

Planner's Comments – Army Inter Corps/Individual Championships (day event) & Wimborne Gallopen

Having spent more years than I care to remember based in Bovington during Junior and Regular Army service and more recently TA service and as a civilian working in partnership with the Army, I thought I knew Bovington Training Area (BTA) like the back of my hand. That was until I began to plan this event which involved delving into those areas off the beaten track and usually out of bounds to armoured vehicles.

I was fortunate enough to have the use of an Army Landrover for the weekend and clocked up a total of 176 miles placing and retrieving controls as well as checking them on the day. Many more miles were also done on foot getting to those parts that even a Landrover cannot reach.

I was first introduced to Orienteering as a 15 year old Junior Leader at Bovington in 1972 (see picture – somewhat thinner, with a full head of hair and before I learned the perils of orienteering without leg protection!). I had no idea then that I would somehow be responsible for planning the Army Inter-Unit and Individual Championships coupled with a District Event on the same area 33 years later!



As Bovington North (Clouds Hill) had been used for a Gallopen earlier in the year it was decided that the night event would use the northern area on the Saturday and to use Wool Heath and area West 1 for the day event. This posed a particular challenge for me as planner. The 8 km-plus All Weather Driving Circuit (AWDC) winds its way around most of the area prohibiting the planning of long legs without obvious relocation and catching features. Courses also had to be planned to try and avoid the temptation to run along the AWDC rather than take any direct route. I also tried to make best use of all the vegetation and wooded areas rather than subject orienteers to the horrors of too much running on sandy/boggy tank tracks. The longer courses therefore included a road crossing into area West 1 which offered some opportunity to provide controls in an interesting area that offered a fair degree of technical difficulty.

The start and finish locations were chosen with the junior courses in mind as the woods close to the start offered the best area with suitable line features to follow and avoided churned-up tank tracks which may have discouraged the youngsters/novices. It also offered a couple of rather nice gullies which presented a real challenge to one or two competitors at the beginning of the senior courses!

I was pleased to see that all courses were within the BOF guidelines for completion times and that very few runners were disqualified or retired. Scrutiny of results has indicated that disqualifications could be attributed to individual competitors and were not planning errors. Unfortunately the whole of BTA only allows courses to be planned at TD 4 so fast win times were expected for the senior courses.

I received many positive comments about the courses from individuals following their runs and it seemed as though almost everyone enjoyed it which is very satisfying. Miraculously the wet weather that had been around during the previous week abated for both days which added to the overall success of the event.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the excellent advice and guidance that I received from the Controller, Richard Arman (WSX) and also John Warren (WIM). I would also like to express my thanks to the Organiser, Terry Crosby (BAOC) and to Allan Farrington for their assistance throughout.

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