



Semper Igneus

The Compleat Mad Hoc 2006-2011

*A little Knowledge is a dangerous
thing*

Unabridged, unexpurgated, unfathomable



Orienteering in Borsetshire
and the environs of Beryl's
Bottom

Forget Ad Hoc, what you need is

MAD HOG

We bring you the truth!

Issue 1
April 2006

Knoll Publications
(proprietor: Lord
Knoll)

HOC membership passes 20,000

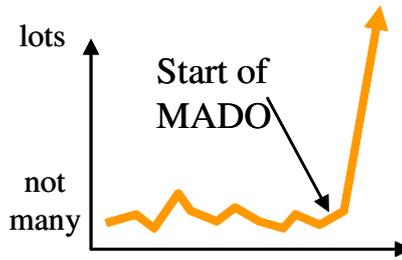
Free £10 note enclosed between pages 7 and 8!

By our Malvern reporter, Hugo Thynne

The amazing success of HOC's MADO introductory orienteering initiative continues to confound pundits. Following huge turnouts at local events, almost the entire population of Malvern has now joined the club. Orienteering stocks are low – compasses are changing hands for up to £250 each on the black market and a top notch Acme Thunderer whistle recently fetched £150 on e-bay.

Whirl

As our high tech graphic clearly shows, MADO is sweeping all before it. "It's been a whirl" admitted MADO mastermind and



co-ordinator Belinda Bartmann (29), "Unfortunately our Membership Secretary has left the country after receiving 19,678 more applications than the 10 I promised her." Meanwhile, rival clubs are scratching their heads in desperation. OD's Coventry Orienteering Development (COD) is thought to be under...(cont p3)

Orienteering Explained.
Number 1: **Elephant Track**

Useful beaten-down pathway through undergrowth made by passing elephants.



Inside this Issue

Red, yellow, green, 3
blue. We ask "Are HOC colours the new black?"

"I like a man with 7
magnetic deviation" – Exclusive interview with Kim Vermillion.

Caption Competition

We give you the caption, you give us the drawing! This month's caption: "No Jack dear, I said quite clearly that it was a thumb compass".

Doping Scandal

The orienteering world was rocked to its foundations yesterday by news that West Midlands String Course Champion Ben X (3) may face a lengthy ban from the sport after testing positive for Calpol in a random drugs test. His mother Mrs X defended accusations that some of Ben's String Course times were "suspiciously fast". "He's a wee lad with a lot of energy" she claimed...(cont p2)

Things you never knew about orienteering

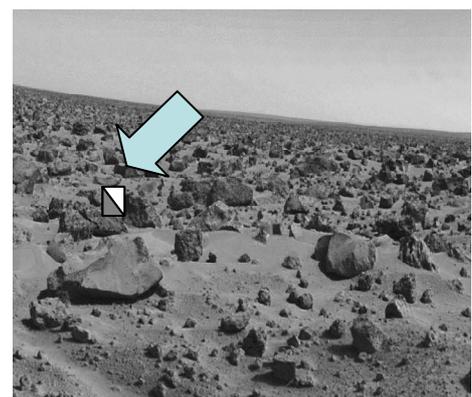
1. It is an anagram of "iron green tie"
2. Er....that's all.

Orienteering Flag Found on Mars

Last night top scientists were investigating the amazing possibility that latest pictures from the Boogle space probe reveal an orienteering control on the surface of Mars.

Fantastic

Space expert Colin Pullover (59), speaking last night said "This opens up fantastic opportunities for inter-planetary competition. The first thing we must do is establish whether the Martians have adopted the SportIdent or EMIT systems of electronic timing". Pale and tremulous HOC supremo, Barry Barrington (50) said



that he doubted that Martian orienteering would catch on as it lacked atmosphere. BOF spokesman Eric Slowly, who declined to be named, said "If it's one of our controls then it's stolen property and we want it back"....(see pages 4,5,and 902)

MAD HOC

We bring you the truth!

Issue 2
May 2006

Knoll Publications
(proprietor: Lord
Knoll)

Orienteering Explained.
Number 2:
Compass Bearing
Carrying a compass.



Magnetic North Pole moves to Bromsgrove

by our polar reporter Hugo Thynne

Last night top scientists were investigating the astonishing fact that the magnetic North Pole may have suddenly moved to Bromsgrove. Professor Colin Pullover (58), an expert, said last night that he had no idea why the change had occurred.

Dahlias

“One moment it was up there off the top of the map somewhere, and now it’s turned up in the back garden of 73 Thringstone Avenue.” The shift is a major blow for owner Mrs Enid Trellis who has already experienced the arrival of a major international polar expedition. “It’s been proper terrible, what with them huskies digging up my Frank’s dahlias” she said.

Crack

Meanwhile teams of crack cartographers are working round the clock to adjust magnetic north lines on all HOC maps. Anonymous BOF spokesman, Eric Slowly, advised BOF members to remain calm and



stock up on tins of soup. And in other developments at HOC, membership continues to spiral out of control as MADO takes an even tighter grip. Various sightings have been made of the missing membership secretary who is thought to be on extended leave as bags of membership applications continue to pile up....cont page 2



Spot the Orienteer

Cannock Chase 1/1/06 11.37am
Wind: WNW 7 mph Temp: 11° c
Age:44 Name: Derek Star sign: Pisces
Favourite colour: Red
Pin Number: 2198 Number of Dido albums owned: 3

Caption Competition: The winner of April’s competition was Jason Twinge of Droitwich whose cartoon cannot be printed since it offends fourteen ethnic and religious minorities (and OD members).

Inside this Issue

Cheating. We ask “Is 3 it cheating?”

Orienteering on ice; we assess its chances of making the Winter 5 Olympics.

Dream to reality! Scientists develop the 10 world’s first foot and mouth proof shoe lace.

Sign our petition to have the rocky knoll 14 reinstated as an official IOF control site.

Vermillion on Top

In a surprise move yesterday, HOC unveiled local screen star Kim Vermillion (21) as their new Honorary President. HOC supremo Barry Barrington (51) appeared pale and tremulous as he defended the decision saying that it was for “services to orienteering.” Ms Vermillion said that she was honoured and looked forward to getting down to some good dibbing on the Pink Course. (pictures p4)

Chess Corner The answer to last month’s chess competition is Mr Bun the Baker (*Are we sure about this? – Ed*)

It's big, it's bad, it's got to be had!

MAD HOG

Truth stranger than fiction

Issue 3
June 2006

Knoll Publications
(proprietor: Lord
Knoll)

Orienteering Explained.
Number 3:
Local Event
Orienteering event
held inside a pub



Scottish Championships won by dog

Hugo Thynne reports

Last week's Scottish Championship's triumph for Rover, a three year old labrador from Barking, has left top scientists scratching their heads and BOF officials searching their rule books. Rover, whose official class is K9, found M21E to his liking and romped clear by over five minutes. "I'm extremely proud of Rover's achievements" said extremely proud owner Nigel "Menzie's" Ming. "He doesn't give the others a sniff of a chance. I am now campaigning to get a bowl as well as cups provided at the refreshment points."

Dog IQ

Rover, said to be dog tired after his run, was unavailable for comment, but posed briefly for photographs when his incognito exit from the event was rumbled. Dr Colin Pullover (58) commented "I'm not surprised Rover won. Tests show that he has a dog IQ of over 200. And he has four legs". A BOF spokesman, who asked for his name to be withheld said "There seems to some sort of unfortunate loophole in the regulations. But we'll find a way to bar this animal, or my name's not Eric Slowly".



Malvern Hills going, going....gone!

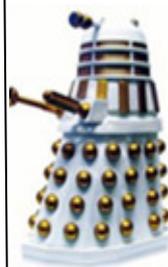
The orienteering world was rocked to its foundations yesterday when it was revealed that due to the huge numbers of new HOC orienteers competing and training on the Malvern Hills, at the current rate of erosion, the hills may be completely gone within ten years. Top scientists have blamed this on the runaway success of the

MADO initiative. HOC supremo Barry Barrington (52), speaking on Midlands Today, appeared pale and tremulous as he appealed to the membership to stay calm and if possible, train in bare feet. He also made an emotional appeal for the return of the club's missing membership secretary, seen last in Brazil.....(cont p6)

Inside this Issue

Stuff	3
More stuff	5
Stuff that will leave you wanting even more stuff	10
Stuff we can't print	17
Hot poster of Kim Vermillion in her new film "The Controller"	23
"No whistle? Flog 'em" – pause for thought with the Rev Nigel Peabody	99

Advertising feature



(not actual size or model)

Amaze your friends and brighten up your mantelpiece with this set of 1:24 scale die cast orienteering models. Titles include "At the Start", "Dibbing", "Lost", "Mad Farmer" and "Policeman". £8.99 each! Hand painted in your club colours*

Also available, tree models at £2.99 each. Why not buy in bulk (copse £49.99, Wyre Forest £99999.99 exc postage). *blue only

"My friends were amazed" J. T. (Droitwich)

Broaden your mind! Read

MAD HOG

Truth but not as you know it!

Issue 4
July 2006

Knoll Publications
(proprietor: Lord
Knoll)

Orienteering Explained.
Number 4:
Aiming off
The exact opposite of
aiming on



British Orienteering in shock move to India

by Hugo Thynne, our roving reporter in Mumbai

The orienteering world was rocked to its foundations yesterday by the shock news that in the wake of rising costs, the whole of British orienteering may be forced to relocate to India. "Unfortunately this is the modern trend" explained eminent economist Sir Colin Pullover (58), "When it comes down to pounds versus rupees, there's only one winner".

Members

Pale and tremulous HOC supremo Barry Barrington (53), when asked how this would affect his members, said that it would probably mean packing extra sandwiches and not getting



No! I said a tiger in the woods -Ed

back in time for the Antiques Roadshow. BOF spokesman Mr X (a.k.a Eric Slowly) defended the decision saying that members could now take advantage of on-line orienteering which would make things simpler and much less muddy. (editorial page 8)

Jason's bid for glory

In a bizarre move to improve his results, fanatical orienteer Jason Twinge of Droitwich has changed his name by deed poll to "Jason Twinge HOC M35 41.55". "I intend to run Blue courses" said Twinge last night, "and my research tells me that with this new name I should have no problem in finishing at the top of every results list". Mr Twinge HOC M35 41.55's name has already caused a serious malfunction of the HOC membership database and the resignation of the temporary membership secretary.

Things you never knew about Harlequins OC

1. It is an anagram of "Lorna's quiche"
2. Er...that's all

Experience in lifting heavy mail bags would be an advantage, but quite frankly we're so desperate we'll consider anyone.

Film Competition

We have a pair of free tickets to give away for the West Midlands premiere of Kim Vermillion's controversial new film The Controller (18)*. Just be the first person to tell us who her co-star was in "Last Control on Malvern Common". Was it (a) Rock Coppice (b) Rocky Knoll or (c) Monty Don? *Warning! Film is not suitable for children or hamster lovers (or hamsters for that matter).

Packed inside

- Latest sightings of the Naked Orienter. 3
 - Living with triskaidekadibphobia – a harrowing account of the fear of visiting Control 13. 5
 - Don't bother washing that smelly orienteering kit – use it to make wine! 10
 - A further selection of unforgettable magnetic north lines. 17
 - 101 interesting things to do with bracken 22
- Situation Vacant:** HOC Membership Secretary. Voluntary post. Only a few hours hard labour each day.

MAD HOG

It's in here so it must be true!

Orienteering Explained.
Number 5:
Re-entrant
Someone who enters the
same event twice



Picture This!

by Hugo Thynne,

Drastic measures intended to stop the decline in event attendances will be put place by BOF next year, Mad Hoc has learned. Top consultancy firm Pullover and Associates (estab. 58 years) have been conducting detailed research into all aspects of the sport and are now set to reveal their chief finding: Orienteers are leaving the sport because pictorial control descriptions are too dull.

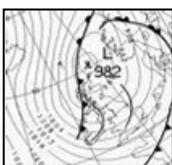
Injection

“The old designs are just too 1970s” explained Chief Executive Colin Pullover. “The sport needs an injection of twenty-first century isometric pre-biotic irony to bring back the punters. We are already working on some hot new ideas”. A sneak preview of the new designs was given the thumbs up by MADO mastermind Belinda Bartmann (29) who said that they reminded her of Dudley in the springtime and would look particularly fetching in dappled sunlight. However BOF opinion may be divided. Erics Lowly (name scrambled to preserve anonymity) said that he couldn’t see what was wrong with the old ones and that BOF fees were now in line to rise by 50% in order to pay for the consultancy. (Sport or Art? See p17)

Apology: We apologise to readers confused by July’s orienteering tip which advised them to sow their carrots 6” apart. The correct tip should of course have read 4” apart.

**Posh ‘n’
Becks**

(not seen
orienteering this
month)



Depression



Gully



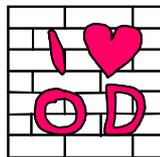
Gate



Source



Broken
Ground



Ruined
Wall

Packed inside

A brief history of 3
hamsters in orienteering

Get the steamy new 5
Rock Coppice fitness
video that BOF couldn’t
ban!

“My compass caught
fire!” We continue our
countdown from 75 to 10
51 of the 100 most
unusual orienteering
excuses

Naked Orienteer Nicked

The controversial Naked
Orienteer is being held at
Hereford Police Station on
suspicion of violating BOF
regulations regarding full arm
and leg protection ...(cont. p2)

Sing When You’re Winning...

The next-generation orienteering timing system, designed to reduce the risk of fraud, will require runners to “dib and sing” at controls. Following recent cases of cyber-cheating, the need for additional security has become apparent. The new system ensures that all controls are visited only by the person who is registered to an e-card. For out of breath runners, the voice recognition technology works best when the message is sung.

Runners will be asked to sing their BOF number to the tune of “Land of Hope and Glory”. Poor singers may be forced to attend BOF choral classes in order to brush up their skills. “The last thing anyone wants on a peaceful Sunday morning is an out-of-tune cacophony in the woods” said a top boffin working on the new technology at a secret research location in St Andrews Rd, Malvern. (Lloyd-Webber “interested” p11)

You can't keep your hands off this organ

MAD HOG

It's true so it must be in here!

Issue 6
Oct 2006

Knoll Publications
(proprietor: Lord
Knoll)

Orienteering Explained.
Number 6:
180 degree error
Unfortunate result of
misunderstanding cooking
instructions for a soufflé



Orienteering Banned by the King

by Hugo Thynne

The orienteering world was shaken to its foundations yesterday by the shock news that according to fourteenth century English law, orienteering is an illegal sport punishable by 30 days imprisonment. Eminent historian Colin Pullover (58, Professor of History at The University of Pershore) explains. "The reference to orienteering is unambiguous and is clearly a strong move by Henry IV to keep archery as the number one sport"

Compaff

The previously un-discovered legal manuscripts state that "Any person that taketh up ye mappe and ye compaff for pleasure shall be made to ferbe thirty dayf in ye gaol." The law has never been repealed and so still applies today. All English orienteering has been suspended with immediate effect. BOF spokesman Eric Slowly (107) advised members to stay calm, stock up on tins of soup, and to sharpen their arrows. However reports that BOF will now be known as BAF were, he said, "wide of the bull's-eye" (Editorial page 11)



Packed inside

- I was 2nd – to a penguin! 4
- Updated register of mad and crazy land-owners 8
- Orange Squash – the overdiluting scandal 11 rumbles on
- When controllers turn bad! – a terrifying tale of tyranny from a traumatised planner 34

Naked Orienteer on the Loose

Following the escape of the Naked Orienteer from Hereford Police Station last night, police are appealing to the public to stay calm. However, they are warning people that on no account should he be approached as he is thought to be armed with a Silva Type 7NL compass, an Acme Thunderer whistle, and not a lot else. "He's used them before and may not think twice before doing so again" said Chief Inspector....(cont p8)

LORD KNOLL: A STATEMENT "I would like to clarify some of the issues surrounding what the media has dubbed the 'Knollgate' scandal. On July 10th, 2006, Lady Knoll and I attended the prestigious Ledbury Poetry Festival, an event also patronised by the well known local actress Ms Kim Vermillion. During the evening's entertainment, I needed to attend the Gentleman's facilities. On my return I became confused and accidentally found myself in the vicinity of the Ladies cloakroom whereupon Ms Vermillion offered to show me her extensive collection of orienteering outfits. In pursuit of courtesy I agreed. At some point later, having removed my shirt due to the extreme heat, I unfortunately slipped and became entangled in a pair of pink lycra leggings. Ms Vermillion was kindly assisting in their removal when some photographs were taken and subsequently misrepresented. I would like to stress that nothing of an impropriety nature has ever occurred between myself and Ms Vermillion, and that the late hamster was her personal pet. I have the full support of Lady Knoll, my two sons Rocky and Brent, and the board of Knoll Publications. Mad Hoc is in safe hands and I have nothing more to say on the matter"

Winning Lott'O' numbers: 3, 11, 744, 9 of Spades, Old Kent Road, Peter Crouch, Tinky Winky, π

A balanced and erudite read

MAD HOG

True to it's words!

Issue 7
Nov 2006

Knoll Publications
(proprietor: Lord
Knoll)

Orienteering Explained.
Number 7:

Contour – A dodgy
holiday package



Page 17
returns!
Packed in
between pages
16 and 18

Strike by 'O' Fundamentalists

by Hugo Thynne

The orienteering world was shaken to its foundations yesterday by the shocking events that unfolded at Malvern Hills. A formally unknown extremist organisation calling itself CAMPRO invaded the forest and began forcibly removing maps and compasses from any competitors encountered. In place of the stolen equipment, a pamphlet was issued, containing the following message
"We, members of the Campaign for Real Orienteering (CAMPRO), hereby demand that our voice be heard. We deplore the use of artificial aids to navigation, namely the compass and the map, We believe that man, and man alone (no women permitted) should be pitted against nature as God intended. We believe in the use of the sun, the moon, the stars, prevailing winds, moss on trees, migrating birds and the rumble of distant motorways to find our way. We believe in the complete cessation of orienteering during months with an "O" in them (and Wednesdays during Wimbledon). We believe in complete body cover including the head and face.. We believe in Father Christmas and free school milk"

Bonkers

The Very Reverend Colin Pullover (58) commented "We should be careful not to dismiss these people as bonkers. They might have a good

point" A pale and tremulous Barry Barrington (50), speaking on behalf of HOC said that it was impossible to hear the M5 from Malvern. Eric Slowly (BOF) recommended the new lightweight (6kg) Silva sextant and said that his mother knitted a mean balaclava. Guide to British moss –Page 7

Packed inside

Shock lab results show 3 that Turkey Twizlers are "the best food for orienteering"	
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Naked Orienteer to dine with the Queen	10
New map scale of 1:1 hits "unforeseen snag"	44
Scratch 'n' sniff the new Eau de 'O' odour.	50



LEGAL NOTEBOOK Miles Piles



The dramatic scenes at the Old Bailey yesterday as the libel case brought by publishing magnate Lord Knoll against the Rumpus-Sport magazine entered its second week, seemed like a brief throwback to the sixties. The first appearance in court of the talented young actress Kim Vermillion, clad in what can only be described as the antithesis of full arm and leg protection, caused a sensation and had even this seasoned hack forgetting to top up on nicotine for a couple of hours. Grilled intensely by Rupert "Hatchet" McRupert QC on her role in the Knollgate affair, Vermillion's brilliantly executed testimony

brought forth gasps of amazement and hilarity in equal measures as she revealed the extraordinary series of events involving herself and Lord Knoll at this year's Ledbury Poetry Festival. By the time she reached the shocking demise of her beloved pet hamster, Gerald, the whole courtroom was in thrall to her and there was scarcely a dry eye to be seen. During questions, the uproar following her answer to the judge's query "And just what exactly is a dibber?" suspended proceedings for fully ten minutes. Who indeed would crush a butterfly on a wheel? The case continues.

DUMM HOG

Die vollständige Wahrheit

Orienteeing Erklärt
Zahl 8:
Knöll – Englische
aristokrat



Unglückliche Remarkung funk Internationales Kerfuffeln!

Hugo Thynne reportat

Die orienteeing welt wurde zu seinen grundlagen geschaken durch das furore gerüttelt, das durch eine unvorsichtige remarkung in einem kleinen Rhineland dorf verursacht wurde! Während, das dörfchen von auf einer gutwillenmission besichtigend, Eric Slowly (107), der BOF repräsentant, leider und unerklärlich gesagt zum bürgermeister "Deine mutter war ein lemming" anstelle von "Danke"

Glückliches
Weihnachten zu
allen unseren
Lesern!



Wurst

Diese remarkung war leider die schlechteste mögliche Insultdigung in diesem teil von Rheinland Deutschland. Herr Colin Pullover (59) erklat "Der lemming wird hier betrachtet, da ein symbol von stupidity". Herr Slowly recoverd gut von uber denn kopf mit einer wurst geschlagen werden hat, aber internationale orienteeing relationen mit Deutschland unter aufhebung bis weitere nachricht sind. Vorsprung durch technik!

Zanachst ist es Hollywood für Kim

Was auch immer das resultat des beleidigungfalles durch Lord Knoll gegen Rumpus-Sport holte, scheint es frei, dass Hollywood stardom auf den karten für Malvern schauspielern Kim Vermillion folgend ist. "Es ist weit von Worcestershire zur Westküste" sagte einen latten und tremulous HOC wortführer Barry Barrington (50), "aber wir wünschen unseren honorary Präsidenten gut in, was auch immer sie beschließt, zunächst zu tun".

Spate fussballresultate:

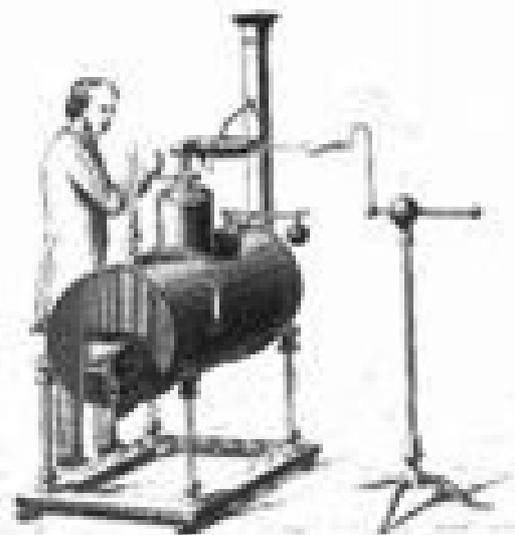
Burussia Munchengladbach 10 Neasden 0
FC Hamburg 0 Dollis Hill 1 (abandonen, lemminge)

Nach innen verpackt!

Interview mit Claudia Schiffer	3
Claudia Schiffer im Wald	5
Claudia Schiffer treffen Kim Vermillion	10
Claudia Shiffer und der Naked Orienteer	44
Forbenreiches Plackat von Claudia Shiffer	50
Claudia Schiffer hat schluckaufe!	77

Sonderangebo

Fabelhafte übereinkunft!



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und Tee-Hersteller

Nur bloss erst 399 euros

All
new

THE BIG VALUE MONTHLY

Special Chinese edition – only kidding!

PAGES 14-20 FREE!

Jan 2007

mad hoc

**Ask Rocky! The Rocky Knoll
Agony Column Inside**

**World lycra shortage –see
our counselling page**

Win a year's
supply of
safety pins

Kick him out!
My rat bag husband told me
he was Championship
standard - then I discovered
he was only Bronze!

