

NESSCLIFFE and EYMORE WOODS

I'm at control No. 5 doing well. I don't look at the map or compass. I punch my electronic dibber device in the gadget on top of the control post and turn direction heading for control No.6. Nesscliffe Country Park near Shrewsbury, 3rd November 2024 about 1110hrs. Weather dull but no rain, trees all around and a few annoying brambles to trip up on. Some muddy bits on the paths. I'm doing well. Back to orienteering after nine months off.

I'm cocky and about to make my first mistake

To be clear me and an orienteering course and mistakes can, and very often do, go together. This is a story, of two events and of my continuing love of a sport I tried to get into in the 1960s, didn't persevere with then but came back to in early 1990s.

I have never finished other than in the bottom half of the field even when in my 'prime' but I didn't mind. This is not a team sport such as football or cricket. Nobody relies on you passing to them or taking a catch. I belong to the Wrekin Orienteering Club and, in West Midlands League events, points can accrue to the club and I then do have a responsibility to the Club and sense of achievement to finish as high up the results finishing times as I can. More of that later.

Now I'm 88 and my knees are a bit dodgy and slopes I could once go up and down with ease are more like the north face of the Eiger. Now twelve and thirteen year olds speed passed me knowing exactly where they are headed. No longer do I compete in the 3k to 7k 'runs'

As you will see – attachments below showing course map and my results- I'm today doing an Orange course only 2.5k long. It's on a piece of land well-known to me. The attachments are there to read because I'm telling the true story of this and another event on the 10th of November and not telling either you or me lies about my results. This, I think, is one of the most important features of your sporting life. Lack of honesty will wear away at your morale, take the edge off your 'game' and eventually sour you for any further participation. Tell it how it is, enjoy it how it is, try to improve from what you last did or accept and enjoy what you do and carry on doing it. It doesn't matter if you are not very good. Sport should not be a trial but a pleasure with a little bit of challenge along the way. A walk might seem to some as good as an orienteering experience. It's that challenge overcome bit that makes the difference.

Just like every other event I've taken part in over the years I set out to do better than last time. On my back are those sporting demons I carry around with me whispering all the time that I should have done and could have done better.

Control 5 to control 6. is over that bit of hill where they cut down the trees so the archaeologists could dig up the remains of some pre Roman fort. My club had its annual club championships there last January. I made a mess of it then and I made a mess of it this day. 22.43 minutes! You see how accurate these electronic bits of kit are – to 43 seconds. My own Bermuda Triangle.

I find control 7 in 8.19.

Then I take 27.09 to find 8. It was within spitting distance! There are no excuses but I blame the malevolent ghost of that bastard Kynaston who still haunts this area. You see I can get quite worked up when I fail. However I shriek at myself not the referee or umpire or fellow team member. It's a tough sport when you fail, orienteering, you only have yourself to blame.

Sam Hudson who is an M12 (male aged 12) won in 29.37. I, a M85 (that is male aged 85 to 90) took 141.24 and was last. Debby, a W60 (women aged 60-65) had a time of 64.42. Shye is Wrekin club as well. She's over twenty years younger than me. I will improve, won't I?

I do at Eymore Woods near Kiddderminster the following weekend.

Before writing about that event a few words on orienteering in general. Sport takes place on your various local sports fields and courts. Anyone can go along and watch. The events are confined to a quite small area. On a much larger scale TV brings you the national and international sports in seemingly endless profusion so much so you may end up feeling bored and finally listless and put off by yet another screaming

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commentator telling you you've just witnessed the wonder goal or run of a lifetime and then showing you it again in numerous replays.

Orienteering is no spectator sport because it is not televisual.

Competitors set off at intervals over a two hour period of time. Eight or nine different lengths of course are happening in roughly the same area. Sometimes the control positions are shared by different courses. Later starting competitors will still be coming in while early starters are well on their way home. Only when all are in and the computer has made sense of the multiple data will each course have its results tabulated and the winners and timings for every competitor will be known and published.

Courses are colour coded. Blue will be the longest course and the most difficult technically. Then come Brown, Green, Short Green, Light Green, Red, Orange, Yellow and White. Around the UK it is assumed that wherever you go each course will have the same equivalence of difficulty/challenge. How can it when you orienteer in such diverse terrain as The Lake District and the eastern lowland areas such as Norfolk? However it is an attempt at guidance.

