

Rock Coppice WEE 13.1.09

Rock Coppice is a nice little compact area, part of the Wyre Forest. First mapped in 1979 by Paul Graetz it had a quickee survey by Robin Harvey of Harvey's maps and scribing by Terry Foxton for a mapping course held in 1985. Alison resurveyed in 2004 removing a large chunk that had been sold off to the golf club.

Part of the area is owned by the Frank Chapman Outdoor centre which apparently specialises in residential courses for Sandwell primary school kids; quite impressive I thought. We appreciate their help and use of part of their centre. The disabled toilet opened for us could have made a decent event centre. Every path junction seems to have a permanent control plaque and punch. It would be interesting to know how many there are, probably over 100 as Alison says some are off paths.

I spread the 27 controls pretty evenly throughout the area. Although 9 controls were on easy features on or just off path junctions this was not necessarily helpful if competitors were zig-zagging about. There was no obvious optimum route. The map was still very good with only a few paths and vegetation possibly needing a bit of tweaking. When I checked out my arm chair planning I moved a few controls as I thought they were too easy, but it probably wasn't really the case.

Dave Williams was back fairly early clearing the lot in 49 minutes. I thought the big hitters would do better, but I was wrong. At one point I heard a blood curdling scream coming from the forest and I thought, oh dear, somebody has injured themselves. A couple of minutes later a light came towards me from an unexpected direction but went straight past the tent to car park and then back into the forest. Apparently Chris McSweeney had realised he had gone without his compass and had to return to his car, wasting 6 minutes and possibly the competition.

The event found a window in the icy January weather, although temperatures dropped to freezing by the end of the event. Barry Houghton/Alison's set up of a tent with heat and light was much appreciated.

It is disappointing the turnout was again small and out of line with the effort put by organisers.

Barry McGowan