**Tempers flare at auditions
for the "O" Factor**

The woman
with 150 'O'
Suits and still
nothing to
wear!

Trauma for Geri

Loses second whistle in three years

Said to be inconsolable

Friends and family rally round

A big hello to all new readers. Following the collapse of the Knoll Publication Empire, we are delighted to have acquired this prestigious monthly title. We hope you enjoy our new direction for Mad Hoc and that you are as excited by the rebranding as we all are.

Feb 2007

mad hoc

Ask Rocky!

No problem too large or too small

No fee

No pussyfooting

No hawkers

Dear Rocky,

Recently our club has been afflicted by a spate of control thefts leading to courses being declared void. Do you have any ideas on how this might be prevented? KS, Walsall

My father used to take pot-shots at vandals with his shotgun if we had any trouble at the Knoll Towers O-Ringen, and quite frankly this is by far and away the best method to deter the blighters. Unfortunately the authorities lacked the same vision and we had to lock him up during events. I'm interested that the problem has only manifested itself recently. Have you considered the possibility of lemming infestation. Top scientists have recently discovered that hoards of *lemmingus munchalotus* (not to be confused with their distant cousins *lemmingus suicidus*) can consume an entire orienteering control in under thirty seconds. Slow moving orienteers have been known to lose whole gaiters *without feeling a thing!* The solution is a liberal dosing of rat poison around each control site. Alternatively use brat poison for the human equivalent.

Dear Rocky,

I keep mispunching at orienteering events. What should I do? Sarah, Droitwich Spa

Let's get one thing straight right away Sarah, it's important to use the correct terminology when discussing this sensitive subject. The approved terminology for your problem is chronic dibbing dysfunction (CDD) and recent research by top scientists has revealed that its root cause is actually genetic. This means there is not a lot you can do about it except blame your parents for your poor breeding and to avoid having children. I have an altogether different theory that for a cure involves rolling naked in a bed of freshly cut wild garlic under a full moon, and you're welcome to come down to my wood and give it a try any time you want since I need to collect more data on the subject. Ultimately my best advice is to try punching fewer controls and to that end I would recommend golf.

Dear Rocky,

When I'm running I sometimes find myself humming a song. Just lately I haven't been able to stop myself singing the Birdie Song. Please help me. Desperate, Dudley

Dear Desperate from Dudley (are you sure you're not Dudley from Desperate?), you must get proper medical attention immediately. I'm no doctor but it sounds like you may have contracted Birdie Flu. This is actually a more serious and mutated form of the Agadoo Virus, which swept through Britain some twenty years ago with disastrous consequences. The Boney M Clinic in Birmingham has the best facilities for dealing with conditions like yours and their isolation wards are second to none. Please hurry.

Rocky is available to respond to readers' problems

Mar 2007

mad hoc

Ask Rocky!

**No stone left unturned
No charge
No one unsatisfied
No particular place to go**

Dear Rocky,

Our club has great difficulty in getting people to volunteer to officiate at events, to the extent that events are at risk of being cancelled. What is your solution? BB, Malvern

Dear BB, the annual Knoll Towers O-Ringen never had this problem as we had the estate staff well trained to take over these duties. If you are unfortunate enough not to have any servants then I must query your over-reliance on the volunteering process. It is an accepted fact that most orienteers, left to their own devices, will never offer to plan, control or organise events as they are, beyond actually running around courses, inherently and terminally lazy. They need an additional incentive to do so. After years of research I have concluded that the best form of incentive is not, as generally thought, expenses, league points, alcohol, tickets to see Kylie, etc, but fear. What your club needs to do is to appoint an Enforcer. The Enforcer is a shadowy and ruthless figure with an ambiguous portfolio reporting directly to the top who has free reign to use whatever means to coerce idle club members to take over positions of officialdom. The Enforcer's methods are left up to him but an ideal blend of persuasion is probably 10% pester, 20% threat, 30% blackmail and 40% terror. In order to avoid losing membership the Enforcer should be allowed to extend these methods to ensure annual renewals (BOF take note). This approach will guarantee limitless staging of events. Happy orienteering.

Dear Rocky,

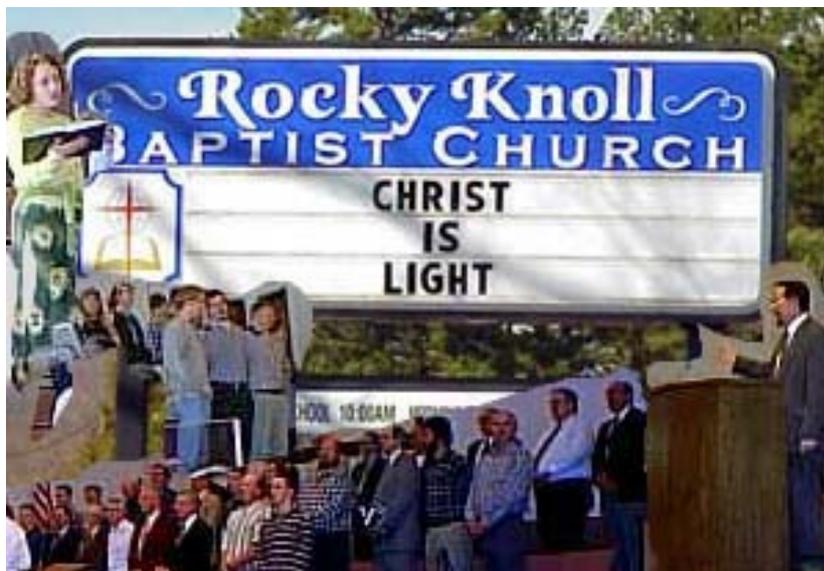
Where can I find that extra 5% that I need to keep going for longer? KV, Hollywood

You need to watch your weight. I find that a full body shave and wax works for me every time. And don't forget to trim your shoe laces.

Dear Rocky,

I'm really useless at orienteering. What hope is there is there for me? Bill,

Bill, don't underestimate the power of prayer. Check out my new franchise (available Sundays am).



Rocky is available to respond to readers' problems.

Apr 2007

mad hoc

The Rocky Knoll Music Review
The best advice on how to spend your
hard-earned cash
Fully biodegradable

Green (REM)

First in a series of seven planned concept albums extolling the merits of the colour-coded system of courses. Strangely, we're still waiting for the other six.

I'm in Love with my Compass (Queen)

The opening track to "Night at the West Midlands Night League" sounds as good as ever.

Mellow Yellow (Donovan)

A cautionary tale about attempting a colour coded course under the influence of soft drugs.

I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For (U2)

"I have climbed the highest mountains, I have run through the fields" - Bono admits to going out-of-bounds and other misdemeanours.

Maps (The Yeah Yeah Yeahs)

Withering and cynical take on the controversial White Downs map shortage at National Event 1.

The Boy with a Thorn in his Side (The Smiths)

Morrissey droning on about too many brambles on junior courses at West Midland Events

Lost in the Supermarket (The Clash)

Joe Strummer explains how a short cut through Sainsburys made it all go horribly wrong at the Oxford city centre races.

Do you know the Way to Amarillo? (Tony Christie)

Caused a stir due to its implications of cheating.

New Boots and Panties (Ian Dury and the Blockheads)

Ian Dury describes some of the more unconventional orienteering purchases he made at Ultrasport.

Blue Monday (New Order)

Explores the theme of post-navigational depression

Where the Streets Have No Name (U2)

What are they complaining about? Midweek night street orienteering maps were always like this.

STOP PRESS: The whistle-checking policy at this year's Knoll Towers O-Ringen (probably the last one ever) will be as follows: Any one presenting one of the said items which they have been using for more than five years and which is not of a bright colour, will be subject to the Old Grey Whistle Test. This is for your safety. Thank you.

Now please wash your hands

May 2007

ye oldie mad hoc

matter for the more mature orienteer

Podcast and blog free
Available in large print
Caution: may contain
traces of nuts

Out and slightly about with Ramblin' Roger

I hear things have been getting nasty in the new M/W70Z classes introduced for Zimmer frame users. Accusations of cheating have been flying around. The latest spat? A GPS guidance system discovered installed inside a frame. They'll be motorised next. Watch this space.

Overheard at the JK: One elderly competitor to her equally elderly husband. "Now dear, don't forget to take two of the small blue ones at control 3, three yellow at number 5 and wash down a big pink one at the drinks station...." Is that what they mean by Doping Control?

Just to stir things up a bit, what is the correct protocol for precedence when one meets a fellow competitor coming along a narrow path from the other direction? Who should be the one to step out of the way and let the other past? Mrs Ramblin' Roger claims it should be ladies first and who am I to disagree. However, my strategy is quite simple. Stare wildly ahead and totter along with mouth open and head on one side (dribbling adds to the effect) and this gaga gambit will scare even the keenest M21 into the bushes. Unfortunately Mrs Ramblin' Roger tells me this is how I run all of the time.

You Know You're Getting On A Bit When (Part 284)...you can finish courses in fewer minutes than your age. Or it is other way around? I can never remember. Which brings us onto You Know You're Getting On A Bit When (Part 285)....

I don't know about you, but I find the leafleting at orienteering events has changed somewhat. At the last event I attended I returned to my car and under the wiper blades I found an advert for a stair lift, another for a walk-in bath, and a phone number promising cheap Viagra. I couldn't decide which was the best offer so in the end I plumped for all three. Bye till next time...

An ode to M60

I used to be M40
(London – Birmingham)
A straight and speedy highway
Describing how I ran

And then I reached M45
(The route to Coventry)
Short and sweet, direct and neat,
Perfectly summed up me

M50 and M55
(Ross and Blackpool spurs)
Older but still functional
Through oak and beech and firs

But now I am M60
(Manchester Orbital)
Round and round in circles
Slowing to a crawl
I know not where I'm going
Or when I need to stop
Where once was wile and once
was guile
There's frankly not a lot

So should I reach M90
(Edinburgh to Perth)
Of actual orienteering
I'm sure there'll be a dearth
Too many hills, too many pills
All there'll be left for me
Is dreaming of M20
(London to the sea)

EJ Throbb (age 59¾)

Don't get caught out by early start times!
Elephants for hire!

Guaranteed to produce only the highest quality elephant tracks. Special "no droppings" promise for the first 60 minutes. Rates available on application
Also available: Quite large dogs, hamsters (state quantity)

More Late Arrivals at the Orienteers' Ball

Mr and Mrs Nalmarsh and their slightly wet son Caesar.
Mr and Mrs Sidegold and their very keen son Justin.

June 2007

mad hoc

No corner of the arts is safe from the roaming eye of Rocky Knoll
This month – recommended reads
Disclaimer: Mad Hoc accepts no liability for any injuries sustained whilst reading this material

Recommended Reads

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night time (Mark Haddon)

The mysterious disappearance of the controller during a particularly wet Western Night League event at Castlemorton Common is solved by a precocious M10 and his pet hamster.

Put out more Flags (Evelyn Waugh)

Best known as a novel, but also contains many interesting tips for planners, as the title suggests.

Control-22 (Joseph Heller)

Conspiracy theorists are convinced that if you read this aloud in synchronisation with watching the Wizard of Oz with the sound turned down, the secret of life, the universe and orienteering will be revealed to you (the answer is rumoured to be something to do with a man called Wilf).

A Series of Unfortunate Events (Lemony Snicket)

In my experience, anything held in Wales.

A Brief History of Timing (Stephen Hawking)

Impenetrable discourse on the technical side of orienteering finishes and the theory of how to cope with runners approaching at the speed of light. The book everybody seems to have on their shelves but nobody seems to have read (although the rumour that it includes a recipe for soufflé near the end is probably an urban myth).

The Forty Seven Thousand and Thirty Nine Steps (John Buchan)

Now known to be about an early Scottish Mountain Marathon.

The Secret Training Diary of Adrian Mole (Aged 43 $\frac{3}{4}$) (Sue Townsend)

A curious mix of love, politics, fartlek and measuring things with rulers.

Day of the Rhododendrons (John Wyndham)

The follow-up to Day of the Triffids in which terrified orienteers flee from hordes of rampant killer mutant rhododendrons sweeping down from Snowdonia and invading West Midland forests. A cult classic in the under-rated specialist orienteering sci-fi horticultural horror genre. “Chillingly believable” – The Malvern Gazette.

Eats Orienteers and Leaves (Lynne Truss)

I thought this book was about grammar but the truth is altogether more grisly. Not suitable for younger juniors.

NEW The Kim Vermillion Book of Tantric Orienteering.

Some of the most advanced and outrageous techniques ever published. As featured on Blue Peter. Banned in 19 countries. “I can now keep going for 5 hours on a Yellow course” – Eric Slowly (107)

More Late Arrivals at the Orienteers’ Ball

Mr and Mrs Ablefence and their disagreeable relative, Uncle Ross. You don’t want to get on the wrong side of him!

Oh look, it’s Dr Bedcommon and his charming daughter Holly.

July 2007

mad hoc

World Exclusive

**Full and unabridged
Frank and uncompromising**

You won't believe it (we didn't)

The Rocky Knoll Files

People ask me why I'm not often seen out orienteering. I'm a firm believer in the fact that you can have your finger on the pulse of the sport by keeping your nose to the ground and picking up on the intrigue, the scandal and the dirt. And then publishing it. The actual running, I try to keep that to a minimum. I prefer to maintain a low profile. Mind you, my navigation is second to none. My skills were all picked up whilst I was on the run from the authorities, hiding out in the backwoods with Lord Lucan and Shergar. Happy days. My favourite piece of O kit has to be the flame thrower. An indispensable aid to the removal of brambles and undergrowth. I love the smell of napalm in the mornings. My father used to send me and my bother Brent out each year to clear the estate woodlands in preparation for the Knoll Towers O-Ringen. We became experts. The terrain became so fast that some of the classes were won in sub 4 minute kilometres. And that was just the W65s. Our other job was to check that all of the man traps had been removed. We did a pretty good job apart from one year when we had an unfortunate incident involving the BOF chairman. That needed a bit of covering up but fortunately our story about the escaped crocodile held up. It's a tragedy that the whole Knoll Towers estate has to be sold off following my father's trumped up disgrace in the Knollgate affair. He never actually orienteered himself you know (I think he had a man to do that sort of thing for him), but he had a sharp eye for making money and the O-Ringen fitted the bill perfectly. That and the abundance of lycra around, preferably attached to young female bodies. That was his weakness and undoing really. He used to have a collection of it which he kept in Room 101, somewhere in the East wing. I think it may have burned down sometime in the 1980's. There always seemed to be some part of the building on fire at any one time. The whole scandal thing was a complete set-up though. Somebody must have switched the hamsters; I haven't been able to prove anything yet but I'm pretty sure Gerald is alive and well and living in Hollywood somewhere. That Vermillion woman sure is a foxy lady. My mother, Lady Knoll, has taken the whole thing full on the nose but she's bearing up well, bless her. She might appreciate downsizing as she never did get the hang of finding her way around the house. We once lost her for three whole days when she went off to find the West Drawing Room. I'm often asked what the high point of my orienteering career has been. Well I can tell you that it was exactly 432 metres above sea level when I used a microlight to take a short cut in the 1989 Knoll Towers Mountain Marathon. Unfortunately this co-incided with my orienteering low point since disqualification handed the title to my brother Brent. We didn't used to get on back then but nowadays we've become partners in little private detective business I've set up. We specialise in solving orienteering crime. Unfortunately we're persona non grata with the Federation since the disastrous outcome to the case of the Reliant Robin and the disappearing ink. So most of the time I'm either operating under cover or in disguise. My true age class is only releasable on a need-to-know basis. You can't be too careful in my line of work. I don't really believe in fancy food before competition but a couple of Rothman's usually do the trick first thing in the morning. And you can't beat a couple of pints of Old Scroat to rehydrate afterwards. My hipflask suffices when thirst strikes out in the woods. I was gutted when father lost the publishing rights to Mad Hoc, but I'm pleased that the new owners have seen fit to keep me on as a contributor. Journalistically, I'm working on a very interesting case involving MADO, van conversions and the Ledbury Poetry Festival at the moment but I can't reveal any more details other than to say that it's going to be huge. I suppose I've yet to meet the perfect woman but I haven't given up hope. Mind you, my father's title will pass to my brother, so there's no potential attraction for anyone in being married to the future Lord Knoll. Finally, my best orienteering tip, which I can heartily recommend, is never, never, ever, under any circumstances, make an orienteering tip. It's always worked for me.

September 2007

mad hoc

**Get ready for the new season
Don't be caught short
Let Rocky Knoll brush up your
orienteering know-how**

Doctor Knoll's Lexicon of Lesser-Known Orienteering Terms

Baggeridge – *ill-fitting lycra.*

Baggott – *An attempt to insert a map into a map case whilst simultaneously reading it and running at high speed (only five successful baggotts have been recorded in the history of orienteering).*

BIMM – *has now become synonymous with any event it's almost impossible to get to for reasons of remoteness, expense or ambiguity of the directions.*

Dearden – *a shortened version of Deardennis, the correct form of starting a letter to the ex HOC chairman.*

Dugmore – *describes an orienteering site that has been manually altered in order to improve its use for an event (usually used in relation to pits and depressions).*

Embrey – *the sense of disappointment and frustration felt after making a bad mistake ("I was feeling a bit embrey after control 6"). Often followed by a post-event haugh.*

Fauset (archaic) – *the meaning of this mysterious term is lost in the mists of time.*

Hawkbatch & Skeys – *Solicitors specialising in orienteering litigation. Made their name in the infamous orange overdilution scandal of the late '90s.*

Keeling – *a sudden and overwhelming yearning in the middle of an orienteering course to have a piece of Wilf's chocolate thingy.*

Kidnalls – *the most painful place that one can sustain an orienteering injury ("old Jack's never been the same since 'e were whacked in t'kidnalls").*

McGowan – *the McGowans are an exclusive list of 278 orienteering areas thought to have been visited by their namesake during a single year. McGowan-bagging has now become an obsession for many.*

Mews – *the pause between looking at your map at the start and actually setting off.*

Nevell – *to analyse orienteering data to within an inch of its life.*

Powick – *the noise made when one is whacked in the kidnalls.*

Rumford – *an unexpected encounter with a member of the Ford family whilst orienteering.*

Schaanning – *reminiscing about events before 1970 (too much schaanning can make you quite disley).*

Sloman – *someone who takes longer to complete the course than it took the mapper to originally survey it.*

Stiperstones – *a terrible affliction caused by wearing damp O kit on later days of multi-day events.*

Titterstone – *a funny looking boulder.*

Uff - *the noise made by an orienteer struggling up a steep hill..*

Uffmore – *the noise made by an exceptionally unfit orienteer struggling up a steep hill.*

October 2007

mad hoc

The long wait is over!
Are you in line for the big prize?
We reveal the answers to the Rocky Knoll's Quiz of the Year

ROCKY KNOLL'S QUIZ OF THE YEAR

Thank you for the many entries that came flooding in. Your knowledge of the obscure, warped and obsessive is, quite frankly, an honour to the sport. We apologise to those readers who did not receive the August edition of Mad Hoc due to circulation problems – you have no doubt been spared many hours of mental torture. And so, with out any further ado, here are those much sort-after answers.

SECTION A: General Knowledge

- 1) 42
- 2) Barnsley (but we'll also accept Basingstoke).
- 3) Strangely enough, true (you can get them "under the counter" at Ultrasport).
- 4) World Speed Dribbling Champion (was later stripped of his title due to substance abuse).
- 5) Eric Slowly (1999, 2002 and 8 times in a week in 2004).
- 6) He ate 17 helpings of Wilf's chocolate thingy at a single event.
- 7) Fined for being outside the official BOF regulation of one part orange to eight parts water.
- 8) They were all chased by animals whilst orienteering ((a) dog, (b) wild boar, (c) herd of lemmings)
- 9) (i) Disqualified for being Welsh (ii) Mistaken for Mr Burns from the Simpsons.
- 10) It was voted the rudest shaped piece of woodland in the UK.

SECTION B: Observation: A typical scene at the finish of this year's British Championships was altered to include ten deliberate mistakes. Did you spot them all? The mistakes were as follows.

- 1) The runner nearest the camera has bear feet (no really!).
- 2) The queue at Wilf's only has three people in it.
- 3) The third nun from the left is wearing an engagement ring.
- 4) The rabid dog has five legs.
- 5) Hogwarts is clearly visible on the horizon (normally it would be obscured by the sand dunes).
- 6) The burning tent is being extinguished by a fireman whose hose is knotted.
- 7) Mistake 7 is clearly missing.
- 8) The policeman arresting the Naked Orienteer has a NYPD badge.
- 9) Six Portaloos were blown over by the freak wind gust (not eight as shown).
- 10) The exploding sheep was actually a feature of the relays, not the individual day.

SECTION C: Hollywood

- 1) Kim Vermillion and Russell Crowe (6 months)
- 2) Kim Vermillion and Matt Damon (2 months)
- 3) Kim Vermillion and Johnny Depp (3 weeks)
- 4) Kim Vermillion and George Clooney (1 week)
- 5) Kim Vermillion and Brad Pitt (5 minutes and counting)

SECTION D: Mad Hoc Highlights

- 1) Gerald the hamster.
- 2) The lycra was allegedly pink.
- 3) She was eventually tracked down to New Zealand.

TIEBREAKER: There are 8756253 trees in the Wyre Forest (will allow plus or minus 10). Congratulations to our winner, Jason Twinge of Droitwich, who scored 100%.

November 2007

mad hoc

Starting today – a gripping tale of intrigue set in the murky underworld of West Midland orienteering. Only one man is prepared to fight for justice. That man is Rocky Knoll. Now read on.

Rocky Knoll in The Mystery of Beryl's Bottom

Part 1 - The Message

It had been a quiet couple of weeks in the offices of Rocky Knoll, Private Investigator, and the sudden ringing tone of the telephone shattered the calm like a brick through a window. I picked up the handset a split second before I realised that in fact a brick had just come through the window and landed on the tatty lino in a scattering of jagged glass shards. However, this was no ordinary brick. Its previous owner had seen fit to wrap it carefully in paper, held in place with a rubber band. I removed the paper, which revealed the following message. "Meet me tonite Beryl's Bottom 2000 hrs. A friend." Hmm, some friend. The street outside was as empty as the bottle of scotch on my battered old desk. I sucked my last Rollo and mused on the missive. Strange things had been going on down at Beryl's Bottom recently, ever since the permanent orienteering course had been opened by Kim Vermillion, local starlet come Hollywood and Old Bailey celebrity. Unfortunately also my father's nemesis. Nothing wrong with her knolls and re-entrants. However, the aforementioned woodland had been repeatedly and mysteriously "re-arranged" over the last few months, each time necessitating extensive re-mapping. Fresh depressions had been dug, new knolls piled up, new clearings created, paths blocked and extra ones trampled. It looked like sabotage on a grand scale, but there were no leads. The BOF boffins were stumped and I was out of favour after the disastrous case of the disappearing ink and the Reliant Robin....

Beryl's Bottom car park in the murky November gloom wasn't my idea of fun. I checked my watch. 2015 and no sign of anyone, friend or foe. An owl hooted and another minute's drinking time in the Lord Nelson slipped by. Just as I had decided to leave, the noise of an approaching car made me draw back into the trees. The vehicle stopped and a figure stepped out. "Where are you, Knoll?" called a harsh voice. "I know you're there. You just stay out of it, you hear. We've sorted your pal out and you'll be next if you keep meddling!" He peered into the darkness, cursed and got back in the car. "This is none of your business" he threw in as a parting shot and was gone in a flurry of mud and gravel.