I never did Blue or Brown. Running and thinking at speed were never my forte. I did all the Greens. Now I'm on Orange. Unfortunately that does not qualify to earn points for your club in the West Midland Orienteering League.

I've moved down to this very much 'lower' level as various bits of me have failed to keep up with my aspirations. Youngsters do very much take part in the sport but as they mature, go off to university /college/work/night clubbing so they drop out. It is very much a sport for those on their 20s, but mainly for the 50s to 70s. Then come the 80s and the inexorable dropping off as hips, knees, and maybe mental attention span declines.

I used to benefit from this. We compete in 5 year age groups. When I was in the M75 to 80 group I was, I think, twice or three times West Midlands Champion in my age group. M80 to 85 I was once champion. All this because there was a big falling away of my competing peer group. I felt really chuffed!

Now I am falling away. But I can still get around an Orange course even if I take my walking pole and take forever. Oh, but I still feel chuffed when I finish having found all the controls.

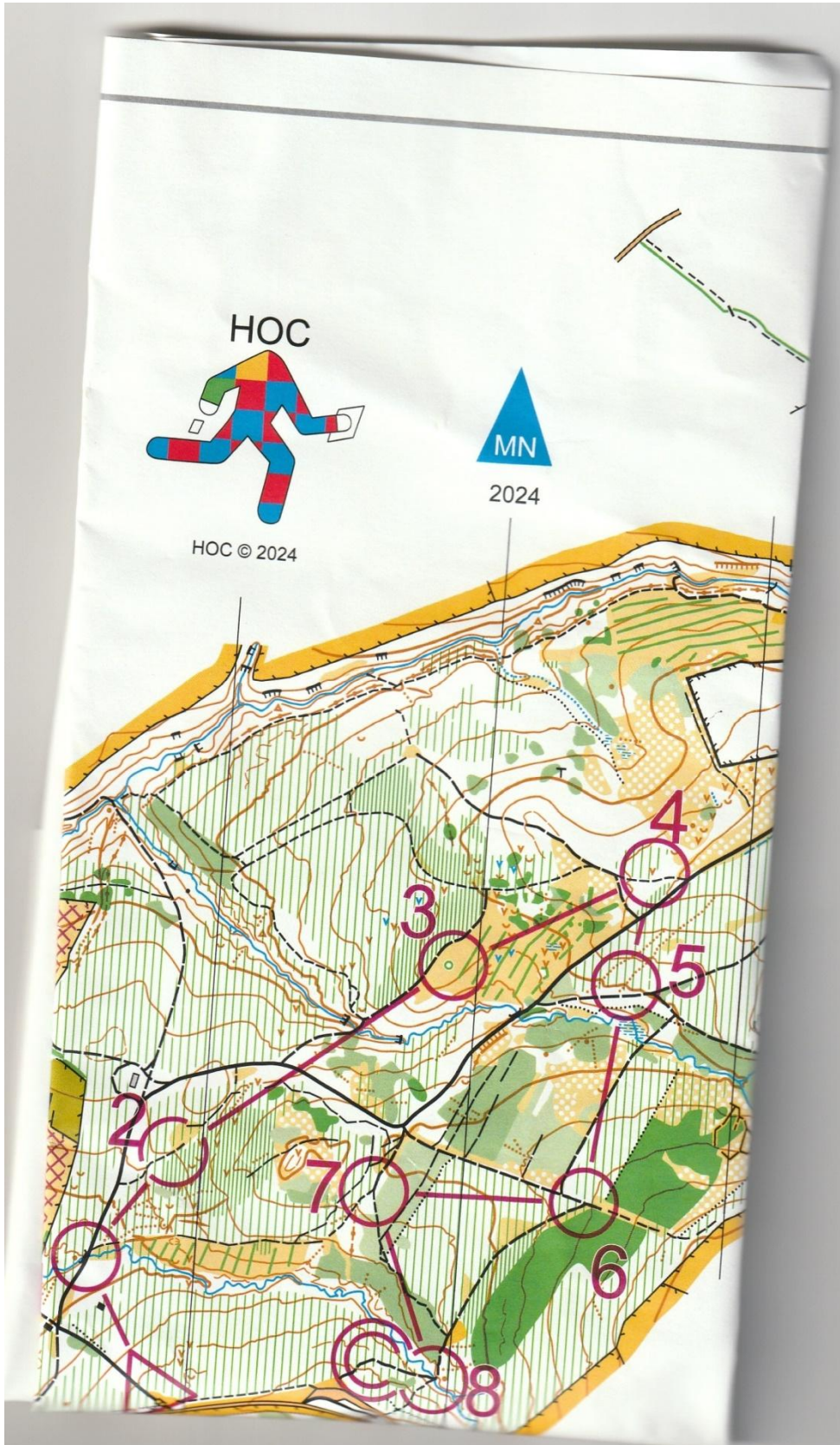
Eymore Woods, NW of Kidderminster, West Midlands Orienteering League event Sunday 10.11.2024. The weather is fine. Warmish, no rain. Woodland area with rough open space, scattered trees, bracken, undergrowth and path network. Lots of the paths are covered by fallen leaves and sometimes quite muddy and slippery. Difficult to see them and slippery. Falling down is something I've not needed to think about before. Just get up and go. Now the walking pole is my ever present piece of equipment.

