I'd never spent much time with the people who were going (apart from the odd squad weekend) and wasn't sure how I'd feel spending ten days in a foreign country with them but by the end of it was a completely different story – I didn't want to leave I was having that much fun.



We all stayed in a beautiful ski hut surrounded by miles of gorgeous Scandinavian forests teamed with wildlife. All the forests we orienteered in throughout the ten days were beautiful with something unique and different about all of them. We also did a bunch of other exciting activities such as Roller skiing, and volleyball and met up with the local orienteering club FSK (Fredrikstad Skiklubb).

Overall, my favourite part was an orienteering course at a place called Viker we did where one of the legs you had to cross the sea onto an island where two controls sat. Because the Norwegian coastline has so many islands close to the mainland, we were able to cross at a shallow area where it only went up to our chests. [*\*fully risk assessed and*

*marshalled* 😊 Ed.] The rest of the terrain was all granite rock with occasional waist-height deep heather and 10ft deep chasms.

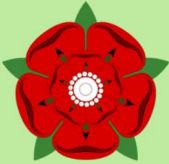
From my experiences in Norway, I can bring back improved orienteering skills, fitness and how to follow my compass right instead of going 45 degrees wrong. Apart from listening to Mr Brightside by The Killers on repeat, Norway was one of the best experiences in my life and the best 10 days ever.



[Ed.] Here are my Norway O -tips:

Understand their mapping styles – on the left is a 'Rocky Pit', usually what we would map as 2 small crags at 90 degree angle. Bare bedrock is often marked more like open yellow, and only grey if it has no vegetation on it. Paths crossing or coming off this can be tricky to spot in the terrain.

Norway uses EMIT. Whichever way you approach the control , you'll have your brick the wrong way round.



### Cate in Czechia

Cate Matthew



This summer, I participated in the JROS Czech tour with 15 other M/W16s from across the UK. We did four days of training in the areas surrounding our accommodation, and those areas were dramatically different to the ones we are used to in Britain. There was everything from questionable marked vegetation to towering rock passageways and somehow we learned to adapt and navigate through both. After the training days, we went to the Pěkné Prázdniny [*‘Lovely Holidays’* .Ed.] –the Czech equivalent to the Lakes 5 Days- and competed in two of the three days there. In between training we also did some fun activities such as swimming in lakes and rivers, picking bilberries and having a Czech dance lesson on the last night. The overall orienteering experience abroad is definitely contrasting to that of the Lakes, and I had an amazing time navigating the unfamiliar geography among new friends.

*[prior to this, Cate had also been at the OO Cup and O-Ringen in Sweden, a couple of Lakes 5-Day events, and then the NWJS Norway tour immediately after her Czech tour!! Ed.]*



Drabovna Migrating Controls	
All controls	36 controls
21A	☐
21B	☐
21C	☐
22A	☐
22B	☐
22C	☐
23A	☐
23B	☐
23C	☐
24A	☐
24B	☐
24C	☐
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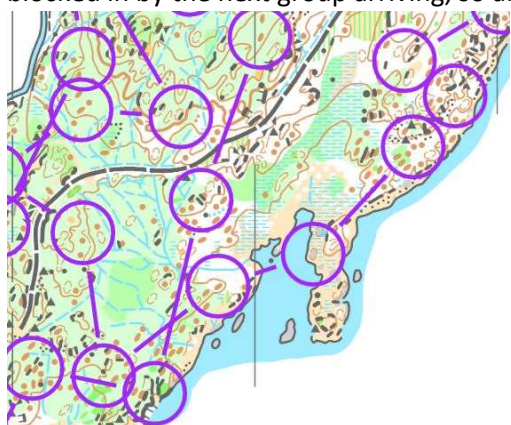


## Coast and Islands Week / Masterplan Adventure

Julia Preston

It was rather a last-minute decision, but I'm really glad I went to the Coast and Islands week, if not just to visit a part of Scotland that I have never been to. The week was based over the Kintyre peninsula, with the community of Tarbert as a central point, and then we moved to Arran for a couple more days. On Kintyre I stayed in the relatively remote holiday park of Port Ban, as this was the best accommodation I could find for my budget, but what a wonderful view out to Jura and Islay! Tarbert is about 40 mins away by car, and I saw seals a few times - which made me pretty happy.

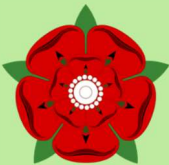
Alas, the orienteering.. It was a week with one big DNF written all over it. I finished 2 sprint races and a middle, but all of the long events eluded me, and worse, none were over 5k! The first long event at Torinturk (see below) I was really enjoying, despite some muddling along, as you can see from the map it is a complex area but very satisfying to orienteer in, and not at gruesomely green as you might think. The bay was at low tide so no swimming was required, however I can't say that seaweed and wet rock makes a great running surface. Sadly, the issue of Torinturk is that there is extremely limited parking in the area, so competitors had been grouped and given a 2hr slot to arrive and run in. I realised about 75% of the way round that I needed to finish ASAP as to not get blocked in by the next group arriving, so abandoned my run. As the M21E winner was doing not



much less than 10min/K, I think you get the gist!