It was I felt, very much my business whether I liked it or not. Threats like that were like a red rag to a bull and I wasn't going to be intimidated. I checked the tyre marks; he needed a new offside rear as soon as possible. The shoe prints were interesting. He was clearly overweight and walked with a limp. But this was getting me nowhere. Just like my life. Hell, if Evelyn were here things would be OK. I'd know what to do and I'd know what to say. But she wasn't and I had a case to solve. It was no use living in the past; it was time to move on and start again. Easier said than done, I reflected as I pushed open the Saloon bar door of the Lord Nelson, oddly known to its locals as the Lord Charlie. I hoped Brent would be there, I was going to need him....

Brent occupied his habitual chair in the bar. As usual he was scruffily dressed, hair wild,

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looking as if he had just come in from feeding the pigs. In fact he probably had. How shall I describe Brent? Well, for a start he was my brother, just two years older than me, but that doesn't even scratch the surface. He defied description by most normal means so, dear reader; let's just agree not to try. He eyed me inquisitively, noting my muddy boots. "I'm not sure I want to know what you've been up to," he remarked, his words at odds with his obvious curiosity. I filled him in with the details of my eventful day. "Ah-ha," he chortled, pushing a pint towards me, "The mystery of Beryl's Bottom deepens. It's a regular cornucopia of dubious characters and shady goings-on. Have you got any theories?" I leaned forward. "My theory Brent, is that you should get off your backside and help me get to the bottom of things, no pun intended. We need to get a closer eye on what is happening. To put it bluntly, I want you to help me run twenty-four hour surveillance on the wood, starting tonight." Brent looked dubious. "I think, dear brother, that you are becoming over-obsessed with this. It sounds dangerous. Of course, that doesn't bother me but I'm concerned for your safety. Why not just take the polite gentleman's advice and forget the whole thing. Next time it won't be a threat, it'll be a bullet." I took a long draught from my glass and fixed him with a steely gaze. "I would," I said, "If it was just me involved. But what about our mysterious brick thrower. There are other people out there with information who could be in trouble." "Typical Rocky," smiled Brent, "As altruistic as ever. Go on then, count me in. But get another round of Old Scroat in first. We're going to need it."

A week later we were: (a) knackered, (b) no wiser. We repaired to the office, replete with boarded up window. Times were hard since the Knoll empire's fall from grace. I sat with my legs up on the desk. Brent lounged on the threadbare sofa, his head immersed in the Borchester Bulletin. The latest Hollywood scandal involving Ms Vermillion was splashed on the front page and there appeared to have been another betting scam at the Colwall sheep races. Brent had eyes for other news. "It says here," he said, "That the Federation had a break-in last week. Nothing was stolen apart from the base maps for a West Midlands orienteering area with a newly opened permanent course." We stared at each other and exclaimed in unison "Beryl's Bottom!" I grabbed the paper off him and smiled wryly. "Shame I'm persona non gratia with the Federation. I don't suppose we'll get any information via that route. But I suggest that we chase up this Miles Piles character who wrote the piece. Perhaps this is a lead at last....."

Is this really a lead for Rocky and Brent? Who is the mysterious brick-thrower? What does it all mean for the future of orienteering? Read on in next month's gripping instalment of The Mystery of Beryl's Bottom!

December 2007

mad hoc

Private Investigator Rocky Knoll and his brother Brent may have a lead into mysterious goings-on at Beryl's Bottom permanent orienteering course. Now they need to talk to local reporter Miles Piles who broke the story about a break-in at the Federation offices.....

Rocky Knoll in **The Mystery of Beryl's Bottom**

Part 2 – Something fishy

The secretary at the Head Office of the Borchester Bulletin was apologetic. No, Mr Piles wasn't in work, hadn't been in for several days and they had no idea where he was. And no, this wasn't his habitual behaviour but it was possible he was working on something big and was lying low. Brent snorted in derision. "They've got delusions of grandeur. He's probably throwing a sickie." I didn't see it that way. "We've got to find him." I persisted, "Let's go round to the address they've given us. It can't do any harm." Ten minutes later we were standing outside the front door of a modest semi-detached suburban house, getting no response from ringing the bell or knocking on the window. "I'm going round the back," muttered Brent, "Give me a leg up over the gate." He needn't have bothered; the gate was open and we found ourselves in an untidy back yard. There was no sign of life but something curious immediately caught my eye. A pile of bricks. Now, one brick is very much like another but I was in little doubt that these bricks matched the one that had been delivered to me in such an unconventional manner a week before. Brent read my mind and picked one up. "Perhaps he was planning to send a whole load of messages," he mused, "Anyway we'll check this one out at the office when we get back". I considered for a moment. "This puts an altogether more sinister slant on the whole affair. Our Mr Piles could be in some difficulty." "Perhaps he's buried somewhere in Beryl's Bottom" offered Brent in an unnecessarily morbid manner.

I took stock, sucking on a Rollo. "No-one's been here for days. I could see a pile of letters in the hall." Brent brightened. "Right, we need to get in and take a look." He tried the handle of the back door and to our mutual surprise it opened easily. He went forward into the hall whilst I checked the kitchen, which looked as if its owner had been interrupted during a meal, most likely breakfast. Brent re-entered the kitchen holding a piece of paper. "It's all bills and circulars apart from this. What do you think?" I studied the A4 sheet which was blank apart from what appeared to be a telephone number and a date; 07/05. I did a calculation. "If that's the 7th of May then that's er.....this coming Friday. We could be getting a bit paranoid here though. Why should it be suspicious?" Brent looked exasperated. "Well ring the number and we'll find out." He reached for his phone but I put my hand out to stop him. "Don't use it, use Miles's instead. At worst it'll just cause confusion." We waited as the ringing repeated then cut out as the recorded message began. "Hello, this is the office of Professor Colin Pullover, University of Droitwich Spa. I'm probably out giving an important statement to the press. Please leave a message after the tone....." Brent dropped the handset back into its cradle. He gave a low whistle. "Professor Pullover. Professor of what I wonder." I thought hard. "I'm sure I know that name, hang on...I think he was one of the VIP guests at the opening of the Beryl's Bottom permanent course. I've got it! Nanotechnology. The science of sub-microscopic machines doing incredible things. They say it's going to be massive." Brent's face creased. "What's the connection between nanotechnology and orienteering then? Co-incidence or something suspicious?"

His musings were interrupted by a crashing sound from outside the front of the house. Brent opened the front door and we rushed out onto the road. A dazed-looking bespectacled man, of short stature and plump physique, was clambering out of a small red and rather bent car which had embedded its front end into Mr Pile's garden wall. He wore a grubby raincoat and a bewildered expression. As he

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lurched towards the drive Brent ran forwards and took his arm. “Slowly, slowly,” he said, “It’s best if you sit down.” The man gave him a quizzical look and slumped onto the pavement. “How did you know my name?” he gasped, his words becoming indistinct. Brent bent over him, trying to catch the words. “What’s he saying?” I asked, leaning forward keenly. “Something about fish,” replied Brent, “I think he’s got a bit confused, he’s saying we should beware of a fish.” “What sort of fish?” I persisted, but Brent ignored me and stood up. “We better get an ambulance straight away; he’s passed clean out, poor chap.”

Whilst Brent called for help, I made the man as comfortable as possible and then went round to inspect the car. On a hunch I lay down and took a close look underneath. I was right. It looked like the brakes had been tampered with. Opening the door of the car soon confirmed my suspicions. The man’s name, clearly visible on an envelope lying on the passenger seat, explained his curious reaction to Brent’s words. I knew it well. He was from the Federation. I went back to Brent and told him my two pieces of news. He gave a low whistle. “The mysterious Eric Slowly then,” he mused and lowering his voice muttered “He doesn’t look 107 to me”. “107 kg more likely,” I retorted, somewhat rudely, “What’s he done to deserve this sabotage, I wonder?” Brent stared at me. “Come on, you clot!” he spluttered. “Can’t you see it? It can’t just be a coincidence he’s turned up at Pile’s house just like us. Either he’s onto something or.....” “....or perhaps he’s been asked to come here,” I interjected, “He’s probably been sent brick-mail, just like me.” My brother looked worried. “No, it can’t be that. Piles wouldn’t want to meet him here.” “Then it’s probably a trick,” I said. “He was going to either be kidnapped, just like what must have happened to Piles, or come to a sticky end due to the nobbled brakes.” Brent’s eyes opened wide and we both grasped the significance of those words at the same time. “There must have been some-one hiding in the house,” he whispered. We stared at each other for a moment and began creeping back towards the front door. Once inside we went slowly round the house together, room by room, finishing up in the kitchen. There was no-one to be found. I glanced at the table and I felt the hairs stand up on the back of my neck. There was a fresh piece of paper propped up against the sugar bowl. We could both clearly read the words on it. “*This is your final warning.*”

The silence hung like a noose for a few seconds and then was shattered by the noise of the front door bell. We stumbled into the hall. A paramedic was standing by the open door. “Where’s the patient then?” he asked briskly. “D..didn’t you see him on the way in?” I stammered as Brent brushed past and out onto the driveway. He turned to me, lost for words, shaking his head in disbelief. Things were getting worse by the moment. Eric Slowly had disappeared!

Who is behind these mysterious disappearances? Who will be the next to go? Will it be all over by Christmas? Find out in the next instalment of The Mystery of Beryl’s Bottom, only in Mad Hoc.

January 2008

mad hoc

PI Rocky Knoll and his brother Brent are investigating the connection between mysterious goings-on at Beryl's Bottom permanent orienteering course, the disappearance of local reporter Miles Piles and nanotechnology. Now the sabotage of Federation official Eric Slowly's car has made things yet more complicated.....

Rocky Knoll in **The Mystery of Beryl's Bottom**

Part 3 – Seat of Learning

“Do you fancy a visit to the University of Droitwich Spa?” That question had been the precursor to our current journey. There had been a significant pause. Brent looked up, bleary eyed. It had been a bad day yesterday what with the second threatening message aimed at making us lay off the investigation, the car accident and the disappearance of Eric Slowly. It was a good job for us that we had found him crawling confusedly through the neighbour's geraniums, as the paramedic had been about throw a wobbly. So now the Federation's finest was in hospital, hopefully out of harm's way for a few days and we had to act fast. Any attempt to get through to Professor Pullover, who we suspected may have a link to Piles, had failed so it seemed to me like a good idea to go the university in person and do some digging around.

“I still don't know what you think you're going to achieve by coming here,” chuntered Brent as we approached the magnificent new campus. He had been in a negative mood all morning and it was getting on my nerves. “He's probably not even in the country. And who is paying us for all this work anyway.” I swerved to avoid an erratic cyclist. “Oh for goodness sake shut up,” I exclaimed. “We haven't got any other business at the moment and we are the ones being threatened, remember. Now get ready, we might need some of your breaking and entering skills once we reach the department.” It wasn't long before we found ourselves in smart new science building, trying to look casual as we wandered down a corridor of offices. “Ah, here we are,” I said, pointing at a nameplate. “Prof Colin Pullover, Head of Faculty, Spokesman”. There appeared to be nobody around and it was silent apart from the distant sound of grass being mown. “Here goes.” I knocked crisply. There was no reply but we both heard a shuffling sound from what sounded like behind the door, and then it was quiet again. “Did you hear that?” whispered Brent, looking enthusiastic for the first time. I nodded and knocked again. Nothing. “There's definitely someone in there,” hissed Brent. “Try the door.” Ignoring the fact that the Professor might actually be wanting some peace and quiet, I pushed the handle down and found the door wasn't locked. We edged into the room. “Professor?” I queried, more in hope than anything else. He clearly wasn't there, but someone else was. For a moment I thought it was a cleaner, mistaking what must be the height of casual fashion for overalls, but then I realised we were into a different league altogether. The last time I had seen the figure standing behind the desk was in a photograph on the front of a popular newspaper, and Droitwich Spa was the last place I expected to meet them next, especially as they appeared to be pointing a gun at the pair of us.

Time seemed to stand still and then Kim Vermillion gave a gasp of relief. She put the object down on the table and I realised it was a stapler. She gave a nervous giggle. “I'm sorry,” she stammered, “I thought you were somebody else. Do you know where Colin is?” “I was going to ask you the very same question,” I replied, “but we are obviously in the same boat.” She moved forward, holding out her hand. “I'm Kim” she said. “Don't I recognise you from somewhere?” “Rocky” I replied, “Rocky Knoll. And this is my brother Brent.” At the mention of name of Knoll the actress turned pale. “Oh.....oh, I'm sorry...” “Don't worry”, I reassured her, “It's all water under the bridge now. The court case was between my father and Rumpus Sport. It's not your fault. And I'm very sorry about your hamster”. She looked awkward, as I thought she might. Brent meanwhile was in some kind of

parallel universe. He appeared totally starstruck. I nudged him. “Oh yes, right” he coughed, “Errr.. Ms Vermillion, er..Kim, why exactly are you here, and who else did you think we might be?” “Well it’s a long story” she sighed, and proceeded to tell it to us.

At the end of the story Brent gave one of his low whistles. “So you seem to be as mixed up in this as we are,” he said, almost in admiration. “But you actually know the Professor”. “Oh yes” she smiled. “Col and I go back a long way. Well, back to the opening day at Beryl’s Bottom to be honest. He’s so nice. He invited me to come up and see his tiny little bots if I was ever around, so here I am. But it seems he’s not around when we arranged.” I picked up the stapler and fiddled with it. “There seems to be a theme developing.” I pondered. “Piles, the Prof, Eric Slowly and now Kim here, all of them were at the Beryl’s Bottom ceremony, and now all of them seem to be in danger of some kind. Well, we don’t know about the Prof, but it’s odd he’s not here. And I’ve just got this nagging suspicion that he might be the link.” Before anyone could reply the stapler slipped from my hands and fell to the floor under the desk chair. As I bent down to retrieve it, something caught my eye. There was some kind of rolled document stuffed under the seat. I fished it out and spread it on the desk. The three of us bent over it. Brent whistled again. Kim gave a gasp and I almost stapled my finger with surprise. We were unmistakably looking at a copy of the base map for Beryl’s Bottom. It appeared to be inscribed with various cryptic markings. “That doesn’t look much like the permanent course,” remarked Brent, “So what on earth is it?” “There’s some writing here” exclaimed Kim, jabbing her finger, “But it’s difficult to make out. It seems to say COD at the end. What could that stand for?” Brent became animated. “It’s cod again, Eric Slowly was muttering about being careful of cod, but he clearly wasn’t talking about fish.” “COD could stand for anything,” I said, “Cash on Delivery, er....” “Where I live it usually means California or Die” interjected Kim not very helpfully. “There is one orienteering possibility” I suggested. Brent read my mind. “What, the Coventry Orienteering Development. On the face of it, set up to rival MADO, but thought by some to have a more sinister agenda. Do you think Pullover is working for COD and is responsible for all of the strange activity at the Bottom?” “Could be, but another possibility is that he’s been conducting some secret research connected with orienteering and now some element of the criminal world is trying to muscle in and exploit it. He might just have hidden this map under his chair as a precaution.”

We all stood around pondering the situation. The lawn-mower whirred distantly. I noticed a desk diary and flipped it open. There was no entry for today, but the following day, which just happened to be the same day that had been on the note to Piles along with Pullover’s telephone number, clearly read “BB”. “That’s easy,” exclaimed Kim. “Beryl’s Bottom”. “You’re probably right,” I agreed. “It looks like we need to pay another visit.” “I’m up for it.” she replied animatedly. Brent and I exchanged glances. “I’m not sure it’s.....” I began, but Brent interjected. “Why not?” he exclaimed. “The more the merrier. Strength in numbers and all that.” I stayed quiet. I wasn’t sure of Brent’s motives but I reckoned that since all three of us were already immersed in this shady affair, sticking together might not be such a bad idea after all. If COD was really behind this, then we could be in far deeper trouble than any of us had suspected so far.

Will our trio get to the bottom of the Bottom? What does COD really stand for? Has Brent got the hots for Kim? Find out in next month’s thrilling episode, exclusive to Mad Hoc.

February 2008

mad hoc

Rocky and Brent have teamed up with film starlet Kim Vermillion in order to track down Professor Colin Pullover who may hold the key to strange events at Beryl's Bottom and the meaning of COD. Now read on.....

Rocky Knoll in **The Mystery of Beryl's Bottom**

Part 4 – COD and chips

The Professor's diary indicated that his "BB" appointment was at 12 noon. On the assumption that "BB" stood for Beryl's Bottom, we arranged to pick Kim up from her parent's house at 0900 in order to make an early start. Upon leaving, the car was somewhat fuller than expected as Kim had insisted on bringing a large Irish wolfhound answering to the name of Silas with her. "We are going to need some tracking expertise," she insisted "And what better than a dog?" Her logic was good enough for Brent so I stayed quiet, concentrating on the driving. We drove on for half an hour. Silas was well-behaved and quiet, which was more than could be said of my brother who was in full-blown show-off mode. Suddenly a car roared past us and cut in sharply to avoid the oncoming traffic. "Wait a minute", I exclaimed, noting the car's registration COL 1N, "That's the Prof's car". "And that's Colin driving" added Kim, "Let's follow him at a discrete distance and see what he's up to." The theory was fine; the practice was not so easy. Laden down with three adults and huge dog, the Knollmobile was little match for the Professor's gas guzzler. Fortunately the traffic congestion slowed him down, allowing us to keep up at only minor risk to life and limb. Then, unexpectedly, he signalled to turn off down a side road. "That's a funny way to get to Beryl's Bottom", I said, swinging after him, and even Silas put his head on one side and looked puzzled, as if a promised bone had vanished into thin air. Brent was struggling with the road atlas as we rattled down the minor country roads. "Looks like we're going somewhere completely different," he mused. "And wherever it is, it's going to be right out in the sticks by the looks of things". Brent was quite correct and within a few minutes, as we entered a small wood, the car in front slowed and pulled on to a minor track signed as leading to a picnic area. I drove past and parked the car on the verge. "OK" I said "We need to find out what's going on but without him knowing. We'll cut through the trees and put him under observation".

A few minutes later we found ourselves crammed into a brambly ditch within sight of the small car park. The only visible car was Professor Pullover's and he sat it, apparently waiting for something to happen. Silas was happily chewing my boot and Brent was clearly delighted to be enclosed in such a small space with a Hollywood film star. I had cramp, which got worse as a whole hour dragged by. Finally we heard the sound of another car approaching, which drew up alongside the first. A figure got out and walked over to the Professor's window, which he had wound down. I recognised the man immediately from his pale and tremulous bearing. "It's Barry Barrington," I hissed, "From MADO". Kim concurred. "So that's what BB stood for" she whispered, "It wasn't Beryl's Bottom at all". Barrington appeared to be taking possession of a small package that was being passed to him. He in turn passed the Professor an envelope and returned to his car. Seconds later he was gone. The whole operation had taken just over a minute. Brent gave a low whistle "Well that puts the cat amongst the pigeons" he muttered, but before he had time to elaborate, Colin Pullover got out of his car, pulled a small haversack onto his shoulders and set off into the wood. I was desperate to get out of the ditch and stretch my legs but I found myself frustrated again as we heard the sound of another car approaching. We all kept our heads down as the car drew up; three men got out and stood in conference. The apparent leader gesticulated, pointed at the Prof's car and then into the wood. There seemed to be slight disagreement about something. "Do you know who they are?" mouthed Brett. I shrugged my shoulders. "It's not a local number plate," I whispered. "I think it's from the East

Midlands.” Brent grinned. “Then I bet they’re from COD. We’re definitely onto something here.” The discussion came to an abrupt end. Two of the figures started off into the trees whilst the third returned to the car and started its engine. I fished in my pocket for the car keys and thrust them at my brother. “If you nip back through the trees you might be able to follow him in the car,” I hissed. “Kim and I will tail the others.” Brent looked slightly aggrieved but took the keys and scuttled away under cover. The car park was now clear and we came out giving Silas a good chance to pick up the scent of the strangers. Kim was gleeful. “This is better than sitting around on a dull set with Brad Pitt.” she giggled as the hound strained at his leash, eager for the chase. I looked her in the eye. For a moment it felt like a Hollywood film. “This could be dangerous, Kim. We need to be as discrete as possible.” “What if Colin’s in trouble?” she replied forcefully. “We can’t just stand by and watch, Silas can be quite fierce if he wants...” “Come on,” I interrupted. “Let’s get going.”

We moved off slowly. There was nobody within sight and all was quiet save for Silas sniffing the trail forwards. The woods were extremely pretty but we had no time to enjoy them; every sense straining for a sign of anyone ahead. Then we could hear it – the unmistakable sound of digging coming from our right. We edged across towards a small clearing where the Professor was suddenly visible, scooping out earth from a small hole with a trowel. Kim grasped my arm and pulled me down into the bracken. She pointed silently over to the left edge of the clearing where the two strangers could be seen, crouched behind a large oak tree. Fortunately they didn’t seem to have spotted us; they were intent on watching the man at work. We could see them whispering to each other then, alarmingly, they appeared to arm themselves with two stout sticks and prepare to move forward into the clearing. Things looked ugly. Kim bent to Silas’s ear and began muttering something I couldn’t catch. Everything then seemed to happen at once. The two thugs rushed at the Professor, sticks raised. Silas gave a great bound forward, barking furiously. Pullover, alarmed, jumped up and waved his trowel ineffectively in the air. The dog caused mayhem, leaping, growling and snapping at the attackers, preventing them from getting near their intended victim. The woodland seemed to shake with the melee, birds scattering in fright. Silas continued to harass the assailants, who couldn’t escape from his giant paws and snapping jaws. It wasn’t long before they were in retreat, stumbling in shock and terror further into the wood. They disappeared, Silas in pursuit “It’s OK,” laughed Kim “He’ll be back. He’s just escorting them from the premises”. It was fine work. She seemed to have a way with animals, not just with hamsters and it had certainly saved the Prof’s bacon. He now however had another shock as two more figures rose out of the undergrowth and approached him, prompting a second rather pathetic raising of the trowel. Once he recognised Kim though he relaxed, and welcomed us with a mixture of relief and puzzlement. I introduced myself and gave a very brief explanation, intent on getting out of there as quickly as possible. He was only too glad to comply, gathering his equipment together swiftly. “I don’t know how on earth you knew I was here,” he muttered. “I told no-one.” “Well you must have told Barry Barrington at least,” I retorted, “We saw you with him in the car park. And you left a cryptic clue in your diary.” He looked sheepish. “You seem to know everything. Can you pass me those please.” He was pointing to some brown packages which looked very similar to the ones we had seen earlier. The packages were very light. “What’s in them?” I asked as we set off back through the trees, Silas bounding up at our rear to receive a big hug from Kim. “Nanochips” he replied, “State of the art technology. It’s central to my research.” “Research into what exactly?” I queried. He was a bit vague. “Oh, lots of things.” He caught my eye. “Yes, there is an orienteering connection”. “Those men”, I said, “We think they are from COD. You seem to have generated interest from the criminal underworld of orienteering. Do you know why?” “I could guess” he sighed, “But someone must have tipped them off.” “Well if it wasn’t us,” I said, “Then the finger of suspicion points at only one person. And that person must be Barry Barrington.....!”