Nesscliffe Orange was 2.5k with 13 controls. Eymore is 1.9k with 8 controls. This seemed quite a big difference. This time I was again last but only took 48.09 minutes as opposed to 141.24 the week before. I felt that this course was, probably, nearer to the guide lines for an Orange with controls much nearer the path network. Our setter at Nesscliffe, I think, added technical, difficult and length. In that sense I thought it a better course. The M12 winner took 20.30, Debbie 33.19 so the gap between them and me was very much closer and I think more reflective of what I can usually do.

I was chuffed. I'm about to sign up for a Cannock Chase event at the end of the month. So, two events after a long layoff and another one to come and then the club championships at Severn Valley Country Park. Liz and I will aim to be the oldest on the courses we select and therefore win back our shields.

The future? On the first of January 2026, because we orienteers go into the next five year age group as the New Year breaks not on our actual birthdate in that year, I will become a M90. I wish no aging fellow sportsman still 'running' ill health but some of the good ones will remain as M85s for a year or two and some will bin their orienteering shoes. I may, just possibly may, have a year to become West Midlands Champion of my age group. I would be so puffed, I guess, and so mightily chuffed.

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Eymore WML 2024

November 10, 2024

John Riley

Club: WRE

Age Class: M85

Course: Orange

1.875km 60m

Time: 48:09

SI-Card Number: 2066696

Start Times:

Punching: 10:51:55 [used]

Finish Times:

Punching: 11:40:04 [used]

Control	Leg Elapsed	
S S	0:00	0:00
1 47	3:09	3:09
2 71	2:54	6:03
3 79	7:41	13:44
4 76	10:45	24:29
5 75	6:04	30:33
6 77	7:13	37:46
7 78	5:18	43:04
8 44	4:07	47:11
F F	0:58	48:09

