

Bessyboot – Aug 3rd – Controller Comments – Trevor Hoey (FVO)

The attraction of working with a new area for orienteering was a major factor in persuading me to take on the project. The other was reversing roles with Roger from the New Zealand South Island Championships in 1986, when he was Controller and I was planning.

Finding a new genuine TD5 area with access permissions in place is a rarity in England, and there were challenges in providing the right physical and technical challenges for all age classes. We were only able to deliver a successful event because of the advanced work that went into it - having a full officials' team in place almost 12 months in advance was essential, and I was able to visit the terrain 10 months before the event to reassure myself of the quality of the map, terrain and suggested courses.

Late decisions on land access and other issues often provide good reasons why it is impossible to plan so far ahead, but the quality of the event is definitely enhanced by providing everyone with more thinking time. Over those 10 months, courses were adjusted and shortened following test-running, and the maps were revised to ensure consistency.

The area used for White and Yellow was also selected once permissions were confirmed, enabling appropriate courses to be planned. Many micro-decisions followed, such as the use of looped courses on White and Yellow which necessitated making the courses available in the assembly area for prior inspection by parents and competitors. Throughout the information on the web site was kept current, focused on helping competitors to make the most appropriate decisions on which courses to enter - another reason why working to a long timetable helps an event to run smoothly.

Of course, the best thing on the day was the weather, but we had several contingencies in place had there been poor conditions. This included the provision of a roped river crossing on the way to the Blue start and an alternative route from assembly to that start if necessary. We also had arranged the use of the Rest Day as an alternative had extreme weather occurred, such as a named storm which would have made Bessyboot too dangerous to use.

Safety in all parts of the event was also a major consideration.

On the day, the number of casualties was very small but one competitor was air-lifted from the high part of the area - our first-aider stationed at the finish was able to assist. But the medical team from assembly were not able to make it to the site of the accident before the helicopter arrived, thanks to two competitors who came to the aid of the injured runner.

Both Bessyboot and the Combe are fantastic places to visit, for orienteering, walking, climbing, or their geology and landforms. There is scope to extend the Bessyboot map and hopefully we will all be able to return, on a sunny day, to experience more of this unique terrain.