Barry Barrington bent? Surely not! Find out in next month’s instalment, exclusive to Mad Hoc.

March 2008

mad hoc

Following Rocky and Kim's dramatic rescue of Professor Colin Pullover from the hands of COD thugs, Rocky has suggested that it may have been HOC chairman Barry Barrington who had tipped them off. Now read on.....

Rocky Knoll in **The Mystery of Beryl's Bottom**

Part 5 – Spilling the Beans

The professor stopped dead in his tracks, a horrified look on his face. Kim was aghast. "Never!" she cried, "Barrington may be a bit barmy but he's not bent". I wasn't sure that I trusted Kim's judgement here; she seemed to have a thing for older men (mental note to warn Brent), but even I found it hard to find a reason for the club chairman to be acting treacherously. "Maybe it's blackmail" I mused. Kim's face was one of blithe innocence. "I can't possibly imagine what they could pin on him" she murmured, turning to give Silas a hug. Pullover looked agitated. "Come on," he urged. "We need to get out of here as soon as possible. Those thugs might come back with some of their friends." We walked on. I was quite firm with him. "If you want us to help you," I said, "You must tell us what's going on. You seem to be inadvertently putting a lot of people in danger". He groaned. "It's turning into a nightmare. My life's great work is being ruined by people who don't understand what they're doing. Is there nobody I can trust. If this carries on I shall have to move abroad." He turned to Kim. "California is one option I suppose."

I didn't wait to hear the answer - we had reached the car park and I pulled out my mobile in order to contact Brent. He answered immediately, sounding frustrated. "I tell you Rocky, you've got to get a new car. I was on their tail but they were just too fast and I've lost them. Mind you, they were on the Coventry road so it looks like we were right about the COD connection. What the hell did you and Kim do them? The driver only went round to the other side of the wood and waited, and then the two goons came running out, completely terrified, jumped in and off they sped. Excellent work by the looks of things." I chuckled "Why don't you meet us back at the office. I'll get the Prof to take us there and hopefully he'll spill the beans about everything. Oh, if you get back first, see what you can find out about Barry Barrington. I think he could be a key player in this". I rang off and explained the situation to Pullover. He didn't seem too pleased but reluctantly agreed to come back to Knoll HQ. "Probably safer than the University, judging by recent events" he muttered, as we packed his equipment, three adults and a large dog quite comfortably into his sizeable 4x4.

An hour later we were spread out around my desk tucking into a range of takeaway food. The professor seemed more relaxed. Silas obviously had a great liking for pepperoni pizza. Brent had made Kim relate the details of the rescue at least half a dozen times and the story was becoming increasingly embellished. It seemed an age since that brick had originally come crashing through the window. It was time for business. "It all began," started Pullover, "When I received my invitation to the opening of the permanent course down at Beryl's Bottom. Being somewhat of a local celebrity it's the sort of thing I like to attend. Actually, it started years before, with all the research I had been conducting, but that was the first time that I had linked what I had been experimenting with to orienteering. I contacted Barry Barrington, who was organising the day, and sounded him out about a few things. I must say, he sounded very interested. We agreed to talk further after the opening. By the time the day arrived I had a few things up my sleeve, so to speak, and was ready to try them out. I gave my card to a few people - you had one Kim, so did Barry, and the local reporter, Piles....er who else, oh, and I think that BOF chap Slowly might have had one. What none of them knew is that was just part of my experiment - not really serious, more of a joke actually." He paused and sipped his cup of tea. Brent was getting

impatient. “Come on, get to the point man” he urged. Pullover ignored him. “Anyway,” he continued, “I must have been observed by a criminal element, because all those people have subsequently ended up in quite a bit of trouble. Now, the technology itself. I have developed a liquid containing what I call nanoids which when applied to a surface, dries and forms an wafer thin artificial neural network. Actually, it’s like a paint-on brain. In the context of orienteering I can print a map using ink made from it. The map can be programmed to visually display where the runner is at any point of time. All I need to do is position a network of nano-transponders in the forest to get the accuracy required. The runner knows exactly and visually where he is to the nearest millimetre. What’s more, I can programme the map to change at any time I want. A rival runner’s map can be altered subtly without him noticing in order to induce errors. It’s a way of ensuring victory for any half decent runner. Kim, if you checked my card now, which has had the treatment, you will see that I’ve changed my name to your name. Rather a weak joke I’m afraid.” Kim fumbled in her bag and gave gasp of amazement. “It’s true! I never noticed. Gosh, I seem to have become a Professor”. Pullover pulled out his mobile phone and started jabbing at buttons. Kim gave a shriek. “It’s changed again” she cried, and then “Oh that’s naughty Colin”. The professor chuckled and put his phone away. Brent looked concerned. “In the wrong hands this is dynamite. And the wrong hands are doing their best to get hold of it. Those COD idiots have been abducting people, threatening them and have dug up half of Beryl’s Bottom searching for stuff. I presume that’s where you have been conducting trials.” Pullover nodded. “Yes, but Barrington and I have agreed to go for a live trial so to speak at next weekend’s Midland Championships. I passed over the bits he needs today”.

It went very quiet. I opened my mouth to speak but there was a frantic knocking at the door. Silas rose, growling and Brent grabbed a bottle. I went to the door and called “Who’s there?” Upon hearing the answer I opened the door a fraction and then fully when I saw the figure outside. He staggered into the room and collapsed on the old sofa. He looked unkempt and tired. “Piles!” exclaimed Pullover, “Miles Piles from the Bulletin”. The reporter weakly nodded his head “That’s right” he said, “And I’ve come to warn you of the danger you are all in!”

Find out about the perils faced by our intrepid heroes in next month’s episode –exclusive to Mad Hoc

May 2008

mad hoc

Rocky Knoll, Brent Knoll, Kim Vermillion, Professor Colin Pullover (and Silas the dog) have just received a surprise visit at Knoll HQ from missing journalist Miles Piles who has urgent news for them.....

Rocky Knoll in **The Mystery of Beryl's Bottom**

Part 6 – Proof of the Pudding

“Where on earth have you been for the last couple of weeks?” exclaimed Brent, still brandishing a bottle. “You’ve had us on a wild goose chase.” Miles Piles grimaced. “Before I tell you anything, give us a bit of pizza and a cup of tea will you. I’ve not eaten or been to bed for two days.” I passed him some of the remaining food and Kim bustled with the kettle. Silas sniffed him suspiciously; he was a curious odour, even to humans. Piles munched away and began his account. He explained how he had been present at the grand opening ceremony of the Beryl’s Bottom permanent course, covering the story for the Borchester Bulletin. He had become suspicious about the behaviour of a small group of men who were present, one of whom he recognised as having been previously involved in a case of illegally imported south-pointing thumb compasses. “They were especially interested in Professor Pullover here,” he said. “Taking photographs, writing notes, even trying to break into his car. I took one of the Professor’s cards and realised later that there was something odd about it. I did a bit of research, put two and two together and realised what might be behind all of the strange activities at Beryl’s Bottom. I observed both Pullover and the COD men on different occasions....”. Here he paused. “Yes, we know about COD” I bluffed somewhat. Piles continued. “Okay, I managed to track them back to their HQ. I decided I needed to infiltrate further to get a good story.”

Brent looked puzzled. “So why did you put a brick through our window?” he asked. “And how did you manage to get yourself kidnapped?” Piles now looked puzzled as well. “I don’t know anything about any bricks,” he replied. “I certainly didn’t want to get anyone else poking around. As for being kidnapped, when I realised you were after me, I hid in the house and left a note warning you off. It clearly didn’t work as I probably should have realised at the time.” “How about the break-in at BOF central then?” I persisted. Piles responded again. “Undoubtedly down to COD, but I believe they may have tried to frame the Professor. The main thing is, if they manage to get hold of what they are after, they are planning to use it at the Midlands Championships. If that’s successful, who knows where they’ll stop. They’ve even discussed burning down the Professor’s laboratory.” Pullover jumped up, incensed. “We must inform the police at once” he exclaimed, his hands waving wildly. “No.” I said firmly, “No police, not yet. We need more evidence. The police will just get in the way. The key person here is Barrington. If Barrington has been forced to hand over to COD what you have been passing on to him, have they got enough to run a trial next week at the Champs?” “It’s possible,” he replied, “Quite possible. Even more possible if we go ahead with our trial.” “Then that’s what we need to do.” I said emphatically. “Both trials go ahead and we have the opportunity to gather as much evidence as we can about who’s involved. This will be the proof of the pudding!”

That pretty much won the day. There were a lot of awkward details to fill in that I won’t bother the reader with. Suffice it to say, we had two runners lined up on our side, ready to test the technology. In the know, elite M40 Morgan Alexis, who would be ready to provide feedback after his run. Also in the trial was the club’s keenest member, 100-event a year man Jason Twinge who would have no idea of what was going on (so no change there then). As the Prof had explained at length, he had developed an expert system that would monitor a runner’s progress and if they strayed off course then the map would “intelligently” adjust itself to encourage them back on track without realising it. “It’s only at the beta stage,” he enthused, but it’s going to be just spectacular”. We decided not to pressurise

Barrington but to keep an eye on him, not wanting to prevent COD from going ahead. It was he, after all who was nominally in charge of our trial. Pullover would run things from the nerve centre of the operation, hidden in the back of a van in order to be hidden from prying eyes. The rest of us including Kim, who was holding up the production of a major Hollywood blockbuster in order to stay in the UK for the Championships, would act as eyes and ears. Silas unfortunately was barred by the “no dogs” rule, but even so ended up in the van with the Prof as a security measure. As HOC were running the Championships, the maps had already been prepared; they were ready for who ever wanted to perform what ever experiment they chose to do on them.

The day of the competition dawned, and unlike the many weeks before, it was a spectacularly warm and sunny day. In fact, it was uncomfortably hot. Pullover sat in the van mopping his brow. “We don’t know yet how many of their runners are going to be using the system,” he explained, fiddling with an array of laptops, “But I’ll be able to pick up any transmissions and will be able to monitor it closely. If they’re greedy, too many outstanding results will start to look suspicious. My bet is they’ll go mainly with their best runners.” As the first start times approached it began to get tense. The van door eased open and Barrington’s pale and tremulous face appeared in the crack. “Everything OK?” he muttered, looking agitated as well he might be. Pullover muttered back something non-committal, making sure he only appeared to be set up to monitor the HOC runners. Barrington disappeared and I breathed a sigh of relief. Silas cocked an ear and appeared to go back to sleep. I continued to flick through the latest edition of *Codpiece*, the COD magazine. I found the article entitled “20 things you never knew about residents of Malvern” in particularly poor taste. The door creaked open again and Kim’s faced appeared, Brent at her shoulder. “They’re about to start” she whispered conspiratorially, a gleam of excitement in her face. “Brent and I are going down to the quarry area to watch them go through.” “When I know who is on the system I’ll phone it through to you” replied the Prof. Brent ought to know most of their runners, isn’t that right?” Brent nodded and the door closed again. Next it was Piles’ turn. “I’ve been doing a bit of snooping,” he said, “And I reckon that COD are based in that large motor home up at the top of the carpark. Judging by all the coming and goings I reckon they’ve got a lot of people on the system. I tried to get a pre-race quote for the Bulletin from a couple of their runners but they didn’t want to say much. I’ve got young Hugo Thynne taking plenty of discrete photos though.”

Finally the stream of visitors ceased and the action was ready to begin. “Aha” exclaimed Pullover, “There’s the first one..... oh dear, they ought to be ashamed of themselves, on a junior course too....M20” The minutes passed with more mumbling and tutting. “It’s hardly a trial they’re running, more like total world domination” was a further comment. “Anyway, our two are off and running at last....oh, what’s Twinge up to – the man’s totally useless....oh good grief....north, go north you idiot...” I phoned a list of names through to Brent who was in place with Kim and waiting. “Everyone’s coming through really slowly here, it’s so complex” were his words. “We should be able to see if COD are much quicker” He rang off. It felt even hotter. I poured some more water out into a bowl for Silas to drink who began slurping it with gusto. Suddenly I heard a commotion behind me. The Professor was cursing under his breath and jabbing away frantically on one of his laptops. “No, no, that’s impossible” I heard him mutter, then “Another one! What’s going on?” I asked him what the matter was. “I’m losing contact. I’m getting no response from some of the maps. But there’s nothing wrong with the transponders”. The phone rang. It was Brent in a state of high excitement. I listened carefully for thirty seconds as he told me the sensational news. I turned to Pullover. “Are you sitting comfortably” I said to him as calmly as I could muster." I think you better prepare yourself for a shock!"

How will Rocky’s news rock the boat? Will Twinge’s fans be dancing on the streets of Droitwich Spa? Find out in the final episode of The Mystery of Beryl’s Bottom, only to be found in the June issue of Mad Hoc.

June 2008

mad hoc

HOC and COD are running competing trials of Professor Colin Pullover's nanobot system at the Midland Championships. All is not well however.....

Rocky Knoll in The Mystery of Beryl's Bottom

Part 7 – Front Page News

As bombshells went, this was a pretty big one. The Professor stopped jabbing at his keyboards and gave me his full attention. I put down my phone. I swear the temperature in the van went up a few more degrees. "Brent and Kim aren't exactly sure what's just happened," I said carefully. "But something strange must be going on with the map. One of the COD runners came flying through the quarried area, spiked a control bang-on, but as he was leaving let out a series of loud shouts. His map seems to have disappeared. He's apparently still wandering around without it and looking pretty upset. Brent said he could smell burning. It sounds like the map may have just....well, exploded!" Pullover looked horrified. "Exploding is definitely not an option on my menu" he replied. "But I guess it would explain the signals I'm getting. Or rather not getting." He did some quick mental arithmetic. "I'm now missing four maps that I had earlier detected some activity on." "Well, at least that's four cheesed off COD runners." I countered. Pullover was not mollified and resumed his inaudible muttering and keyboard gymnastics.

Some shouting was audible from outside and I slipped through the door, taking Silas with me, tight on his lead. He perked up and sniffed the air, pulling me in the direction of the Finish and the source of the hubbub. Miles Piles ran past, notebook in hand, trailed by a photographer. Now I could smell burning too. There was a argument going on, a competitor in an oddly coloured O-top gesticulating and remonstrating with the officials. I suddenly realised that it was a COD top, discoloured from what must have been a combusting map. Another COD-clad competitor was trying to drag him away from the scene. It looked like the runner must have been unaware of the trial as it was unlikely that he would have kicked up such a fuss, and those in the know were trying to keep him quiet. It was clearly too late. The Bulletin were getting some great shots of the sensational bust-up at the Finish of the Midlands Championships. This was going to be a better front page story than the conspiracy theory over the rigged voting in the Inkberrow giant cucumber competition, Zanu PF implicated or not. A sea of bodies were now involved in the melee, swelled all the time by additional finishers trying to fight their way through to the final control. It was utter bedlam. My phone rang. It was Brent again, but I couldn't hear him because of the noise. "You better come back" I yelled. Silas was pulling frantically at his lead, up towards the top of the car park. The hound's immense size meant that resistance was futile and we were soon scampering up towards a large motor home by the field edge. What did Kim feed this dog on? It dawned on me that this must be the COD nerve centre and all was not well. Smoke was pouring out from under the door. As I yanked it open the acrid fumes sent me reeling backwards. Silas was made of sterner stuff and in a bound had disappeared inside. Seconds later his backside emerged as he dragged out a choking figure in his jaws. I grabbed the man and helped him away, spluttering. "Anyone else in there" I shouted. He shook his head. The three of us edged away from the vehicle which was just as well as a series of bangs emanated from within. Flames were now seen in the doorway. A few moments later the whole van exploded. The Bulletin team, rushing past, must have thought they'd died and gone to heaven, Somehow, I reflected, this trial hadn't quite turned out as expected.

"In the end it was the weather that was to blame" reflected Pullover, sipping on a long cool pint in the

garden of the Lord “Charlie” Nelson where we had all repaired to some hours later. He seemed to have recovered some of his poise, regenerated no doubt by a series of interviews with the media. It was all going to take a lot of explaining, and he was probably the man for the moment. “This is the first hot and sunny day we’ve had for months and it exposed a serious flaw in the whole technology. So serious in fact that it may take years to put right. So as far as orienteering goes, the nanobot project is well and truly over. I’ve decided anyway to publish all my findings in the public domain. No more underhand stuff. You were right Kim, it wasn’t worth it.” She smiled and gave Silas a hug. “And I’ve a feeling that just for once, my own dog’s going to get more column inches than me. Just think, one minute he’s chasing a thug out of a wood, the next he’s saving the same chap’s life.” “So what actually happened?” asked Brent. “And why did the COD motor home go up in flames?” The Professor still looked slightly pained at explaining the system’s shortcomings. “The only maps at risk were the ones that were activated. The total energy created by the activation and the heat of the day caused the thermal overload. COD didn’t really know what they were doing. They must have had a pile of spare maps in their van and inadvertently activated them all. They might as well have lit the fuse to a bomb.”

We all were quiet for a moment, reflecting on the lucky escape. “What on earth’s going to come out in the Bulletin?” I reflected. “Piles is going to have a field day. He’s only got cheating, breaking and entering, sabotage, blackmail, explosions, fisticuffs and dramatic canine rescues to be going on with. It’ll be front page news as well as back page. In fact I can feel an eight page special pull-out section coming on” “Maybe it’s just the publicity orienteering needs,” offered Kim. “In my line of work all news is good news. Nothing wrong with a good bit of scandal.” I was willing to defer to the opinion of an expert in *that* field. My phone rang. I answered it. It was Barrington with some more information. I listened and rang off. “Good news.” I said. “They’ve found Twinge at last. He was apparently located in a state of confusion some four miles off the map heading directly towards Beryl’s Bottom. He was mumbling incoherently about never being able to show his face in Droitwich Spa again.” Pullover looked sheepish and muttered something about the automatic route correction expert system still being at the beta stage. We all burst out laughing. “Let’s hope we’ve heard the last from COD for a while” I added.” Although I expect they’ll be up to their tricks again sometime in the future. Personally I could do with a holiday right now. Although I think the family funds might only run to a weekend in Tenby.” “Ah, well yes...” mumbled Brent. “I need to have a word with you about that. You see, Kim and I think this whole story might have potential for a film. I was hoping to go out to California to sell the idea. The more publicity over here the better.” I was lost for words. Kim, seeing my face, interjected. “Rocky, it’s fine. In fact it’s all settled. Colin and Miles will keep the story running here in the media whilst the rest of us head stateside. I’ve got the all the contacts we need. It’ll all be paid for. The story’s a sure fire winner. Look out Hollywood, orienteering’s coming your way!” I thought long and hard for two seconds. “OK, I agree.” I said, “As long I get to be played by Brad Pitt.” Brent snorted. “Now hang on bro, who’s the handsome one in the family? I get first choice!” “No way, I was the one who chased this story up in the first place....” “Boys, boys! Behave!” interrupted Kim, laughing. “We all know who is going to be the true star of any future film.” She flicked back her hair. “And he’s coming home with me for tea.” The three of us looked up hopefully. “Come on then boy,” she called and Silas bounded to her side. “Arrivederci!”

The End

July 2008

mad hoc

Kids! Here's a great way to make those dull journeys to distant orienteering venues just fly by! Your parents might remember I-Spy books but this is a revamped version for the twenty-first century. Play.....

O-SPY! Tick the boxes, win the points, join the tribe!

Section A - Roadkill



1 point



1 point



1 point



1 point



-5 points



100 points (UK)
 1 point (Sweden)

Section B - Traffic



Temporary traffic lights - 1 point



Cones - 1 point



Diversion - 1 point



Traffic jam - 1 point

Congestion charge - 1 point Road rage incident - 3 points

Contraflow - 1 point



Stopped for speeding - 5 points (on Dad's licence)

Section C - Navigation

SatNav loses the plot 1 point

Mum takes over navigation 1 point

Dad gets lost 1 point

Mum and Dad have argument over a missed turning a mile back 1 point

Mum and Dad not on speaking terms on arrival at event 1 point

Section D - Litter (Plastic bags in hedgerow)



1 point



1 point



1 point



2 points



5 points

Section E - Miscellaneous



Orienteering sign hung upside down so arrow points in the correct direction - 1 point



Controls spotted before reaching event - 1 point each

When you have completed this page you can send it off to Big Chief O-Spy, Rocky's Wigwam, c/o Mad Hoc at the usual address and he will send you a special feather signifying that you are a member of Rocky's tribe. Get spying!

September 2008

mad hoc

Rocky-TV

Your day's viewing at a glance

0630 Wake Up to Orienteering. Early morning magazine programme featuring news, event previews, up to the minute bracken measurements, the magnetic North Pole webcam and Orienteering Thought for the Day with Rabbi Colin Pullover.

0900 The Morning Phone-in. Bryan Brampton hosts another controversial debate. Today's topic; "My wife won't iron my orienteering trousers – is it time to ditch her?"

1045 Mapwatch 2008 Live mapping action direct from The Pludds in the Forest of Dean. See some of the country's top surveyors at work with expert commentary by expert experts from the Bewdley Institute of Russometrics. Signing for the deaf. (Caution: prolonged exposure to men with beards).

1300 News, sport, weather and further vegetation reports from around the regions.

1340 Mapwatch 2008 Back to The Pludds for more live surveying action. (Subsequent programmes subject to late running)

1830 The O Factor. This week's wannabees from the north of the country are put through their paces under the scrutiny of the judges. Be prepared for tantrums, tears and some very bad orienteering poetry.

1930 Brook Side (East End). Sarah and Billy agree upon a trial separation after failing to agree over plans for the String Course at Beryl's Bottom and Frank ends up in Casualty after accidentally heat-sealing himself into a map case.

2000 Pioneers of Orienteering (New Series). Part One – Lord Knoll. Melvyn O'Brigg looks back at the life of one of the sport's great innovators, including previously unseen footage of the first attempts to use electronic punching at the Knoll Towers O-Ringen in 1973 (now known to be the true cause of the collapse of the National Grid and the three day week), exclusive access to the world's largest private collection of lycra and fresh revelations from the Rumpass-Sport libel case of 2007.

2100 Desperate Orienteers' Wives and the City. 7/13 With Ken away at the Welsh 6-Day, Barbara decides to check out the talent at the local Summer Evening Event League and makes a shocking discovery. Meanwhile Gloria wonders if Big Pete will measure up to all the Gold standard badges sown onto his 'O' top.

2200 Party Political Broadcast on behalf of the Light Green Party.

2205 FILM The Controller (2006): TV premiere of Kim Vermillion's stunning breakthrough into mainstream cinema. Dark, brooding and at times (the hamster's head scene) terrifying. Shot on location at the White Rose. (Dir: Clent Eastwood).

0015 Mapwatch 2008 Highlights: Catch up with the best bits of today's action from The Pludds plus naughty outtakes. Introduced by Russell Brand Wood.

0100 The Man Who Eats O Shoes. The extraordinary life of Cornwall orienteer Arthur Badger (rpt)

0200 Relocation, Relocation, Relocation. With Kirstie Pullover. (rpt)

0300 Lost (rpt)

0400 Closedown

October 2008

mad hoc

Mad Hoc is pleased to present
5 minutes with.....
Kim Vermillion

We caught up with Kim on a flying visit to Malvern to receive a life-saving award for on behalf of her dog, Silas

Kim, can I start by congratulating you on the huge success of your latest film, *The Controller II: Revenge of the Hamsters*. How much did you enjoy making it?

