

## Navigation events

**By John Stephenson**

There are several forms of nav events. They range from urban park orienteering courses starting at about 2K up to two day Scottish mountain marathons. Typically they are 2 to 3 hours long and you can choose to walk, jog or thrash round at your own pace, you can also run in pairs if you wish. (Disclaimer: you may fall out with your partner over map-reading decisions, it has been known to happen). The general idea is that to make your running more interesting as you don't know where you will go on the day!. You are given a start and finish point, usually the same place, and a map with various checkpoints pre-marked for you to find. I have done these in the Glossopdale Peak District area and after 20 years I discovered areas I hadn't known about.

Two main differences in format are Score type and Timed.

In score class each checkpoint has a score value, the harder they are to get to the higher the points value. This is totally designed to lure you into going farther in the dream of higher scores.

Timed class usually has a fixed number of checkpoints that you must visit in the right order, fastest one home wins.

I love these events for two reasons. They are less about speed running and more about good navigation and route choice. Also they are a fantastic way to explore an area that you might not have thought to visit.

By the way I think good navigation is mainly good map-reading and compass skills and a clear understanding of features shown on your map; whereas good route choice is about making decisions between a more direct but tougher line versus a longer route that uses easier terrain or a path. The classic example is if you're standing near the head of a steep sided valley. Going straight down and up would be shorter but it means a lot of effort spent in the ascent, but keeping your height going round the head of the valley can be two or three times further but means you arrive at the target point in a similar time but having spent less energy.

Typical events that Glossopdale Harriers have done/will do:

Peak Raid 3, or Explorer Events. Score class events all over the Peak District. 3 hours time period to find/score as many points as you can. Always based on trail running rather than open fell country. Currently these are being run using the MapRunF app that means you enter online, download the challenge map then you run whenever suits you. Once you're finished you can upload your results easily through the app and then have loads of fun comparing your route with others.

Orienteering events. Manchester District Orienteering Club (MDOC) put on lots of events from urban street courses to countryside score events. Currently all are suspended due to the pandemic but when they come back on their countryside events are usually on midweek evenings, pub based and a great way to spend a Spring/Summer evening. These are often in the area from Macclesfield Forest, the South West and up to Glossopdale.

Mountain Marathons. I have to mention them although they've all been suspended for the foreseeable future. Two day events, usually in Wales, the Lake District or Scotland. Hardcore stuff where you start Saturday morning, hunt for checkpoints all day, sleep in your tent at a remote midpoint campsite and continue on Sunday. You have to carry all your kit with you including food for two days. These events are wondrous for discovering the remote wilds of the UK, breathtaking sights very few ever get to see, and a unique camaraderie amongst the competitors. Oh, and you will be lucky to see a path or trod all weekend.