The next two long events used the north and south of an area called Corranbuie, just by a holiday park in Tarbert. The first day I just felt too warm and tired out, but probably should have kept going after making a bit of a 'wandering' error. The second day I simply couldn't get my head around the mapping style, the terrain was very rough and I got dehydrated and pretty fed up.

The final day long was on an area on Arran called the community land initiative. I think by their own admission, the organisers had been struggling to find an area, and then bracken had moved in on the job. Here, I had a bizarre experience of starting my course, only to merrily wade into some brambly grot on the way to the first control, with a crumbly earth slope. (It was all marked as undergrowth, but apparently there was a slightly nicer way). Cue aimless fight with brambles resulting in multiple lacerations. Next, I realised my (new!) dibber had flown off, and once I had retrieved that from the bottom of the Grotty Slope, progressed to no. 1 which was now visible. Oh. I now did not have a map in my possession. I had a look about, but realised I'd have to go back down the Grotty Slope...Plan B-return in frustration to start, opt for an Orange course instead. Last time I did one of those was 1997!



Strangely, I had my best ranking points of the year on Merkland Forest middle, which from the map looked slightly uninteresting but was actually a fun area to run in. I also really enjoyed the sprints



around the grounds of Brodick Castle with its treacherous steps, and in also Tarbert, where there were devilish controls in the castle ruins to catch you out right at the end!

Next year the Coast and Islands week is (provisionally) in the Outer Hebrides, just before the Scottish 6 Days. I really liked the small informal feel of the events (I don't think I'd cope with the O-Ringen!) and to be fair it was top quality orienteering and attracted a mix of elite and non-elite competitors.

Tarbert Sprint

## How does orienteering in Sweden compare to the UK?

James Turton

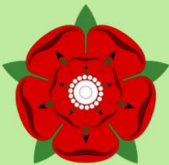
The brief I had for this article was to compare orienteering in Sweden to the UK. I'm not actually sure whether I'm the best person to do this - given my experience of orienteering in the UK is actually relatively minimal. So I drafted in a little help from my fiancé, Helen Hanstock (BOK) - a lifelong orienteer and the reason I ended up in the sport - and living in Sweden - in the first place. We've put our heads together to try and give a little insight into our experiences of orienteering in and around our home in Östersund, Sweden, for the past few years.



James and Helen at Obygdshelgen 2021, Råndalen, Sweden

As I'm not exactly a regular at SROC events, perhaps I should start with a brief introduction. I joined SROC in 2016, having only just started orienteering at the age of 21. At the time I was studying Engineering Science at the University of Oxford, but SROC was the natural choice as I grew up in Ormskirk and was active in a range of outdoor activities in West Lancs Scouts. The year after, in 2017, I moved to Sweden - following Helen who emigrated shortly before I did, to start a new job as a Sports Science lecturer at Mid Sweden University. These days, we make it back to the UK for the occasional big event, and it's been a pleasant surprise to bump into a few club-mates at Stockholm Indoor Cup for the past few years (the maps are well worth checking out in Compass Sport if you haven't seen them!).

I could start by saying that I suspect our experiences of orienteering around Östersund are perhaps not typical of Sweden as a whole. We live in the Swedish "North" - about halfway up the country geographically, and inland, near the mountains. There is snow on the ground from November until May which makes for a relatively short foot-O season, but does provide the opportunity for a couple of months of ski-O.



Add to that that the forests are more-or-less out of bounds from late August onwards for the moose-hunting season, and the best terrain being a little bit too far away for evening events, it isn't quite the orienteering paradise some might imagine! However, we more than make up for it with a host of seasonal activities; rock climbing, mountain biking and kayaking in the summer, ice skating, cross-country and downhill skiing, as well as more recently ski touring during the winter months.

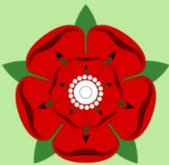
Nevertheless, the local orienteering community is committed to providing a great O experience for the locals, especially during "peak" season. The urban area, home to around 80 000 people, has six local clubs, of which three have active junior sections where around 200 kids participate in weekly training from spring to autumn. Not too many of these translate into participation at 'bigger' events, or even local events, but the newly founded local junior league attracted around 70 participants last



season. During April we have park orienteering on weeknights as the snow continues to melt in the forests, followed by weekly technique trainings and local evening events through May, June and August. Evening events (within cycling/jogging distance of the city centre) can attract 300+ participants in May, at least half of whom are active individuals from other sports who seem to show up to orienteering events for just these couple of weeks every year.