Yeah, thanks. Most of it was good fun, although it was a pretty exhausting schedule. We had to film quite early in the morning because as soon as it got hot, the hamsters refused to do anything and just went to sleep. I'm OK with early starts but Brad could be a bit grumpy at times. At least the Californian weather was better than for the first film; it rained most of the time at the White Rose.

Are there any plans for another film in the series?

Well, we grossed \$50m in the first three weeks. What do you think? I suppose it depends whether the public's current craze for the orienteering/suspense/horror genre continues. I guess we'll keep on making them until one of them bombs.

Your next film's quite different isn't it? Can you tell us something about it?

Well, I can't give too much away at this stage but I can say that it's great to be back working with Rock Coppice again. And before you ask, yes, the full arm and leg protection rule will be relaxed, but only in the interest of artistic excellence. Very relaxed in fact.

You and Rock go back a long way don't you? Were you surprised about how much impact "*Last Control on Malvern Common*" made?

Of course. I mean, it was made on a tiny budget by unknown film-makers in an unfashionable location. None of us really knew what we were doing. The one area where we did have some expert advice was on the orienteering side. Our Technical Advisor, Barry Barrington from MADO, spent hours and hours on set making sure we did everything correctly. He made us re-shoot some of the scenes over and over again until we got it right.

Including the infamous dibber scene?

Especially the dibber scene. Barry had a fantastic eye for detail. A lovely man, greatly misunderstood.

How quickly did things change for you after that?

Once the Malvern Gazette described the film as "essential viewing" things started to happen. I guess the accidental distribution of the film to schools might have had something to do with it as well. There's a lot of good educational material in there, come to think of it. It all happened when MADO took off, so I got tremendous exposure, especially since I was asked to become Honorary President of the club.

Wasn't that a somewhat controversial appointment?

I guess some people might have thought so. But Barry was very nice about it and I felt I couldn't say no after he had helped so much with the film. I think it's worked out OK. He's certainly had a lot of publicity out of me one way or another!

You are obviously alluding to the Ledbury Poetry Festival and all that happened

afterwards in the Knollgate trial at the Old Bailey.

Of course.

There's so much speculation still swirling around about it. Can you clarify what really happened there?

Look, I've pretty much exhausted what I want to say about it. The basic fact is that my meeting with Lord Knoll was one of minds. We just see eye-to-eye on the beauty of lycra. A lovely man, greatly misunderstood. He was more mortified about what happened to Gerald, my hamster, than the Rumpus-Sport photographs. If you want to know any more then you'll have to wait until my autobiography comes out.

Your name seems to have been linked with many men; however most of them are, shall we say, on the mature side.

I don't know what you mean! (*laughs*). Perhaps I just appreciate the company of the more sophisticated gentleman. Just because I am seen in the company of someone like Professor Colin Pullover who is a lovely man by the way, greatly misunderstood, the media jump on their usual bandwagon. It makes me quite wary of who I am seen with. As a result I'm happiest when I spend the evening in with Silas.

So, what next for Kim Vermillion?

Apart from the usual filming, I'm working on a promotional project with the Knoll brothers and British Orienteering called "Bums in Lycra" It's very exciting and doesn't involve hamsters, thank goodness. I'm also making a fitness DVD based on tantric orienteering which is a brand new concept of the sport that can be pursued entirely within ones own bedroom. And I'm really looking forward to the HOC AGM. So it's all go-go-go!

Thanks Kim.

(Kim was talking to our special correspondent Hugo Thynne)

November 2008

mad hoc

A new service to our readers
Mad HOC is pleased to be able
to exclusively offer a range of
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Don't be caught out by the change over from 360 degrees to 1000 degrees in under 4 years time! Old style compasses will cease to work on Graduation Day (01/01/12). Our decimal models will work both before and after the big switch.

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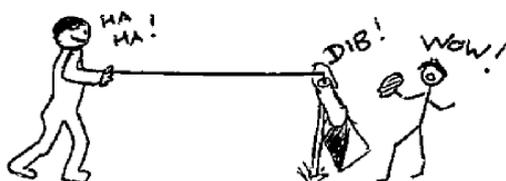
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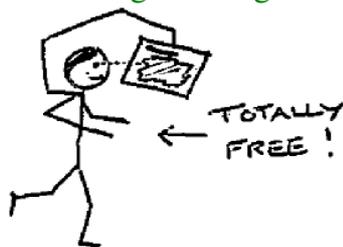


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December 2008

mad hoc

Starting this month!

**A brand-new Rocky Knoll
serial!**

**Put the cat out*, put your feet
up and away we go!**

(* we recommend water)

Rocky Knoll in Trouble with Lycra

Part 1 – The Photo Shoot

“OK Kim, just one more shot. Fantastic. That’ll do for now. One more change of outfit and we’re done. Back in ten minutes.” Damien, the photographer, looked pleased with his efforts, and well he might. The photo-shoot for the new British Orienteering initiative “Bums in Lycra” was going well. The autumn sun shone down on Malvern Common, the golden bracken almost sparkled and these pictures were going to look just great in the 2009 calendar. The powers that be at HQ were delighted to have the services of a Hollywood star to promote their product and consequently the Knoll brothers, having brokered the arrangements, were back in favour. Today I was masquerading under the title of Assistant Concept Director or some such rubbish; what it actually meant was that I was responsible for looking after Ms Vermillion and the range of kit that she was going to wear. This was actually Brent’s job but he was indisposed due to “having drunk a bad beer” the previous night.

Kim disappeared into her “trailer” (actually a van borrowed from the Bartmanns) to put on her final outfit. I took a swig of water from a bottle. The heat of this Indian summer was surprising. “Hey Rocky, what do you think of these?” called Damien, gesturing at his camera. I wandered over and took a look. Kim looked fabulous, as she always did, but this was taking orienteering to a new level of.....well a new level of fashion, at the very least. She had already succeeded in putting plenty of bums on cinema seats, so surely this campaign centred on Malvern’s finest daughter was onto a sure-fire winner. I heard the van door open and close and turned to see her walking down to where we were under the trees. “Wow, this is some outfit Rocky,” she said. “Where did you get it from?” The lycra seemed to shimmer and change hue with every step. I’d never seen it before. I didn’t remember it from the kit-check I had done earlier on. It was extraordinary. I started to waffle a non-committal answer but she wasn’t really listening; she was doing a twirl down the path, delightedly admiring the spectacular costume. “We’re a bit in the shade here, Kim” said Damien. “So I’m going to use a little flash.” The shot was prepared, Kim would be emerging from some bracken to dib at a control site. We were soon ready. Damien made some final adjustments and began to snap. Almost immediately there was a faint cry from Kim’s lips and she pitched down head first into the bracken and lay motionless. Panic ensued. Cries of “Get some water”, “Give her some air”, and “Find the first-aid kit” echoed across the Common.

I rushed to Kim’s side and turned her over. She didn’t seem to be injured; the bracken had provided a soft landing and more than anything else she appeared to be peacefully asleep. We made her comfortable and tried to rouse her but it was a good five minutes before she stirred and opened her eyes. “Where am I?” she whispered in best Hollywood tradition and then “Oh hello Rocky....oh I’ve had such a strange dream. It was so real. I was running though the woods, orienteering, in these clothes. I was going so fast, punching every control spot on with those old fashioned pin punches. And there was this big house near the finish.....I think I won.” “Take it easy Kim” I said, “You’ve had a nasty fall.” Everyone fussed around a bit more and made sure she was OK. Kim refused to be taken to hospital but the shoot was called off and she agreed to be taken to the Bartmann’s for a cup of tea and a rest. As the equipment was being cleared up I wandered around in a perplexed state trying to make sense of it all. Something she had said rang a very loud bell in my mind. Damien’s voice cut through my musings. “Hey Rocky, come and take a look at this”. There was puzzlement in his voice and I

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quickly joined him. “Right, these are the last couple of shots I took of Kim before she collapsed. Take a look and tell me what you can see.” I bent and squinted at the images one after the other. Yes, there was the control flag under the trees and there was Kim, emerging from the bracken, map in one hand, dibber ready in the other, but what was she wearing? A lycra suit yes but with a dramatically different appearance to the one we had seen her in. The image showed all manner of strange designs and patterns swirling over the outfit. It was spectacularly beautiful but surely impossible. I straightened up, shaking my head. “I have no idea,” was all I could say. “You’re supposed to be the expert.”

I jumped into the Knollmobile and shot up to the Bartmann’s as quickly as I could. There was something I had to do. “Kim’s had a drink and she’s now resting,” said Belinda. “I’d leave her for now.” “Is she still wearing her O gear?” I asked. “No, I think Young Beville has put it all in the van for you to collect.” I went outside and immediately spotted what I was after on one of the rear seats. I picked up the shimmering material. It was inexplicably beautiful, flitting from colour to colour, but I could make out nothing more, even by holding it up to the light. As I did so I felt an unexpected craving to put it on. It was so strong that I actually considered doing it there and then. Then I heard someone approaching. “Don’t be ridiculous” I scolded myself and wrenched clear of the urge. I stuffed it into my own bag. I knew where it had to go next. To the one of the world’s leading experts on lycra, a man that knew more about the subject than was good for him, my father. This was clearly a case for Lord Knoll!

What is behind Kim’s mysterious vision? Where did the strange outfit come from? Has Rocky inherited the family fetish for lycra? We can’t guarantee next month’s episode will make things any clearer, but you can read it only here, exclusively in Mad Hoc!

January 2009

mad hoc

Rocky is in possession of a mysterious lycra O-suit which has caused Kim Vermillion to have a strange orienteering vision. He is now off to consult his father about the outfit....

Rocky Knoll in Trouble with Lycra

Part 2 – A Window on the Past

As I drove to the Knoll estate on the following afternoon the irony of the situation was not lost on me. It was lycra that had led to my father's downfall, the lost court case against RumpassSport and the collapse of the Knoll publishing empire. However, since the family had fallen on harder times, it was lycra that had seemingly kept him going. The Knoll Towers estate had been sold off and the main house and grounds were being developed by a leisure group. My parents were now living in one of the old lodge houses which also including some converted stables; this could be found in the woods near the south gate. From what I could make out from my mother, my father had thrown himself into the immense task of sorting and cataloguing his vast collection of lycra which stretched back (in a manner of speaking) to when it was first developed. What he intended to do with it all I had no idea, but apparently the entire stable block was crammed from floor to ceiling with boxes of the stuff. There was even more out in the yard in weatherproof crates. There was no way my mother was going to let any of it come into the house.

I pulled into the courtyard, got out of the car and wandered into the kitchen. My mother, Lady Knoll, was doing the washing up. She was wearing a long pair of bright yellow rubber gloves and was energetically scrubbing a porcelain plate. For most of her married life she would have had a servant to do this sort of thing for her but she seemed to be relishing the task. She looked up. "Oh hello Rocky dear, she said, bustling over and giving me a somewhat absent-minded peck on the cheek. "I expect you've come to see your father. You know, I've been a bit worried about him these last few days. He's been distracted and has been going round muttering to himself. I don't think his cataloguing going too well, but you know your father, I hardly dare ask him. What's that you've got in your bag? Not more lycra? Oh no, don't say you've inherited the family fetish too." I laughed and started drying the wet plates with a cloth. "No mother, relax, I'm fine. It's Brent you need to keep an eye on. Only joking!" Various crashing and bashing sounds could be heard from the out buildings. "I had to hide the shot gun last week," she said. "He was all for going out shooting poachers. I have to keep reminding him that he doesn't own the woods any more and that they're not poachers, they're developers planning the aerial tree walk."

When, between us, we had finished the washing up I went out in the direction of where all the noise had been coming from and found my father peering into a battered crate on the far side of the courtyard. The tenth Earl Knoll of Borsetshire looked tired and frustrated; his jacket was caked in dust and his white hair was unmanageably awry. He acknowledged me with a nod and a grunt, which was pretty much par for the course these days. "You look as if you've lost something" I offered. "Maybe, Rocky, maybe" he muttered. "Damned removal company. They've mixed up all these boxes. My old staff wouldn't have made such a cock-up." I decided to come straight to the point and passed him the package containing the strange lycra outfit. He took it, peered inside then unexpectedly ripped it open with great speed. I kept an eye on his face. The garments sparked with yet another extraordinary range of colours and I could see several competing emotions pulling at his visage. I knew straight away that he recognised it. He somehow kept his composure. "Where did you get this, Rocky?" he asked in as steady a voice as he could muster, although I could see his hands were quivering a good deal more than usual. "I not really sure" I replied. I then gave a thorough description

mad hoc

of the events that had unfolded the day before including Kim's dream sequence and the strange photographs. I could see his eyes widening. When I had finished he stuffed the clothes back into what remained of its packaging and moving off, beckoned me into the nearest stable block. This was clearly the nerve centre for his current operations. Boxes presumably containing lycra towered up on all sides. His cataloguing process seemingly involved the use of a dirty laptop on an even dirtier desk, a mobile phone and several piles of ancient ledgers. Without saying a word he carefully selected one of the ledgers and placed in on the table in front of us. I recognised the chosen volume as containing a record of an early Knoll Towers O-Ringen event. His finger jabbed at the date on the cover. It read 1972. Still not saying a word, he flipped over several pages before settling on a list of results and pointing to its head. The class was W19E, which would have been the premiere women's age category at the time. There were all the finishers, listed in descending order of time and at the top of the list there appeared to be a foreign name with a club listing I didn't recognise. The winning margin was quite considerable. "You may not be sure, Rocky," my father said, his voice trembling, "But I am. This here is the origin of the suit. This is the person who wore it. This is where I found it first, left as lost property. For the last few days I thought I had lost it too, but then you, of all people, turn up with it!"

I pondered for a moment, scanning the yellowing page in front of me. "You say this person wore it 36 years ago?" I queried in amazement. "I didn't know this sort of stuff was worn for orienteering back then." "It wasn't, dear boy, it wasn't. And quite frankly, I'd be astonished if you could find anything quite like it even today. Now there's something else you need to notice. Look closely at that name." It looked Finnish to me. Then the penny dropped. With a crash. "It's an anagram of Kim Vermillion" I whispered in disbelief. That alone was a considerable coincidence but in the context of what had happened the day before on Malvern Common it was one that sent shivers running through my whole body. "Kim must have been describing this very event," I continued falteringly. "She said it was very old-fashioned, using pin-punching for example, and then there was the description of the house at the Finish. A spot-on summary of Knoll Towers, but as far as I know, Kim has never been here in her whole life." My father looked very thoughtful. "She seemed somehow familiar.....". His voice faded away. We stared at each other in disbelief.

Can things get any stranger? You bet they can. Read on in next month's unputdownable episode of Trouble with Lycra, available only here in Mad Hoc (don't forget to renew now!)

February 2009

mad hoc

Rocky and Lord Knoll have realised that the strange vision that Kim Vermillion had whilst wearing a mysterious lycra O-suit was in fact from the 1972 Knoll Towers O-Ringen....

Rocky Knoll in Trouble with Lycra

Part 3 – A Window on the Past

The stables fell silent; the early dusk of autumn was already approaching and the air felt chilly. I didn't really know what to say. That the outfit had some kind of magical property? That sounded like madness; I could almost hear Brent laughing his head off at the suggestion. My father perhaps sensed my unease. "Rocky, there's more you need to know. I've kept this suit for thirty-six years. Somehow it was something I just couldn't get rid of. And in later years it sort of explains my collecting all this." He waved his hands vaguely at the stacked boxes of lycra. I was puzzled. "It doesn't make much sense. Kim didn't leave the suit as lost property. How could you have found it?" My father shook his head. "I don't know. There's a lot to this I don't know. And there's more". He leaned forward, looking more conspiratorial than ever. "Tell me," he murmured in low voice. "Although you only had the outfit for one day, did you ever feel an urge to put it on?" That struck me a resounding blow in the solar plexus. I had to admit it; the feeling had passed through me on several occasions. "It seems to have a persuasive power, Rocky" my father whispered. "A power I could not resist. In the end I just had to submit and try it on." "When was this?" "A few weeks later, back in '72. It fitted me rather well at the time, even though I say it myself. Once I'd put it on, up in the West Wing you understand, to be honest I felt like a bit of a lemon. The thing is, there was a thunderstorm going on at the time. I remember a flash of lightening and the next thing I knew I was running through the woodlands here on the Knoll estate, as fast as anything, reading the map perfectly, hitting each control spot on. Not bad for a total non-orienteer! It was absolutely real, not like being in a dream. There were some things about the event that struck me as being most unusual though. No pin punching for example; it was electronic. The map was a superb five colour job, much better than that brown and black affair we were using at the time. I made a note of a lot of useful things. I finished the event and then suddenly, as quickly as it had all started, I was back in the West Wing of Knoll Towers, lying on the floor with a bruised head. I don't mind telling you I got that suit off as fast as I could."

I mulled over my father's story, comparing it to Kim's. There were clearly a lot of similarities. Then I thought about all of the innovative features that he had introduced to the Knoll Towers O-Ringen over the years. He had acquired a significant reputation for forward thinking, some of which had worked spectacularly well. At other times it had not gone so smoothly, especially the 1973 fiasco over electronic punching which had led to the collapse of National Grid, the three day week and the end of the Conservative Government, not something my father had set out to do. Now I could see where he had got his ideas from. However, there was still something not quite right about this account. "If you were at an O-Ringen event that was in the future compared to 1972," I said carefully, "It must have been before now, because the event is no more. That means you stood a chance of meeting your younger self, if it was something more than just a dream." "Don't think I didn't worry about that for many years," my father replied. "Especially when the technology I had seen started to be introduced. But in fact you had a hand in preventing it happening. Remember, you and Brent refused to let me attend the event in 2002 after the unfortunate incident involving the BOF chairman and the flamethrower. Well that was the year that a certain Dr OL Llonk appeared to have run away with the M35 class, which is just Lord and Knoll backwards. Judging by what I remember of the event anyway, I don't think anyone would have had much of a chance to recognise me."

mad hoc

Evening had now closed in and the courtyard outside was almost dark. My father sighed and closed the ledger. I could smell an appetising smell wafting in from the lodge. “Come on old chap” he said, “Come in and have some supper with us. In fact, why not stay the night in the spare room and go back tomorrow. Not a word to your mother, mind, about all this malarkey.” I chuckled to myself as we walked back to the kitchen. At one time I would have had about 50 spare rooms to choose from as well as waiter service. It wasn’t ever as good as it sounded though. Times had changed and maybe they weren’t so bad after all. But this lycra business was still rushing round my head and needed sorting out, one way or the other, since I knew I couldn’t just let it go.

The evening passed pleasantly enough. My mother’s cooking, just months in development, was extraordinarily good and even my father ate heartily without a word of complaint about the food. An excellent bottle of Rouge de Grenobles 1991 helped matters. The news from the estate centred on the rapid redevelopment of the main house and the grounds for “executive leisure activities” about which my father was full of his own opinions. “They’ve got a cheek”, “Bloody young upstarts”, “No proper business acumen” were several repeated phrases which occasionally permeated my whirring brain. I had a sudden thought. “Is there any chance that they might want to run the O-Ringen in some form again in the future”, I asked. “It’s always been a good money spinner and it could be good publicity for the other facilities.” My father chuckled. “Maybe, if they can get away with charging an even higher entry fee than I used to do.”

We retired for the night, somewhat earlier than I was used to. It was no good trying to get to sleep; my mind was full of lurid colours and dusty ledgers. In the end I must have been dozing fitfully when I awoke suddenly with a start. The wind was rattling the window and outside the moon was full. I walked over to adjust the miscreant pane and looked down on the courtyard bathed in a milky light. The stable door caught my eye. It too was rattling in the breeze. I slipped on a couple of garments and silently made my way outside. At the stable door I paused. I felt a strong compulsion to open it and enter. Inside it was dim and I couldn’t remember where the light switch was but moonlight from the single high window was sufficient for me to make out my father’s various bits and pieces. My eye fell on the ripped packaging containing the mysterious O-suit. I pulled the fabric out; I could have sworn it emitted its own faint radiance. Now the compulsion was utterly overwhelming. I had to put it on. My hands were shaking as I pulled the material over my less than shapely body. It fitted perfectly. Now what? The link between Kim’s and my father’s “dreams” was that they were both initiated by a sudden burst of light, so that would seem to be the logical thing to try and generate. I had to find the light switch. Almost immediately I spotted it, walked over and (I wasn’t really thinking the consequences through at this point) flicked it on. As expected, light flooded into the room but nothing dramatic seemed to have happened except.....hang on, where had all the boxes gone? And the light was not artificial but natural. I pushed open the stable door. Outside it was broad daylight!

Nobody expected that to happen! Now will Rocky start to unravel the mystery or will things just get more complicated. There’s only one way to find out – get your copy of the March Ad Hoc.

March 2009

mad hoc

Both Kim Vermillion and Lord Knoll appear to have experienced strange time travelling experiences whilst wearing a mysterious lycra O suit. Now Rocky has succumbed to the suit's persuasive powers to make people try it on.....

Rocky Knoll in Trouble with Lycra

Part 4 – A Window on the Future

Moments before the courtyard had been shrouded under a cloud-scudding full moon night. Now it was filled with sunlight, and filled too with bustling figures. This was clearly the nerve centre of a major orienteering event; registration, results, start lists, retailers – all crammed into the cobbled area flanked by outbuildings and the South Lodge. Here I was, dressed to compete and surrounded by others, similarly attired. Everywhere I looked, competitors were adorned with the same outfits as mine. No-one gave me a second glance. I looked up at a large digital display which was showing start lists. As I read its heading my heart lurched. “70th Anniversary Knoll Towers O-Ringen” 70th! When had the first event taken place? About 1970 as far as I could recall. So, like my father, I seemed to have moved about 30 years into the future. The age classes caught my eye. The top categories were M/W100. There was R. Bauset (M90) running 1.1km, 5 controls, 5m climb.

As I stood, uncertain of what to do, or even if I was really there at all, but just looking through some sort of window on the future, two men walked past close enough for me to overhear their conversation. “Another lousy rip-off,” one was moaning. “I mean, we pay £90 entry fee per day and all we get is that old Scrollable Plasma Map system. Years out of date.” His companion concurred. “Yes, and they say that bracken has been regenerating in parts of the forest. Can’t they spend some of their money on an effective anti-undergrowth agent. Next we’ll be getting brambles back again.” They passed on by and I noticed for the first time that nobody I could see was wearing gaiters. As I was wondering what to do, another man ran by from my rear. “I didn’t know you were going to be here today R.J.” he called back. “Great event as usual.” Clearly there were mixed feelings about the O-Ringen (nothing seemed to have changed there) but what was most alarming was the fact that at least one person here thought he knew me. Mistaken identity? Who was R.J? I consulted the start list again in order to look for clues. It didn’t take long for me to spot the name of R. Knoll running in M21. Well that clearly wasn’t supposed to be me was it, I’d hardly pass for an M21 unless..... A sudden thought came to my mind. If the O-Ringen was still going, then perhaps it was being run by the next generation of the Knoll family. I had a distinctly uncomfortable feeling.