You are currently 7th out of 7 on Orange

Current leader 20:30 on Orange

You are currently 1st out of 1 on Orange in M85

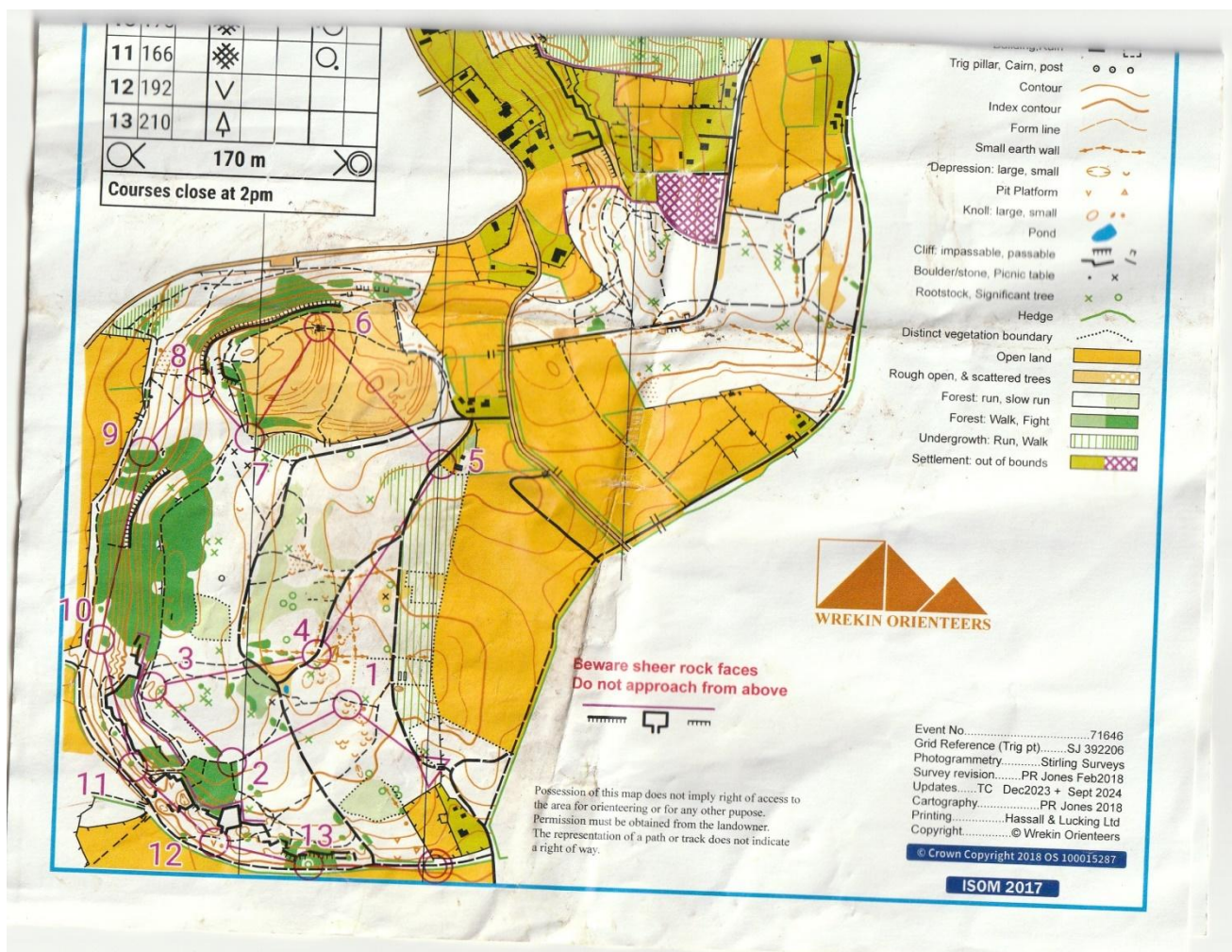
Current leader 48:09 on Orange in M85

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Orange

1.875km 60m

Pos	Name	Club	Age	Time	Behind	Award
			Class			
1st	Samuel Hudson	HOC	M12	20:30		Orange standard
2nd	Joey Fox	HOC	M12	22:39	+2:09	Orange standard
3rd	Sonia Hudson	HOC	W40	26:18	+5:48	Orange standard
4th	Pippa Blackmore	HOC	W12	28:14	+7:44	Orange standard
5th	Vicki O'Brien	IND	W40	29:29	+8:59	Orange standard
6th	Sally Ingram	HOC	W65	31:45	+11:15	
7th	Deborah Clough	WRE	W60	33:19	+12:49	
8th	Carol Farrington	NGOC	W65	35:07	+14:37	
9th	John Riley	WRE	M85	48:09	+27:39	



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Orange - 2.5km 60m

Pos	Name	Club	Age Class	Time	Behind
1st	Samuel Hudson	HOC	M12	29:37	
2nd	Deborah Clough	WRE	W60	62:42	+33:05
3rd	Mike Kennedy	IND	M60	64:31	+34:54
4th	David Hopkin	IND	M70	64:33	+34:56
5th	John Riley	WRE	M85	141:24	+111:47
	Robert King	IND	M55	m12	
	Penny Hemsted	HOC	W80	m11-12	

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Nesscliffe WML

November 03, 2024

John Riley

Club: WRE

Age Class: M85

Course: Orange

2.5km 60m

Time: 141:24

SI-Card Number: 2066696

Start Times:

Punching: 10:46:08 [used]

Finish Times:

Punching: 13:07:32 [used]

Control	Leg Elapsed	
S S1	0:00	0:00
1 191	5:30	5:30
2 167	11:30	17:00
3 170	7:13	24:13
4 183	5:04	29:17
5 188	5:08	34:25
6 195	22:43	57:08
7 209	8:19	65:27
8 201	27:09	92:36
9 163	2:59	95:35
10 175	14:56	110:31
11 166	12:23	122:54
12 192	8:04	130:58
13 210	7:44	138:42
FF1	2:42	141:24

You are currently 5th out of 5 on Orange

Current leader 29:37 on Orange