

Birmingham & the Jewellery Quarter

7/3/2019

Comments

Everything fell into place as I started to plan the event around Xmas. I wanted to make a return to the Jewellery Quarter, but also take runners into Birmingham itself, so an assembly within the JQ seemed to make sense. OO-map makes planning really easy and within a few minutes I had a 1:7500 map centred to the east of the JQ, stretching from Victorian industry in the west, through the business district to the modern Aston Uni campus in the east. I had been musing what to use as control sites and had considered Blue Plaques, but many of these seem to have disappeared. Then I noticed a small button on OO-map toolbar labelled 'add postboxes'. CLICK! All the postboxes within the bounds of the map immediately appeared as control sites along with a set of control descriptions containing all the postbox numbers – brilliant! All I had to do was check them out, which I did during February and delete any I didn't want. Planning never got easier than this, I just had to choose a start triangle.

As this was the final event of the 2018-19 Night Street League, I decided to go a bit upmarket for our event centre. Just off centre of the map was the very picturesque St Paul's Square, and it so happened that my daughter had recently started working at the St Paul's House Hotel right opposite the church. A quick visit revealed that the hotel had an annexe at the rear which was accessible through a side archway. No orienteers needed to enter through the main door, and it was unbooked for the night in question, and I could have it for free! Success!

As the evening of the event approached, the weather changed from beautifully mild spring, back to the damp seasonal norm. The first orienteers started to arrive shortly after we got there at around 6.10pm. Reports started to come in of traffic chaos. Apparently Birmingham's Black Taxi drivers were staging a go-slow protest around one of the traffic islands on the inner ring road, effectively gridlocking most routes.

It was good to see Adrian Bailey out running again after his recent injury and, being on a mission to be elsewhere that night, he started a bit before everyone else. Then the rest started at 7pm taking turns to punch the start box before heading off into the square and then their chosen first control. Russell Finch from SWOC arrived late having taken an hour and a quarter to do the 3 miles from Spaghetti Junction to the venue.

There were 22 controls of 10 points, 6 of 20 points and 1 each of 30 and 40 points. Only Dave Aldridge managed to clear the course, which he did in just under 51 minutes. Dave Williams and the pair of Eloise and Simon from Mercia FR managed all but one 10 pointer. The arrangement of the controls made getting all the 10 pointers and the larger value controls a bit tricky, such that aside from Dave Aldridge only Peter Langmaid successfully visited all the 10 point controls.

Around 8pm all the runners returned to the start accompanied by the pealing bells of St Paul's Church. Marian ran into the wrong building and Barry McGowan lost his dibber on the run-in. It was good to see Barry back out on the NSL circuit after a few years absence.

As people downloaded it became clear that 3 postboxes, checked just a fortnight beforehand, were missing! Marian and Nicola both agreed that one of them had been there for at least 35 years and probably much longer. At a previous event I organised in Birmingham, a whole row of streetlamps I was using for a control were removed in the days leading up to the event. Am I cursed? If anyone would like something removed in Birmingham, let me know and I'll add it to a map.

Having the room to ourselves was great. A good dozen of us ordered meals and service was prompt and we were told that we would be welcome back again.

Andy White, Organiser.