Musing over this I wandered over to one of the retailers. There were piles of O suits looking a bit like mine in style but a dull grey in colour. A potential customer was chatting to the stall keeper and was able to overhear the sales patter. “Great outfits these,” he was saying, “Only £199 and you can have any pattern you like. Look, I’ll show you.” He laid a top out on the table and attached what appeared to be an electrode to the tab inside the neck. This was attached to what looked like a tiny mobile phone. He tapped a few buttons and the clothing turned a lurid pink. He cursed and muttered to himself as he tapped more buttons. Nothing changed. “Sorry, seems to be another dodgy batch. We’re getting some more in next week. Can I interest you in a contact lens compass?” I moved on, fumbling at my neck as I did so. Yes, there did appear to be some sort of odd lump embedded in the label of my outfit, presumably some sort of chip that could alter the appearance of the fabric. That might explain the odd hues and patterns that seemed to come and go in a certain light. It certainly didn’t explain the apparent time shifts that three of us had now experienced.

There was a disturbance from across the courtyard. I turned to see a balding man running towards a woman who had her back to me. The man was calling out “Lady Knoll! Lady Knoll! Piles from the

Borchester Bulletin. Can I ask a few questions please?” I felt my heart lurch, half expecting to see my mother turn round. It was not her of course. Who it was I couldn’t immediately see as some runners passed in between us. She was now in consultation with the reporter, head bowed. I walked slowly towards her, my pulse racing. As I got closer the reporter stepped back and she glanced up and our eyes met. We both stood there with our mouths open in shock. She swayed and I thought she was going to faint. Piles lifted his hand and there was a flash. A green veil seemed to cloak me and the warmth of the day was gone. A musty smell invaded my senses and I was in a different place altogether. In fact I was now standing in a small old fashioned canvas tent. In front of me was a cardboard box with a few sundry items of clothing in. I peered outside to find myself in a familiar corner of the Knoll estate on a grey wet day. Dusk was clearly approaching. The tent had a notice hanging from the top of the pole. It read “Lost Property”. A man, about two hundred metres away was ambling slowly towards it.

Suddenly I had an overwhelming compulsion to take off the outfit as quickly as possible. Within seconds I had done so, and scrabbling in the box, found sufficient other items to make myself reasonably decent. I put the O suit in the box, my actions coming automatically, as if willed on by an unseen force. As I finished I could hear the squelching of boots in the mud outside. A familiar voice called “Who’s there?” I stood transfixed in the semi-dark unsure now of what to do. The door to the tent was suddenly pulled open and torch light flashed in. I caught a brief glimpse of a face I had once known and then again it all disappeared and I was lying on my back on hard cobbles. The moon shone overhead. It was night time and my father was looking down at me with some concern. I could hear my mother fussing in the background. I seemed to have arrived back home again.

How will Lord Knoll react to the loss of his precious O suit? Who were the familiar figures Rocky met on his adventures? You may or may not find out in the final episode of this tortured time travelling tale in next month’s Ad Hoc.

April 2009

mad hoc

Rocky has returned to the present having apparently left the mysterious lycra O suit behind him on his travels. Don't expect this to make any sense unless you have read the four previous episodes of this time twisting tale.....

Rocky Knoll in Trouble with Lycra

Part 5 – Full Circle

We sat down for a late breakfast the following morning to go through the events that had recently unfolded. My father was in a philosophical mood. "There seems to be a destiny for this orienteering outfit," he pondered. "You, like me before, were powerless to withstand its temptations." I was glad he saw it that way. "It does clear up one thing that was troubling me though," he added, tussling with a boiled egg. "And that was how I came to find it in Lost Property after I had seen Kim wearing it in 1972. After all that, she wasn't the one who left it there, it turned out to be you instead!"

I groaned. My head was spinning with all the various permutations of dates and sightings of this blasted bit of clothing. My father however seemed to be in much better spirits. I suspected that it was my account of my brief visit to the 70th Knoll Towers O-Ringen that had cheered him up; perhaps he saw it as a sign of improving family fortunes in the future. Before I could respond to his latest statement we heard the sound of a car drawing up in the courtyard. Peering through the window I saw two familiar figures approaching the back door, accompanied by an enormous Irish wolfhound. It was Brent, Kim and Silas. I wondered how my father might react to Kim's appearance but he was affability itself. "Well, what brings you two here so early?" he queried, gesturing for them to sit down and join us. "Get some more tea and toast will you dear." he called to my mother who was bustling in the background. Brent threw himself into a chair and explained. "I heard about Kim's strange turn a couple of days ago and went to see how she was. When I heard exactly what had taken place I knew that I had to come and see you at once. Two reasons. Firstly for Kim to see the estate and confirm that she had seen it in her little adventure. Secondly, to own up to something." My father looked captivated, leaning forward eagerly. "Go on, dear boy," he murmured, "Do go on". Brent took a deep breath. "OK. A few years ago I thought I saw something very odd at the O-Ringen. Somebody who looked very much like father wearing a very strange lycra outfit. Except that it couldn't have been him as we had locked him up in the West Wing to stop him taking pot shots at vandals." My father looked slightly pained but nodded for Brent to continue. "Also, this person was clearly too young. Anyway, I took a couple of photographs after which this person seemed to vanish into thin air. The photos developed very strangely." "Just like mine did," interjected Kim, "Just the same".

We all waited with bated breath, including my mother who was standing in the doorway with a pot of freshly brewed tea. "I knew father had all manner of peculiar lycra outfits stashed away so a few days later I snuck up to take a quick check if I could find anything similar. To my surprise I found what looked like the very same suit in one of his collection rooms. I took it out and I don't what came over me. I felt this compulsion to put it on immediately. When I had done so I went to turn the light on to get a better view of myself in the mirror and everything instantly changed. Now here's the really spooky bit. I found myself on Malvern Common on an autumn day, next to a van, a few yards from what appeared to be a photo shoot. I could see an extremely attractive young lady posing in orienteering kit". It was me," beamed Kim, "Brent was there, behind the van". My brother continued. "I suddenly saw Rocky walking over towards the van and I knew straight away that I had to take the suit off. Within seconds I had put it onto the back seat and was standing there like a lemon in my underwear. A flash went off and seconds later I was back in Knoll Towers minus the suit". My father whistled under his breath. "So that's how my prize collection piece disappeared." he said, somewhat

sadly. “That caused me a lot of grief, I can tell you. Yet another member of the Knoll family falling under its powers.”

The room fell silent. “OK,” I said, “Let’s summarise all we know and see if it hangs together. Kim finds a strange suit at the photo shoot and assumes that I have put it out for her to wear. She puts it on and pays a visit to the ’72 O-Ringen where she is spotted by father, but returns to the present with it, whereupon I bring it here yesterday. Overnight I put it on, pay a brief visit to the O-Ringen in about 2040 before returning to 1972 where it gets left in Lost Property. Father finds it and assumes it is Kim who has left it there. He then puts in on and travels to 2002 where he is spotted by Brent. Father returns with it to 1972 but thirty years later it disappears from his collection due to Brent finding it and transporting it a few years forward to Malvern Common whereupon Kim finds it. A full, never-ending circle.”

“And now it’s lost.” reflected Kim sadly, “A shame, it was a really neat bit of kit.” “Hang on a mo,” interrupted Brent, “Not completely lost. Didn’t you say that you visited the 2040 O-Ringen wearing it? That’s where we need to look out for it again. Just a mere thirty year wait or so!” My father stirred. “Rocky,” he said, looking at me seriously, “Did you see anybody you knew there?” They all stood expectantly. The clock ticked very loudly. My heart thumped. My throat went dry. I knew what I had seen, who I had seen and who had seen me. What could I say? I opened my mouth. “No.” I replied as firmly as I could muster, “No, nobody at all, and nobody recognised me.” There was a collective sigh. “However Father, if you ever do get to run the O-Ringen again, I’ve got a few ideas you could try. Have you ever thought of using scrollable plasma maps....?”

The End

Watch out for Kim Vermillion and Rock Coppice in Every Wyche Way (18), the sensational follow up to their controversial cult classic, Last Control on Malvern Common, out soon!

May 2009

mad hoc

This is how the Mad Hoc Forum works!
So easy to ask a question.
There will be plenty of helpful answers from club members.
Why not give it a try?

Anyone travelling to Beryl's Bottom?

 <p>From: Rocky Location: Knoll Towers estate</p>	<p>Dear Members, Is anyone travelling to the event at Beryl's Bottom this coming weekend? I have an important package that needs delivering and I'm looking for someone who could take it for me.</p>
 <p>From: Knackered Partridge Location: Location location</p>	<p>I remember the last time we went to an event at Beryl's Bottom there was a really bad hailstorm, I got blisters from wearing a new pair of O shoes and on the way back we saw a whole load of strange four-legged black and white animals in a field by the M5 that none of us could identify.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Orienteering is the new cookery and I'm Nigella Lawson</p>
 <p>From: Ms van H Location: At the optics</p>	<p>What the hell is going on? There was nothing in last month's Mad Hoc about an event at Beryl's Bottom this weekend. If that brontosaurus of an editor doesn't pull his finger out I predict that the entire sport of orienteering will die in exactly six months.</p>
 <p>From: Songbird Location: Down the quack's</p>	<p>I've never damaged a major organ at Beryl's Bottom but however, you might be interested in my latest injury sustained whilst I was ironing the curtains. The top rung of my ladder gave way and I broke two ribs and ruptured my spleen. It didn't stop me from spending five fantastic hours on the Blue course at...[Auto Twitter cutout invoked]</p>
 <p>From: New kid on the Blog Location: Online</p>	<p>Go to my website for pictures of Beryl's Bottom taken from some very unusual angles. How many can you identify? Warning: when searching for "Beryl" and "bottom" don't forget to also include the qualifier "orienteering"</p> <p>-----</p> <p>I know a lot about art but I don't know what I like</p>
 <p>From: Rejuvenated Location: Blackheath nick</p>	<p>Advance notice: Next year's 23rd running of the BIRMM (Bewdley Institute of Russometrics Mountain Marathon) will take place at Der boden von Beryl (Beryl's Bottom's twin location in southern Germany). All control sites will have the common theme of having nothing whatsoever to do with lemmings.</p>
 <p>From: Rocky Location: Knoll Towers estate</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. I'll take that as a no then.</p> <p>Cows?</p>

June 2009

mad hoc

Mad Hoc brings you another exclusive – a fascinating insight into the mind of one of the club's most dedicated orienteers!

The orienteering blog of Jason Twinge (M45) of Droitwich Spa

Is he the most anally retentive man in the sport? (unfortunately, probably not – Ed)

Tues: Spent four hours rearranging my map collection by alphabetical order of the name of the area. At half past nine had a crisis of confidence over whether areas beginning with “The” as in “The Wrekin” should be classified under “T” or not. Had a cup of cocoa in my Wilf’s mug and decided that they should be arranged in alphabetical order of club. Dozed off before I could make a start.

Wed: It’s a disgrace! The committee have decided against my suggestion for a five-day street orienteering festival in Droitwich Spa next summer. Am I the only visionary in the club? What could be more appealing than the thought of running on the same tarmac as our local superstar, the saintly Ashley Giles? I detect the hand of Belinda Bartmann in this rejection.

2130: Drafted my letter of resignation from the club

2230: Had some cocoa in my Wilf’s mug and tore up my letter of resignation.

Thurs: Phoned the Mad Hoc office to enquire into the whereabouts of the extendable dibber that I ordered a few weeks ago. It turned out that the company supplying them has gone into receivership. Consoled myself with the thought that I should soon be getting delivery of my decimal compass. Rearranged my map collection in order of date.

Sun: Disaster. Travelled all the way to the Beryl’s Bottom District event only to find that I had neglected to swap my training shoelaces over to my special super-lightweight foot-and-mouth-proof racing shoelaces. So gutted about carrying the extra weight that I ran off the map and lost twenty minutes. Belinda Bartmann was bad-mouthing Droitwich Spa as a premier orienteering venue. What does she know?!

Mon: Another great disappointment. By an unfortunate co-incidence, the suppliers of decimal compasses have also gone bust. I was reassured by the Mad Hoc office that my Wilf’s Big Mug was on its way. Looking forward to having 10% more cocoa at bedtime. Rearranged my map collection in order of scale.

Wed: Just back from the COD evening event at Booley Fields. Event was ruined by the use of a faded orienteering kite not conforming to IOF Standard 14.7b (Colour specifications). Wrote a strong letter of complaint pointing out that the course should be voided and my time of 118 minutes expunged from all records. Rearranged my map collection in order of great circle distance from Droitwich Spa Town Hall. Spilt cocoa on the stairs.

Thur: Appalling luck continues. The lady at the Mad Hoc office told me that Wilf is suing the manufacturers of the Big Mug. All stocks will have to be destroyed! I confess, I blubbed shamelessly when I heard the news. Also, as a result, I am totally overstocked with cocoa. Wrote to Ashley Giles to try to get extra local support for the Droitwich Spa O-Festival. I know I can count on the “King of Spain”. Rearranged my map collection in order of resemblance to Belinda Bartmann after she’s been run over by the Bromsgrove bus. Felt much better after that.

Cocoa, then bed.

July 2009

mad hoc

Mad Hoc brings you the
latest in the world of
orienteering films

NEW RELEASE: WORLD PREMIERE – Malvern, July 10th

Every Wyche Way (18)

If *Last Control on Malvern Common* could be described as a dark film, which is reasonable since it was set during a Night Event, then its locally-filmed follow-up could be dubbed a spectacular riot of colour. Yellow, Orange, Red, Green, Blue, Brown: Kim Vermillion and Rock Coppice show their enviable technique and remarkable athleticism at every standard, and unflaggingly so for over two hours. There are no dibbers this time but the hand of Technical Advisor Barry Barrington can once again be discerned in several scenes where orienteering equipment is put to a robust range of navigational uses. Aficionados of the genre and especially those of the iconic Acme Thunderer will especially enjoy the ‘six blasts a minute’ whistle sequence. It goes without saying that the two main protagonists give full value for money, easily earning every BOF badge going and then some. Another step on the road to super-stardom for the irrepressible and effervescent Ms Vermillion. As we say in these parts, essential viewing!

“A stunning piece of work. I particularly enjoyed the cameo appearance by Margaret from the Apprentice” – *Hugo Thynne, Borchester Bulletin*

“Does anyone have any good advice for my friend on how to stop his spectacles misting up during events?” – *Eric Slowly (anon), Federation HQ*

“Hamster choreography to die for” – *The Financial Times*

OTHER GREAT RECENT RELEASES

No Cross-Country for Old Men (<50)

This is a withering response to Nick Barrable’s editorial in CompassSport supporting the promotion of orienteering for the over fifties.

There will be Blood (AO)

Reflects the rather pessimistic view of the state of the vegetation on the upcoming Dymoke and Queens’s Wood map.

Frost/Nixon (M50)

The epic struggle at Scottish evening league event between Paul Frost (EckO) and John Nixon (CLYDE) is brilliantly portrayed by Michael Sheen who pays every part including 20 other runners.

How to Lose Friends and Alienate People (65000000BC)

The tragic account of a club newsletter editor’s battle to produce the perfect orienteering magazine, only to become a lonely recluse after writing a string of controversial editorials. May offend dog lovers, mispunchers, dinosaurs and anyone else living in Great Britain.

BOF! The Story of BOF (12)

Truth is often stranger than fiction. The many years of struggle in the wilderness for a little known organisation, tipped for big things but somehow missing the boat. Management battles, disastrous tours to obscure forested parts of the world, unfathomable ranking lists. Brilliantly pitched at a human level, where in the end true love for the sport and determination to succeed against the odds win through. Bring your hankies.

September 2009

ham cod

As ever, Mad Hoc is at the cutting edge of what's happening in the literary world.....

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATION – “Getting to the Bottom of the Bottom” (BIR publications)

Ah, Beryl's Bottom. The very name conjures up memories of halcyon summer evenings spent yomping through its swathes of oak, birch and pine, the sound of crickets chirping, bees humming and local youths chopping up the permanent course posts for firewood. What could be more idyllic than wandering around its sunny glades, tussling through head high bracken whilst searching for one of Frank's infamous bingo controls. Beryl's Bottom, the very soul of the club, an iconic and historic venue. As Queen Mary would surely have said if she had visited here, “When I die you will find Beryl's Bottom graven on my heart”. Or perhaps the other way around.



The Bewdley Institute of Russometrics team take a break from their intensive research activities

Everyone knows where Beryl's Bottom can be found, but how many people know of its background? Now, thanks to the concentrated efforts of a team of experts from the Bewdley Institute of Russometrics, a definitive documentation of the area will be published next month, available from all good emporia, covering its history, archaeology, geology, fauna, flora, and nearby public houses. Mad Hoc is pleased to bring you a few exclusive selections from it, concentrating on its recent association with orienteering.

Due to its central location for the membership, Beryl's Bottom was an obvious candidate for the club's first specialist orienteering map. Early events had been held on OS black and white photocopies but new ground was broken in 1973 with the arrival of Silas Wegg's extraordinary new survey. Printed at an average scale of 1:8848, with magnetic north lines drawn at 33 degrees to the vertical (because that made it fit nicely onto a sheet of A4), not to mention its trilingual legend (English, Welsh and Swedish), it unleashed a completely new orienteering experience on an unsuspecting public. Other controversial features included specialised symbols for local items including abandoned cars and percentage ground cover of litter. Sadly to say, this bold new advance in cartography proved to be the Beta-max technology of its generation and following the need to provide counselling sessions for traumatised orienteers who had run on the map, the club abandoned these initiatives to the dustbin of history.

In 1985 the area played host to the first and only application of a very early and experimental version of the orienteering Duckworth-Lewis rule. Following a thunderstorm, Beryl's Brook burst her banks and several control sites were swept away causing the event to be abandoned. After several weeks of calculation, reconstructed results were produced, although they were subsequently discredited as nobody could understand them. The subsequent retrieval of a large quantity of orienteering equipment from a nearby cricket pitch is what is thought to have inspired the rule's inventors to apply it elsewhere and the rest, as they say, is history.

1990 saw the area stage the club's attempt to establish a new record for the world's longest string course. Having laid out over 14km, the record attempt was ultimately deemed unsuccessful due to its sheer length being beyond the ability of any toddler under the age of three to complete it, a requirement of claiming the record. Accusations of child cruelty were played down although the

ham cod

removal from the course of over 20 youngsters suffering from exhaustion and over-exposure to Postman Pat had to be skilfully handled.

In modern times the area has acquired a reputation for staging quality night events. These have been enhanced by the unfortunate misprint on a set of event details in 2000 when the phrase “dogs welcome” inexplicably became corrupted to “doggers welcome”. The attendance at that year’s regional night championships broke all records.

In 2007, amid a fanfare of publicity and with the attendance of many local dignitaries, the new permanent orienteering course was opened. This broke new technological ground, featuring vandal proof control sites, the capability for 24/7 electronic timing and a post-course diagnosis service. Unfortunately numbers for its first year of operation were still dismally low as no-one had thought to update the map-vending procedures which still involved a man sitting in hut three miles away which was open every third Thursday afternoon when there was an “r” in the month.

So, with Beryl’s Bottom remaining the club’s most used area, this new booklet should appeal to young and old alike. And watch out for the next BIR publication due early 2010; The Joy of Dibbing (foreword by Kim Vermillion).

October 2009

mac hod

“History is bunk!” declared Henry Ford. In this article Mad Hoc proves conclusively that in fact, Henry Ford was the one who was bunk.

More fascinating historical trivia brought to you by The Raiders of the Lost Archives

The sad news of the recent demise of Gerald Klapp (universally known as G.K.) whilst playing ice hockey at the age of 86 represents the loss of another link to the early days of the club. Without G.K. history may have taken a different turn altogether. We are referring to, of course, the extraordinary contest that has gone down in local orienteering folklore.

The protagonists were essentially G.K. and Harry Barrington (Barry’s father). Harry had built up a small but enthusiastic group of orienteers from the vicinity of the village of Bambridge, not far from Beryl’s Bottom. They had registered themselves with the English Orienteering Federation under the name of Bambridge Orienteers (BO). The charismatic G.K. had likewise gathered an equally enthusiastic squad of rapidly improving novices who competed under the banner of the Borchester Orienteering Group (BOG). The two clubs were competing for membership in the same catchment area and both needed to recruit to ensure their longer-term survival. Tensions rose throughout the early months of 1966; there were mutterings from both sides of poaching and illicit “signing-on fees”. In the end, Harry and G.K. got together and struck a deal. The two embryonic clubs would meet face-to-face in a showdown at the Plantation on a course laid on by Octavian Dribblers (the oldest club in the region but yet to change its name from that reflecting its origins in the Coventry 8-a-side football league). The winning team would take all; it would have the right to absorb the losing club into its ranks and therefore create a single, more powerful unit operating under a unified banner. This then was the showdown, Klapp versus Barrington, BOG versus BO!

A young Frank Bearden, now of course the landlord of the Lord “Charlie” Nelson in Bambridge, was in the BO ranks for that fateful clash. “I remember being dead nervous. It was the morning of the 1966 World Cup Final, England v West Germany. We each had a team of eight and I had to be drafted in at the last moment as a replacement for my father who had dropped a barrel of Old Scroat on his foot the previous evening. It was only my second ever event.” Frank senior may not have competed on the day but he inadvertently played a significant role in its outcome. He “knew a man” who could get 1:25000 OS maps copied on the cheap and had provided two dozen to The Dribblers for use at The Plantation. Little known to anyone these cut-price maps had a distinctive and not altogether desirable property, namely that they quickly faded in bright sunlight. So much so that after about fifty minutes of exposure, most of the map was illegible. All was not totally lost though since the competitors still had their marked up routes visible, having used the master-map system at the Start. In the tension of the moment nobody dared retire; each runner ploughed on working off fewer and fewer details until only the control circles remained. In these circumstances only one competitor had the experience and skill to make steady and mistake free progress. G.K., starting last, gradually worked his way through the field and in doing so he acquired an increasing number of not-so-discrete followers. By the time he reached the final control almost the entire field of 16 runners was clustered together in a single group. Only young Frank was missing, by this stage he had run off the map and was halfway to Borchester.

G.K. punched first at the final control. OD had been experimenting with some homemade pin-punches and these were still at the development stage. Their main fault was that they did not always release properly. However, they had chosen to use them for this event. G.K. quite clearly

mac hod

was in a hurry and did not notice that the pins of the final control punch had caught firmly in his sealed card. The card naturally followed wherever G.K. went. The pin punch had no option but to go where the card went. In its turn the stake that the punch was attached to faithfully followed suit and to complete the party the control flag joined in the merry procession. Down the run-in G.K. flew oblivious to the fact that he was trailing the very object of desire for fourteen other closely bunched people who were snapping at his heels. As the Pied Piper of The Plantation crossed the finishing line, the rats were onto him. Within seconds there was a heaving pile of competitors fighting for the punch which had completely disappeared from view. The Finish official, Gladys Golightly, who was taking a quiet morning off from running the Bambridge village stores leaving her daughter Celia in charge, was somewhat startled to observe this sudden explosion of activity. In the melee her kitchen clock, which was the official time piece, was knocked over and could not be persuaded to restart, its hand remaining stubbornly at ten to twelve. By the time the runners had unravelled themselves the pin punch had vanished completely and no times had been recorded.

As arguments over the validity of the event raged, Harry played his master-stroke. Why shouldn't, he suggested, everyone come back to his house for a spot of lunch and a chance to watch the World Cup final on his brand new 21" black and white television. This was enthusiastically accepted by everybody except the bruised and battered G.K. who was by now in a sulk and who hated football anyway. By the time the afternoon was over and with the whole country in thrall to its great triumph over West Germany, Harry had won the day. BO would be the name that lived on, BOG would be consigned to the dustbin of history.