That being said, there are relatively few active orienteers who compete seriously, and are prepared to travel to larger events during the main spring season. The serious 21s tend to run for bigger clubs from outside the region (including fellow Brit & GB squad member Hector Haines, who now lives in Åre but runs for Stockholm club IFK Lidingö). So like many British clubs, we are also thin on the ground in the 21 age groups. There is, however, tough competition - I have a hard time as a competent M21 trying to not come last at regional events. It seems that fellow competitors who would be around my standard either don't show up, or choose to run the open courses (Helen has the same problem - compounded by the fact there are fewer still W21s). By comparison, in the UK, I'll usually find good competition on M21L, and have a good chance of beating a few people on M21E.

For us it's usually a 3+ hour drive to participate in other regions' events, or 6-8 hours to most national events, so we'll manage it a few weekends a year (more than most) - here having our home-built VW camper comes in very useful! One event on the Swedish calendar we always look forward to is 25 manna. This event is almost like the Swedish version of the Compass Sport Cup - but run as a 25-man relay in October, with some legs exclusively for female competitors, juniors, veterans, etc. The clubs in our region usually have to come together to put out a team or two, but it's great fun and a good weekend away.



James (cyan t-shirt) approaching the finish of his leg of 25 manna 2017, Stockholm, Sweden



So what could the Brits learn from the Swedes? We find regional event start lists to be one contrast with typical UK practice, where a small event with 100-200 people will start competitors in age-class courses at 2 or 3 minute intervals, without gaps. Although it would make it more difficult for split starts (meaning one person has to make do with an open course), it makes for nice racing even with small numbers, and less hanging around for results at the end. Usually all timed starts would be done within an hour or so, with open classes having free starts for a slightly longer window, so there isn't too much hanging around for anyone - organisers included. Those who have run O-Ringen will have encountered the rows and rows of open-air, communal showers at the events. But this isn't exclusive to O-Ringen; even smaller regional events will usually endeavour to provide warm showers - outdoors or indoors. It's great to be able to freshen up before a long drive home, and wash out any cuts or scrapes. They even provide biodegradable shampoo to minimise the environmental impact. And in terms of participation, the Swedish orienteering federation's season-long, app-based, semi-permanent orienteering course initiative, HittaUt, has been a phenomenal success in recent years at engaging the masses to get out into the forest by foot or bike and find a few controls. Maps are available in a mobile app or on paper, with GPS tracking easing the barrier to entry for app users, and offer score orienteering with codes to register in the app. Last year over 100 000 participants registered over 5 million checkpoints - that's an average of 50 controls visited by ~1% of the population!

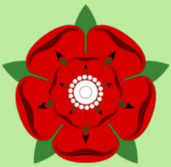
Perhaps the biggest difference among all these musings is the general familiarity with orienteering as a sport in Sweden. Everyone does it at school and many will have participated in local club activities as younger juniors, before perhaps straying away to other activities. The attrition is clear in the older juniors and 21 age groups. But last year, as we sat down to watch the annual sports gala on SVT 1, it was clear the status that orienteering holds in this country as Tove Alexandersson won the public vote for the Swedish equivalent of SPOTY, beating Olympians and World champions from a host of other successful sports. It might be a while longer before orienteering in the UK reaches those dizzy heights!



James exploring some newly mapped, remote terrain, August 2021, Muodoslompolo, Sweden

**We couldn't finish this article without a little plug. In Summer 2023, our region of Jämtland will host O-Ringen for the first time since 1989.** The events will be based around the ski resort of Åre in the mountains, where new maps and exciting terrain awaits competitors! We're really excited after two years of postponements for the event to go ahead, although it's a huge undertaking for our small region, so we're drafting in some help from a few Norwegian clubs from the Trondheim region. Helen and I

will actually be competition directors for the MTBO, which is again a big undertaking as we have relatively minimal experience of organising and of MTBO! However, those events will take place just a few km from home in Östersund, on trails that we ride regularly, so if anyone fancies giving that a go we would love to see you there!



What a fascinating article, and many thanks to James for being patient as we were not able to include it in the previous newsletter!

## Upcoming fixtures

As the newsletter will only be published a few times a year, for upcoming fixtures it is best to check those which are regularly sent out via the club bulletin; also see the BOF website.

SROC will be hoping to keep their crown at the upcoming CompassSport Cup final in Scotland on 16<sup>th</sup> October.

## Club kit

SROC club kit can be ordered from Martyn Roome at [Development@sroc.org](mailto:Development@sroc.org). Tops are from £28 and come with a multitude of pocket, gender and arm length variations; Jackets are £33.



## Links



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