There is of course, plenty more to tell of those early days, but only space here to tie up a few loose ends. In later life Gladys never tired of relating the tale of the great Pile-Up at the Plantation. As Celia Golightly remembers, the story grew ever more fanciful and dramatic, sometimes involving over fifty men fighting for twenty minutes as Gladys waded in and sorted them out, giving them a good ticking –off into the bargain. As for the kitchen clock; it never ticked or moreover tocked another second. It found its way into the club's equipment shed whereupon Frank senior retrieved it and turned it into an unusual and idiosyncratic trophy, presented for many years at the Club Championships to the most bloodied and battered finisher. The BOGBO Trophy, or Gladys's Gong, as it was affectionately known, served this purpose for many years until it perished when Billy Bugmore's ceiling collapsed onto it in the Great Earthquake of Bambridge in 2002. G.K. never fully recovered from the humiliation of that day and shortly afterwards emigrated to Minnesota whereupon he took up ice hockey, which completes the circle of this particular story.

Coming soon: Early days of the Knoll Towers O-Ringen investigated

November 2009

mod hac

Had enough of the
CompassSport Cup? Of course
you haven't! Let Mad Hoc take
you back in time.....

The Best Laid Plans.....

As the excitement fades following this year's Final, it is worth retelling the story of the club's first foray into the then newly established Rumpass Sport Cup in 1983. At that time, the competition was in a multi-round head-to-head knockout format and Bambridge Orienteers (as they were then still known) found themselves up against local rivals Octavian Dribblers. By a strange quirk of the fixture list, this match ended up being scheduled at Faraway Forest in Dorset, at an event run by COK (Casterbridge Orienteering Klubb). To promote team spirit it was decided that travelling together by coach would be a good idea and Billy Bugmore was duly appointed as Chief Organiser of the Transport. He devised a cunning pick-up route for the Sunday morning that snaked its way back and forth across the county such that those unfortunate to live near its start found themselves with a 3am alarm clock rise. Excitement however was at fever pitch and nobody complained. The final port of call for the coach before it set off in earnest was outside the Bambridge village stores where a huge supply of Gladys Golightly's lucky chocolate fudgecake was loaded on board, intended to boost both team morale and team blood sugar.

Apart from Frank Bearden senior, who was recovering from a nasty accident involving the sign outside the Lord "Charlie" Nelson and some step ladders, BO were arguably at full strength. The main star of that era was "Fast Eddie" Barwood, the Team Captain. It was Eddie's responsibility to sort out the allocation of runners to courses which, due to the complex nature of the rules, was a fiendish optimisation exercise to which he managed to put the entire computing resources of the University of Droitwich Spa to work for several days. The solution, captured on yards of printout, appeared a little unorthodox but Eddie assured everyone that it was the key to the team's certain success. When Celia Golightly demanded to know why she had to run Brown rather than her usual Green course, Eddie was unequivocal in his defence of the plan, explaining that some of the best brains in the West Midlands had been working on this and there was no better policy. Expectations remained high.

The coach meandered its way into southern England. Young Frank Bearden had secreted a plastic flagon of Old Scroat about his person and he kept himself busy hydrating for the race ahead. Celia's West Highland Terrier, Kjellstrom, nipped Harry Barrington on the ankle. One of the Bews twins, overdosed on lucky fudgecake, was copiously sick during most of the journey and several half-hearted verses of the club song were attempted. Bob Baycock, the driver, who could normally be found behind the wheel of the 693 Bambridge to Borchester bus during the week, became increasingly confused about where he was going and after getting lost for the third time in twenty minutes, stopped the engine and announced that he now needed a four hour rest because he had run out of time on the Tacograph. Before anyone could prevent him, a well-fuelled Frank Bearden leapt to the steering wheel and hurtled the remaining 4 miles to the event in under 4 minutes, proving that at least some of his faculties were still working. The shaken but relieved team disembarked into the assembly field.

The actual race passed off without major incident, unless you count early starter Bob Bickers' encounter with an irate gamekeeper who escorted him from the forest at shotgun point, or Belinda Bartmann's discovery of a rare herb which she spent precious time stuffing into her leggings. Hugh

mod hac

Brians was distracted by a yellow-headed great crested warbler which he followed across several nearby fields and Frank Bearden's bizarre revisiting of the same control three times in a row put paid to his hopes. No, it was the usual mixture of glorious failure and plucky triumph that we are all so familiar with. The question was, was it good enough to overcome the dastardly Dribblers? As the Captain began to compile the results it was clear that all was not going to plan. In fact, something was terribly amiss. Many excellent runs were being wasted as non-scoring whilst poor runs invariably ended up as having to count. It didn't take a computer programme to work out that the Dribblers were romping to an easy victory. Eddie's planning efforts were in vain; his allocations were up the spout. It was a prize COK cock-up.

As soon as everyone had finished, the coach immediately departed. Ten minutes later it returned to pick up Frank Bearden, who was discovered fast asleep in the clothing reclaim tent under a pile of bags. The second attempt to escape back up northwards was a sorry affair. Eddie could be found peering and poking at yards of printout, muttering about rogue decimal points and spelling out in graphic detail to anyone nearby just what it was he was going to do to the computer, the computing department staff and the University in general when he returned. Other than that it was very quiet. Kjellstrom nipped Harry Barrington on the other ankle, both Bews twins were terribly sick and Frank Bearden went back to sleep on top of the remaining supply of Gladys's lucky fudgecake, snoring fitfully. The 1983 Rumpass-Sport Cup campaign was over.

The inquest into what had gone wrong was neither deep nor long. It was generally acknowledged that Eddie had done his best for the team but that this new-fangled competition wasn't really the sort of thing that BO members were interested in. As a result, it was almost a decade before another team from the club was entered into the Cup. If the Dribblers wanted to show off, then let them. As Frank Bearden senior could often be heard to say, as he pulled a pint of Old Scroat behind the snug bar of the Lord "Charlie" Nelson, "It'll all come to no good in the end, mark my words". And the patrons of the hostelry would nod sagely and raise their glasses to that wise sentiment.

December 2009

mad hoc

It may well return in 2010! Let Mad Hoc take you back over forty years of a great sporting institution

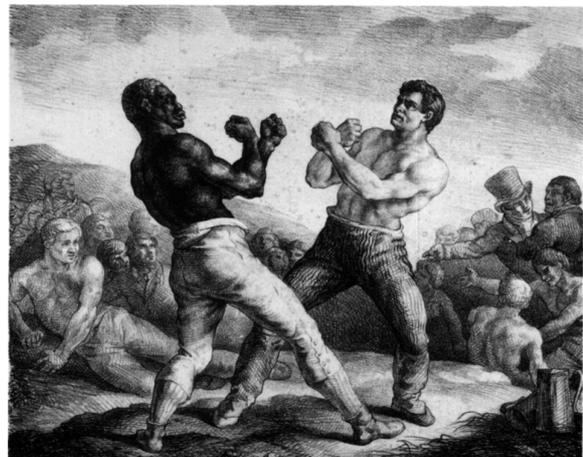
When the Knoll Towers O-Ringen was lost from the orienteering calendar in the wake of the Knollgate scandal of 2006, it could be argued that nobody was more disappointed than Celia Golightly. Her collection of 38 consecutive Knoll Towers O-Ringen mugs was unrivalled (much to Belinda Bartmann's disgust) even allowing for the fact that the 1987 model in the shape of the West Wing had been knocked onto the kitchen floor by her West Highland Terrier, Kjellstrom, and subsequently had to be glued back together again. Early summer without the O-Ringen has been like fish without chips, rock without roll, and Katie Price without Peter Andre (er....).

For anyone living on Mars at the time, Knollgate culminated in the ruinous collapse of Lord Knoll's front page High Court libel case against Rumpass Sport; the poetry, lycra and hamster-rich details of which are too complex to recount here. The long time organiser of one of England's premier orienteering events was forced to relinquish his hold on the Knoll publishing empire, as well as selling up the Knoll Towers estate where the event was always held. Now, as sensational news is breaking that the event looks set to return in 2010, Mad Hoc looks back to the genesis of this sporting institution.

By the start of 1968 Bambridge Orienteers were beginning to cast envious eyes over the superb terrain of the Knoll Towers estate. It quite clearly contained the potential for some of the most challenging orienteering in the region but it was seemingly out of bounds due to the extremely private nature of its eccentric owner, Lord Knoll, the Earl of Borchester. Then, in the spring of that year, fate played its hand when the elderly aristocrat perished in a bizarre accident involving a man trap and a flame thrower. The title then passed to his only son. The young Lord Knoll was more amenable to opening up his land but only if he could see a way of making money out of it, so when Harry Barrington approached him that summer, with a request to use the woodland for orienteering, he met a man with more vision than his own. Knoll had done his research, and based on the Swedish model, he proposed a multi-day O-Ringen type event. Barrington was taken aback and apprehensive about the club's ability to stage such a venture, but he felt compelled to go along

with the suggestion and an inaugural event was scheduled for the following year. Through his media background, including having taken over printing the "Borienteer" magazine, Knoll was able to raise considerable interest both home and abroad and the final entry was almost 500, the largest domestic event yet seen. All the club had to do was to deliver on the day. It didn't go to plan!

It's hard to put one's finger exactly on where things went least well; whether it was the destructive stampede of prize llamas through the assembly area on Day 1 when someone left a gate open, or whether it was when something ate several controls on Day 2 (the missing llamas were



Knoll insisted that disputes between the planner and the controller were settled by time-honoured family tradition

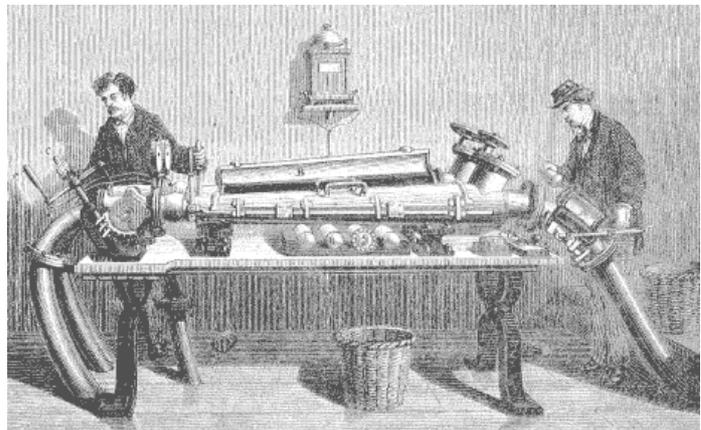
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were the prime suspects), the club were just not up to the job of running something so ambitious. Knoll was not impressed but he could see that there was potential for the future, as long as he was in control. Thus it came to pass that the 1970 Knoll Towers O-Ringen became the blueprint for a type of event that has been almost unique in the sport's calendar; one run by the landowner himself. Knoll had plenty of help though. His extensive domestic staff was drilled into a well regimented team capable of coping with every eventuality. They had plenty of time to prepare for the role of making the event run smoothly. For mapping and planning Knoll turned his eyes abroad, bringing in top-class Swedish expertise. The moves were spectacularly successful. With five-colour purpose-drawn maps and high class technical courses, interest was high and Knoll was able to charge accordingly. There was enough terrain to keep the courses fresh and interesting each year and the extensive parkland provided ample camping and parking space. Meanwhile the club could do little more than sit by and watch Knoll coining large profits.

Not everyone was a fan of the O-Ringen, least of all Harry Barrington who refused to have anything to do with it describing it as a "scandalous rip-off". He tried to persuade fellow club members to boycott the event and became so obsessed by it that he chained himself to the estate gates in a bizarre one-man protest stunt. The media coverage (orchestrated by Knoll himself) gave the event even more publicity and Barrington had to be given a restraining order. This however, was just one of many unusual aspects of the O-Ringen. Knoll was constantly determined to innovate and experiment, pushing back the boundaries of the sport. His disastrous attempt to introduce electronic punching in 1973 has been well documented and it was fortunate that the casualty list did not extend beyond his herd of prize llamas. He also can be credited with the earliest examples of in-situ computerised results, a sprint event (including a section inside the West Wing of Knoll Towers), waterproof maps, and the use of Postman Pat on the string course. Where all these ideas came from nobody is sure and whilst they were all unmitigated failures at the time, all were subsequently proven to be the way ahead.

One of the annual highlights was the lavish hospitality tent laid on for business and celebrity guests who could wine and dine as the races took place. In 1987 the marquee blew away during Day Two and eventually landed several miles away on Bambridge Common. When it was unravelled it was found to contain the local MP, one of Knoll's kitchen staff, an ex-member of Showaddywaddy (who turned out to be a gatecrasher) and Eric Slowly, all of whom were thankfully unharmed. Knoll denied that this was a publicity stunt. Another significant highlight was the spectacular 25th anniversary firework display of 1994 which set fire to the West Wing much to the excitement of the crowd who thought it was all part of the show. Knoll's extensive collection of lycra was fortunately saved from the conflagration.

By the time the O-Ringen moved into the twenty-first century it had lost a lot of its pulling power and was a shadow of its former glorious self. It was still a shock though when it ceased to run. Its re-emergence is awaited with interest; details are currently sketchy but make sure you pencil in into your 2010 diaries in its traditional early summer slot. More information to follow.



Knoll Towers staff supervising automated results processing at an early event. The machine pictured here unfortunately self-combusted in 1971 during a rush of finishers.

January 2010

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Mad Hoc continues to provide you with high quality orienteering reading of a genre not found anywhere else

Beville's Boots

(The one in which Belinda Bartmann has a life changing experience)

Young Beville Bartmann had a pair of boots. Not any old pair of boots you understand, but a very special pair of boots. These boots had the remarkable capability of imparting to their wearer the most incredible turn of pace over the few short yards between the final control and the finish line of any orienteering event. Such pace that none could live with, not even Beville's arch rival, The Spookster. But without the power of these boots, Beville was reduced to a pathetic and flapping scramble once that last checkpoint had been passed.

The only person who truly understood the boots' mysterious ability was Beville himself. To the rest of the running world it was a secret. He had stumbled upon them a few years ago whilst clearing out his gran's attic. There was something about them that made him want to put them on. They were comfortable enough to try out at an event but nothing special happened until they burst spectacularly into action at the end of the race. Unfortunately they were in a state of some disintegration and Beville was forced to take them to an aged shoe repairer in Borchester who recognised them as once belonging to the pioneering and brilliant 1960's orienteer "Bee Line" Beesley who had retired from competition and disappeared under puzzling circumstances after a disastrous run in an early Knoll Towers O-Ringen. The old man was able to salvage the boots and their power lived on.



Young Beville finds the boots for the very first time (artist's impression)

True, there were others who were aware of Beville's seemingly bizarre devotion to the battered footwear, none more so than his mother Belinda who after throwing them away shortly after their discovery (they were saved from the refuse collectors in the nick of time), was at least protective of them, although she believed their effect to be psychological rather than physiological. The boots had an alarming habit of becoming unavailable when most required. Over the years they had been left on a bus, left on a train, stolen by oiks from the estate, buried in the back garden, run off with by a fox, collected by charity workers, and used on a Guy, only to be miraculously reunited with Beville at the last moment. He had performed prodigious feats in the boots both at home and abroad but would his luck run out one day?

Now surely his greatest hour was at hand. The club had again qualified for the final of the Rumpass Sport Cup and the Golden Boot, the prestigious prize for the fastest time on the run-in, was up for grabs. The Golden Boot that was currently in the possession of The Spookster. Young Beville only had eyes for that. His mind went back to last year when by all rights he should have been the victor save for the unfortunate loss of the left boot in a muddy patch as he started his sprint. With one leg moving much faster than the other he was reduced to running in helpless circles much to the mirth of the spectators. He still smarted from embarrassment at the memory.

In the weeks leading up to the event he did not let the boots out of his sight. They went wherever he went and at night he slept with them under his pillow. He studied the form of the Spookster and planned his tactics.

It was an early start to get to Babbage Moor. With the kit carefully piled up ready to be loaded into the car Beville was impatient to get going. A 4x4 roared up and some familiar figures leapt out. It was Brent, Kim and Silas. "We've come to collect the club banners" explained Kim. "We'll get there before you and I've got some publicity stuff to do early on". Silas bounded around excitedly sniffing the air, much to Championship standard Dog Hater Belinda's disgust. The flags were collected and stowed away. Within a few moments they were gone again, hurtling away down the road. "Right then!" called Belinda, "Let's get loaded and away." Beville turned to his kit and realised with horror that the boots, which had been carefully tied together and placed on top of his kit bag, were no longer there. The prime suspect had to be Silas. "Dogs! They should all be shot!" snarled Belinda as they piled their bags into the boot. "And that's too good for them!" There seemed little point in chasing; Kim was a maniac behind the wheel so the best plan was to catch up with them at the event.

Three hours later they disembarked into the car park field and went straight to the club tent. Brent was there but there was no sign of Kim or Silas. Brent pondered. "Yes," he remarked eventually, "I do remember Silas having a chew on something as they went off. They should be back soon. Kim's been taken off by the TV crew to do some promotional filming out in the terrain". Beville was beside himself with anxiety and impatience. It was only a few minutes before he had to go and run and without his boots there was no chance of winning the Golden Boot. He could see the Spookster warming up in the distance. It was all going terribly wrong for the second year in a row. Belinda spoke urgently. "Get changed, use your trainers to run in and we'll think of something. I'm sure the boots will turn up, they always do. We'll find a way of getting them to you". Beville wasn't happy but he had little choice but to comply with his mother. There was still no sign of Kim and shortly afterwards he set off to the Start in his reserve footwear, full of trepidation.

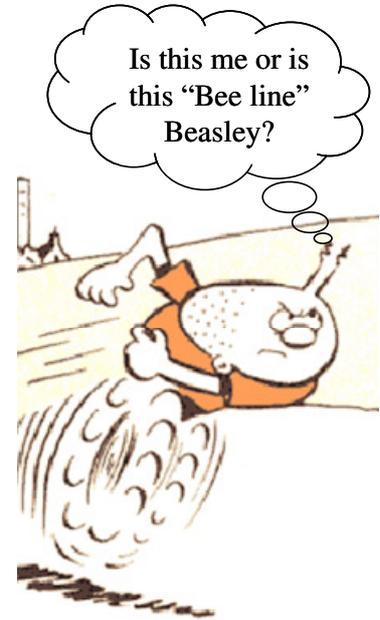
Meanwhile Belinda was in turmoil. She knew how much the Golden Boot meant to Young Beville and she was desperate to find the boots, let alone get them to her son. She had a very late start, Beville would probably be back before she had even started and she couldn't bear to see him struggling up the finish lane. A germ of an idea came into her mind. It was an idea that she could hardly contemplate but it might be her only chance. She kept an eagle eye out for Kim and Silas, praying that the wretched hound might still have the boots. Time went by, too much time. She was running out of time. Suddenly she heard Kim's approaching voice. "I'm so sorry Belinda, I've got Beville's boots here. I only realised that Silas had them when we started our filming. I don't think he's chewed them too badly. I hope we're not too late." Belinda took the boots from Kim. They were in a sorry state but would probably last for 400 metres. She took a deep breath and spoke urgently to Kim. "We may not be too late. This is what I want you to do....."

Beville was making steady progress through the later stages of his course. He checked the map again; only two more controls before the final one. Surely there was no hope. How on earth could he be re-united with his boots? He scanned the terrain but there was no-one in sight he recognised. Through the next control and just minutes left. Suddenly out of the corner of his eye he sensed something approaching. He turned and was greeted by the sight of a massive dog bounding towards him, something dangling from its jaws. His boots! Beville had never been so pleased to see Silas. "Good boy, good boy," he gasped, ripping off his old shoes and hurriedly

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lacing up the boots. He quickly tied the trainers together and returned them Silas. “To Kim,” he whispered in a flapping ear and the hound was gone. So was Beville, flowing towards the final control with renewed confidence. Nothing could go wrong now. Down, down the hillside to that last checkpoint, a smooth dib and away, away. Like the wind, with a speed handed down to him over the decades, half man, half greyhound. And across the line, with one more smooth dib and the Golden Boot was surely his.

After his run, Beville found his mother in a mixed state of emotion. She was clearly delighted at the sight of him sweeping majestically down the finish funnel putting all opposition to the sword. But there was something else; a real struggle going on deep down that was trying to burst to the surface. “What is it, Mum?” he asked, concerned. Belinda screwed up her face. “I had a deal with Kim,” she replied. “I was so desperate for you to make up for the disappointment of last year that in a moment of madness I said that if Kim could get Silas to return the boots to you successfully and help you win the Golden Boot, then I would promise to become a Dog Lover and let Silas give me a big wet doggy kiss.” There was a tense pause. “Okay,” she said finally, “Bring on the dog snog.....!”



Beville's philosophical musings on the run-in (artist's impression)

February 2010

mad hoc

Follow the arrow of history with MadHOC as it spears through the decades of West Midlands orienteering history. An impartial account compiled by Rocky Knoll

BO – *Bambridge Orienteers. The true forerunners of MADO. Formed in 1966 by Harry Barrington around its spiritual home, The Lord "Charlie" Nelson in Bambridge. The club has often been said to run on Old Scroat, produced at the Mad Dog Brewery in the shadow of Beryl's Bottom. Has never won anything of any significance and is proud of it! A Good Thing.*

1966

BUOC - *Birmingham University OC. Student orienteers have become so rare that they have themselves become declared an endangered species. Consequently the campus has been declared an SSSI, and all permissions for events there have been withdrawn. The many nesting pairs of years gone by are but a distant memory.*

1969

SOLOS – *Not Solifull Orienteering Society as some think but actually an 18-30 group set up in the Birmingham area for single orienteers. Became infamous for their somewhat debauched après-O, as well as the pre-O and the actual-O. The goings on at a 1979 night event in Sutton Park are thought to have been the inspiration for the cult movie "Last Control on Malvern Common" Disbanded in 1984 but there are rumours of SAGOS arising from the ashes (SAGA orienteering society).*

1974

WHFY? *Orienteers. Thought to be the only example of an existentialist orienteering group. Set up in Hereford at the start of the 1990s as part of the Foxton/James school of philosophy in sport. Certainly sat around a lot thinking about putting on events but in the end disappeared in a cataclysmic puff of collective self-doubt. Some people think that they still exist.*

1990

COD – *Coventry Orienteering Group. The deadly rivals of MADO. MadHOC isn't fooled by this front. They've been up to no good for many years. We don't rate their magazine Codpiece either. Altogether a Bad Thing.*

2006

1965

OD – *Octavian Dribblers were once Coventry 8-a-side football champions but once they switched to orienteering it is rumoured that they have gone over to the dark side. Their genetic experiments appear to be producing a master race of brilliant juniors. The all-seeing Oracle of MadHOC has read the Midwich Cookpoo and predicts this ending messy.*

1968

HOC – *Harlequins OC. Has now ditched the laid back approach to the sport established over many years by BO. Far too keen for their own good. Reaching the CompassSport Cup Final was the last straw in MadHOC's opinion and a Bad Thing.*

WCH – *Walton Chasers, once a Top Club but now fallen on harder times. Some of their more elderly members are sadly suffering from fungal disease MadHOC may have got that last fact confused with something else to do with bilberries.*

WRE – *Old Wrecks OC. Their iconic "I've run on the Wreckin" T-shirt of the late 1970s has now been replaced by the rather more ironic slogan "I'm wrecked on the run-in". Most notable for their contribution to the biennial 3 day Spring Bank Holiday event, Gallop in Salop.*

1975

POTOC – *Pottering Orienteering Club. Does what it says on the tin. MadHOC can't raise the enthusiasm to write any more about them.*

COBOC – *City of Borchester Orienteering Club. Possibly. In fact, due to a complete lack of members nobody knows what this stands for any more.*

2005

MADO – *Captures all that is good about the sport. Local, parochial, idiosyncratic, informal, and on a sporting level, maintaining the high standard of incompetence that has been a feature of the club since its early roots in BO. Doesn't have any truck with all of the red tape generated by the Federation. Altogether a Good Thing and may it keep going for many years.*

March 2010

mad hoc

“A bloomin’ torrent of unfettered garbage. Keep up the good work.”

E. Trellis (Mrs), Bromsgrove

Club members have been doing stupid or memorable things for many years and have been rewarded with regular portions of the Gorgonzola Sandwich of Infamy. Now, as MadHOC reaches some momentous landmark or other (it probably has) we give you the chance to vote for the most worthy recipient of the “Go Large” award over the life time of the club. Make your choice from the scientifically compiled* shortlist below.

In no particular order.....

Hugh Brians (2007): Managed to spot his favourite bird, the red kite, at thirty-five consecutive events. It was later discovered that this was in fact the same bird every time, which was stalking Hugh.

Belinda Bartmann (2005): Received the largest ever postbag in response to a particularly rabid (even by her standards) diatribe about dogs in an editorial article. The responses included an impressive three death threats and several phone calls purporting to come from actual canines.

Frank Bearden jnr (1985): During a Wyre Forest event, managed to visit the most controls ever recorded on a Green course, an unsurpassed 47, including repeat visits. In the end he had to be removed from the terrain by Federation Officials when he claimed he was being chased by a giant one-eyed Cyclops which was intent on destroying Kidderminster. He was found to be carrying not a whistle but in way of compensation, several (empty) hip flasks.

Harry Barrington (1976): Harry’s one-man crusade against the Knoll Towers O-Ringen reached its zenith with his six week “hunger strike” in the long hot summer of ‘76. He finished weighing slightly more than when he started due to the fact that his liquid-only diet consisted purely of Old Scroat which, as any regular of the Lord “Charlie” Nelson will tell you, has more nutrients than virtually any drink known to mankind.

Jason Twinge (2000): For receiving the freedom of the town of Droitwich Spa. On closer examination, the award was found to be limited to the freedom of any road leading directly out of Droitwich Spa (and not coming back again).

Kim Vermillion (2010): Sales of the Bewdley Institute of Russometrics publication “The Joy of Dibbing” (yes, the man has a beard) reached astronomical proportions earlier this year when the Hollywood starlet and club Honorary President put pen to *just the foreword*. Two pensioners and a small dog were “slightly squashed” during a signing session held in Borchester.

Barry Barrington (2008): A very controversial winner of the annual Bambridge Vince Cable Look-a-like Contest. Almost certainly rigged. Police files remain open to this day.

“Fast” Eddie Barwood (1988): For his fifth consecutive winning of the BOGBO Trophy for the most battered and bruised competitor at the Club Champs. Subsequently banned from the contest for suspected self-impalation on a branch in order to ensure victory. It is thought that Russ Bauset’s dive from a cliff top at Beston Heath in 2009 may have been a deluded oxygen debt induced attempt to win this prize.

Nominations to the editor please. The winner will be announced on June 14th

(*No animals with fewer than 6 legs were harmed in this process).

April 2062

The Finger on the Pulse

MAD

HOC

A night out with the stars

Following another depressing year for the sport it is a relief to have something worth celebrating and the events at the King William V centre in Sheffield last night certainly lived up to expectations. The glitzy dinner dance bash to celebrate one hundred years since orienteering was introduced to Scotland in 1962 was attended by everyone who is anyone in the sport, from home and abroad. We were delighted to have two particularly distinguished guests, Honorary IOF President Lady Knoll, looking as glamorous as ever, and the country's greatest living orienteer, Dame Yvette Baker, still appearing remarkably sprightly well into her nineties.

It was appropriate that the night was opened with a short speech by British Orienteering's current chairman, Larry Barrington, whose own orienteering pedigree stretches back through four generations over the whole century. He described briefly how his great-grandfather Harry, grandfather Barry and father Garry all made their contributions along the way, and how proud he was to be standing where he was today. He pointed out that the current W100 British Champion, Marian Black (who always runs White courses), was remarkably already two years old when it all started. He talked too about the particular issues modern competitors face. The recent loss of great coastal areas such as Culbin and Newborough to the ever rising sea level was of course high on the agenda, and he also made reference to the tragic loss of so many of our traditional tree species due to climate change and disease, including horse chestnut and oak. He bemoaned the fact that leylandi has proven so hardy. He reminded us that not everything has been so bad; the catastrophic plague of dormice in 2029 had led to a rapid change in land management policy, and the complete eradication of all brambles in British forests had re-opened up many areas that had become too green to hold events. He closed by noting that 2061 had seen, for the first time ever, more domestic events held in urban areas and city centres than in woodland, and that this was a trend that was sure to continue whilst the carbon footprint restrictions applied.

Following a splendid meal, the highlight of which was the Venison a la Postensplain with smoked Kidnalls and roast Pludds, Lady Knoll led the toasts, saying that being here was a greater thrill than winning any of her three Oscars. This was followed by a short presentation to Ben Bartmann, the current World Run-in Champion and the first orienteering winner of the BBC Sports Personality of the Year, due mainly to the fact that Urban Orienteering is the sole remaining sport that the BBC broadcasts following the sad loss of its darts contract. Then, before the dancing began, we had a presentation of some of the features of the centenary multi-media holographic-book. This certainly raised a few eyebrows and laughs (dibbers! – what were they thinking of?) as well as a profound sense of nostalgia for some of the old technology. Anyone remember those enormous laptops, RouteGadget or Peppa Pig string course controls (before the porcine one's dramatic fall from grace for not wearing a seatbelt of course)? The package comes with a special reprint of Clive Allen's seminal work of 2017 marking fifty years of BOF – all for the very reasonable price of 999 euros, the equivalent of a family entry to the JK.

We caught up with Lady Knoll and asked her about her personal highlights from the last fifty years of the sport. She said that despite never having actually competed herself, she owed her whole career in films, books and the media to orienteering and that she had been delighted to have been a role model for so long. The international controversy over the revolutionary MADO O-top launched and subsequently banned in 2014 was a particularly fond memory as she had been at the centre of its promotion. And she recalled the great success of the Knoll Towers O-Ringen franchise in over 50 countries around the world, with its unique blend of competition and show-business, for which she had been the figurehead. All in all a great night out.



Semper Igneus

**Knoll Orienteering Enterprises in
conjunction with MADO**

invite you to the 39th and comeback staging of

**THE KNOLL TOWERS
O-RINGEN**

On

29th, 30th 31st May 2010



Orienteering in Borsetshire
and the environs of Beryl's
Bottom

- Venue & Travel** Well signed from all the usual places.
- Parking:** Yes.
- Terrain:** Extensive fast open mixed woodland and parkland. Guaranteed to be bramble free. Money back if any found (conditions apply). Sadly, no interesting flora or fauna remain after the bramble removal procedure. Caution: please wash hands thoroughly after running.
- Map:** Size: Variable. Scale: M21/M35/M40 1:15000 M45 1:10000 reducing by 1:1000 for each subsequent age class up to 1:3000 for M/W80. Updated 2010. Waterproof. Foot & mouth proof. Not guaranteed to be volcano proof.
- Courses:** A full range of courses each day
Saturday: Sprint-O heats (am) and final (pm). A significant proportion of the courses will be inside the West Wing of Knoll Towers (as long as hasn't burned down). Compasses may not work due to the high concentration of medieval artefacts and suits of armour in the corridors.
Sunday: Classic distance
String Course (incorporating the inaugural West Midlands String Course Championship sponsored by Mad Dog Brewery). Competitors may be subject to stimulant E-number testing.
Monday: Middle distance
- Entries:** On the day only. Knoll Orienteering Enterprises has the technology to print your personalised map and control descriptions in the Start area. Please state your language of preference at registration.
- Punching:** SI, EMIT or KnollChip all acceptable
- Fees:** Seniors £12 per day Juniors £5 per day
£2 reduction on production of Knoll Towers O-Ringen loyalty card.
- Dogs:** Dogs welcome in car park and campsite. Why not leave your animal with Belinda Bartmann's highly recommended "Dog Creche" while you run.
- Safety:** Mind how you go
- Facilities:** Camp site. VIP dining marquee (invitation only). Beer tent with special guest ales including Old Scroat, Scroat Old Peculiar, Speckled Scroat and Scroat 6X. WAG tent. Creche tent. Laundry service tent. Exhibition of lycra tent. Tent tent. At extra charge, a full range of leisure facilities available at the Knoll Towers Country Club. Why not visit the 1/12 scale model of Knoll Towers constructed entirely from tins of cat food? There again, why bother?
- Prizes:** Presented by the Earl of Borsetshire following Monday's event. Knoll Towers mugs will be awarded to the first 3 in each class. A special prize will be awarded to anyone who finds the controller's false teeth.

June 2010

mad hoc

Mad Hoc just isn't Mad Hoc without the escapades of Rocky and his chums. Here we go with another tale of intrigue and action.

Rocky Knoll in Federation Blues

Part One: The Candidate

I quite clearly remember the day that mother turned up unexpectedly at the flat. It was the day I had just happened to have left the *Joy of Dribbling* on the coffee table, open on page 44; you know, *that* page. She tutted with disapproval. "I never did see what a beard did for a man," she remarked as I replaced the book in the bookcase. "Your father had one once, you know. Quite dreadful it was. Made him look like an axe murderer." I busied myself making her a cup of tea whilst she fretted about inconsequentially. Eventually we sat down and she came to the point. "It's your father," she sighed. I'm worried about him. He's been behaving very strangely recently. He's finished cataloguing his collection of lycra, thank goodness, and all of the O-Ringen business seemed to go okay, but there's something wrong. He keeps disappearing for hours on end and won't tell me what he's been doing." I passed her the petit fours, of which she was particularly fond. "Nothing new there then," I remarked, a little unkindly. Mother ignored me. "Anyway," she continued, "The other day I was doing a spot of cleaning around his office. Not actual tidying you know, your father would go mad if I actually moved anything. I realised he had left his computer on and I could see what was on the screen. What I could see sent a shiver down my spine." "Don't tell me, it showed hundreds of line all reading 'All work and no play make Jack a dull boy'" I said. This was wasted on my mother. She was no film buff and it flew over her head. "Now stop being silly Rocky" she scolded. "No, it was his email in-box. I didn't get a chance to look too closely but I could see that all of the messages on the page were from the same sender. McElkingday." I drew a sharp breath. "You don't mean..." I began. "Yes," she interrupted, "That dodgy man that you and Brent are always going on about. Anyway, just as I saw them I heard your father approaching. I had to quickly turn the screen off and pretend that I was dusting his mouse. He did give me an odd look but I think I got away with it. However, since then he's kept the machine turned off. I daren't ask him about it. You know what he can be like." I paced up and down the lounge and mused. "Why on earth would he be involved with McElkingday? It makes no sense at all. The man is allegedly at the very nerve centre of the whole COD operation, immersed in the murky orienteering underworld. Nobody can actually pin anything on him but the man is trouble, big trouble." My mother looked very worried. "You must do something quickly, Rocky. I'm concerned he's got involved in something he shouldn't have." I groaned inwardly. Not more shenanigans involving COD. My outward front was somewhat different. "That's fine mother, don't worry. Brent and I will look into it. I'm sure it's all just a minor misunderstanding."

Two familiar figures greeted me from the corner table of the snug bar at the Lord "Charlie" Nelson in Bambridge. A third figure had its back to me. It turned and as expected it was the Borchester Bulletin's "ace" reporter, Miles Piles. "Afternoon Knoll. Looking well. What have you got for me?" I nodded to Brent and Kim, ignoring him for the moment". "I wasn't expecting you both here. Aren't you supposed to be filming, Kim. According to the red tops this new rom-com will make you the new Sandra Bullock." She snorted with derision. "It's nonsense. So's the film. Anyway, we've had to stop filming again. I can't remember whether it's due to the earthquake, the volcano, the oil slick or the studio going bust. Whatever, it's much better being here." Brent evidently concurred. Piles fretted impatiently but he had to wait as I ordered some sandwiches and a pint of Old Scoat. I drew up a chair. I had invited Piles to the meeting as he had experience of investigative journalism centred on the Coventry Orienteering Development, COD, which on the

mad hoc

face of it had been set up to rival MADO but was suspected of operating on far darker levels. “I need to know what you have on McElkingday” I opened with. “And why should he be involved in dealings with my father.” The hack furrowed his eyebrows. “Richard McElkingday, usually prefers to go by the name Ringo” he mused, “COD’s front man. Slippery as Teflon, nothing will stick to him. Almost certainly involved in various orienteering scandals over the years. Pretty sure he was behind all the fuss about the overdilution of orange squash at the JK. Managed to wriggle out of the exploding maps incident. I’ve got him down for fixing the Colwall sheep races and it’s not beyond possibility that he was involved in rigging the Bambridge Vince Cable look-alike competition back in 2007. Been a bit quiet recently though. No, hang on. One of my contacts reckons that he’s been asking questions about standing for the post of Federation Chairman at the AGM. Wouldn’t have thought he stood a chance though, unless he can fiddle it.” “Which is precisely what he will be planning!” I exploded. “Don’t you see, it’s the only way he knows how. The Federation is in great danger if he pulls it off.”

Brent looked thoughtful, in a thoughtful Brent-like way. “Are you sure that’s his style bro?” he said slowly, swirling his beer, “I mean, COD don’t usually operate in a high profile way. They prefer underground activity, apart from the nice friendly local orienteering events they purport to put on.” Kim looked excited. As usual she was up for it. “Why don’t we make a raid on their premises? Collect some incriminating evidence? Plant some bugs? Use hidden cameras? Colin will help us.” The thought of Professor Colin Pullover of the University of Droitwich Spa getting involved gave me a sinking feeling. I pulled the conversation back. “This is getting off the point. What about father? Why should he be having extensive communication with this man?” Brent did a double-take. “Why don’t you ask him? He’s just come through the door behind you.” I looked round in shock. It was true. Lord Knoll was striding towards the bar, wallet in hand. “Ah, Bearden my good man,” he addressed the startled landlord. “Drinks all round on me. Time for a celebration.” Kim half suppressed a giggle and father spotted us. “Rocky, Brent, Kim. Excellent. Do join me,” he boomed. “Have a drink to mark my decision to stand for the Chair of the Federation in next month’s election!”

Where did that come from? I know it’s hard but you will have to wait until next month to find out the next fiendish twist in the new Rocky Knoll serial, Federation Blues.

July 2010

mad hoc

Following suspected secret contact with MADO rivals COD, Lord Knoll has announced his intention to stand for the chairmanship of the Federation. Rocky, Brent and Kim are digesting the news in the Lord "Charlie" Nelson in Bambridge

Rocky Knoll in Federation Blues Part Two: The AGM

No-one said anything for a length of time that was just reaching the threshold of becoming embarrassing when Kim broke the silence. "Oh, that's fantastic," she cried, clapping her hands with forced excitement. "I'm sure you'd make a really good chairman." Lord Knoll sensed Brent's and my awkwardness. "Well, Rocky, don't you think it's a good idea? I have a lot of experience of hosting big events and the business acumen to go with it. The Federation needs shaking up and I believe I'm the man to provide the vision and leadership." I considered for a moment and replied. "You don't need to convince me of your credentials Father. I was just a little worried about the stresses of the job. You're not as young as you used to be and you need to look after your health." I threw a sideways glance at Brent who sat impassively. I decided to stick my neck out. "Besides, Mr Piles here from the Bulletin was just saying that he'd heard that Ringo McElkingday of COD was thinking of running for the post too." For a second I thought I saw a flash of something hidden and dark in my father's eyes but if that was so he recovered his poise immediately. "Well, if he is then splendid. You know I enjoy a good contest. May the best man win. Now how about those drinks....."

In the face of that there was little we could do. Once Father had made his mind up there was no amount of persuasion that could make any difference. The closing date for nominations was only a week away. We decided to wait and see what happened. In the end five candidates emerged but McElkingday's name, as Brent had been predicting, was not amongst them. He was convinced that Father's campaign, however unlikely it sounded, was somehow being backed by COD. This was his explanation for all the secretive emails between the two of them. Over the following two weeks leading up to the AGM something odd happened. One by one the other candidates withdrew from the contest. By the evening of the meeting only one other person's name remained in the hat along with Father's, that of Alan Clive, an highly experienced committee man and hot favourite to take the post. From the beginning Father had always been considered the rank outsider. Contrary to our normal practice, Brent and I had decided to attend the meeting, which was being held not far from Coventry. Kim was back in the States but was tweeting with increased enthusiasm as the big day approached. "Never thought the Federation AGM would be more exciting than Hollywood" she broadcast to her many followers who were also being drawn into the impending drama.

As we pulled into the venue car park we had difficulty finding any space. The turnout was clearly huge. We found a secluded spot some way from the building and having locked the car, took a short cut through some trees. Brent suddenly grabbed my arm and indicated that I should keep quiet. He pointed ahead into the shadows where two figures stood. One was gesticulating to the other and although we could not hear the words being used, the body language was undoubtedly threatening. We kept hidden. "Can you see who it is?" hissed Brent. I was pretty sure I did. "It's McElkingday and Alan Clive," I whispered back. "Clive doesn't look happy at all. McElkingday seems to be giving him a right verbal going over." At this point the clandestine meeting broke up and the two men melted away in different directions. We waited a moment and then proceeded through to the meeting hall. The room was packed to overflowing and it became immediately

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obvious why this was the case. “COD’s got the mobilisation orders out,” muttered Brent. It was true. Wherever one looked there were COD members everywhere. At a rough guess almost two-thirds of the people present were from just that one club. I smelled trouble; catching Brent’s eye I could see he was concerned too. I spotted Father up at the front but of Clive there was no sign. The meeting was brought to order.

We worked our way steadily through the agenda, getting ever closer to the part of the meeting assigned to the election of officers. There was a noticeable frisson of excitement in the air. Finally, as the retiring Chairman Nigel Cameroon cleared his throat to announce how the voting would be carried out, there was a disturbance at the side of the room. A short, plump balding man wearing a grubby raincoat and a worried expression was pushing forwards towards the stage where Cameroon was sitting. The man was waving a piece of paper in his hand in Neville Chamberlain type fashion. “Aha, our good friend Eric Slowly” muttered Brent with irony, referring to the Federation’s man of mysterious portfolio. The hall sat transfixed as Slowly pushed his way to the front of the meeting whereupon he passed the piece of paper to Cameroon and melted his way back into the crowd. Melted really was the correct word to use. The room was hot and Slowly was perspiring freely in his inappropriate attire. Attention however was now shifted to Cameroon who had acquired a grave expression of his own. He rose slowly to his feet. “Ladies and Gentleman,” he intoned. “I have an announcement to make.” He paused in the manner of a reality show host. “I have to inform you that Alan Clive has withdrawn from the contest for the Chair of the Federation. Lord Knoll is the sole remaining candidate. Under this unusual and late change of circumstance the Constitution states that two-thirds of those present must approve the single candidate. All those in favour raise their right hand.” Before I had a moment to consider my own actions, the massed ranks of COD members to a man (and lady) signalled their approval. It was quite clear that their numbers would be enough to carry the day for Father. “Blimey,” remarked Brent with enthusiasm. “Look’s like Father’s a shoo-in. It’s COD who are pulling all the strings. Now I expect we’ll see the fun start!”

Next time: Things start to take a darker turn. But you will have to wait two months to find out just how dark. But be assured, darkness is guaranteed. Sleep well.....if you can.

September 2010

mad hoc

Lord Knoll has been unexpectedly elected to be Chairman of the Federation. Rocky suspects that COD are behind this appointment and that they are up to no good....

Rocky Knoll in Federation Blues Part Three: The One after Part Two

Sometimes, when my head was full of the troubles of a confusing and busy world, I would take a walk alone up onto the peaceful slopes of Beryl's Tump in order to clear my head. This small hill, near the edge of Dorsetshire, was something of a local viewpoint and on a clear day it was said that you could see as many as two counties. Father used to bring us up here when we were young lads and would, with a dramatic flourish, gesture to the Knoll Towers estate spread out below us and declare, "one day son, all this will be yours!" As it turned out he was wrong on several counts, not the least that he would invariably get me and Brent and muddled up. (He also drove us mad by fastidiously pointing out the little known Dorsetshire rhubarb triangle in which 98% of the county's crop was grown – this obsession with rhubarb was later replaced with that for lycra).

Anyway, today it was overcast and drizzling and I couldn't see any counties, or rhubarb for that matter. That wasn't the only thing I couldn't see. I also just couldn't see what on earth was going on at the Federation since Father had taken over as Chairman. More than two months had passed since the fateful election and over the summer events had unfolded with the rapid pace of the coalition government trying to impose its own policies. OK, maybe I could cope with the new nine level event structure, introduced to "clarify" many of the issues that had arisen from problems with the four level system. Maybe I could cope with the emergency 100% hike in the Federation event levy which was urgently required for "enhanced administration provision". Maybe I could even cope with the new Federation Super-Controllers, and their extensive new powers they could exercise over the local clubs. What I couldn't cope with was the thought that Father was the front man for these changes and for the moment, at the least, the membership seemed to be trusting him.

A figure loomed out of the mist. It was Brent, for whom this spot was also a favourite retreat. "I didn't know you were back from the Lakelandsgaloppen already," I said. He grimaced. "Couldn't get away too soon. The whole event's not what it used to be. You could rely on good company and good food in a local pub every night. Now the corporate monkeys have taken over. It's all these new Federation regulations that have been brought in. Only approved and registered traders allowed. And strangely, they all seem to come from Coventry. As for the prices. Robbery!" He grimaced again and peered into the gloom. "Remember when Father used to bring us up....." "Yes, yes" I interrupted impatiently, "I've already done that one. Look, we need to act. If we don't then it appears no-one else will. We'll go to Father and have it out with him once and for all. Something is very wrong, and I can't believe he would behave like this unless COD have really got something on him." Brent looked relieved. "I was going to suggest the same thing. He should be at home. Let's do it now while we're up for it." He paused. "Can't think why, but I suddenly fancy some of Mother's famous rhubarb pie....."

It took us the best part of half an hour to trudge down the hill and across the fields to the lodge entrance on the Knoll Towers estate. We'd both left our cars outside the Lord "Charlie" Nelson nearby so we didn't bother to collect them first but proceeded up the drive that curved through the rhododendrons leading to the house that had been the Knoll abode since falling on harder times. "You better leave it to me to do the talking....." Brent had just started to say when we heard

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the roar of a motor vehicle driven at high speed coming towards us at high speed. Instinctively I grabbed Brent and pulled him out of sight into the bushes. A car I didn't recognise flashed past and we both reeled in shock. "Fathet!" I gasped, having seen him sitting on the passengers set, "Mother" gulped Brent, "She was sitting on the back with some other goon." Before we had time to reply to each other there was another roaring sound. This time Brent pulled me back as another strange vehicle hove into sight. This time our exclamations were in perfect unison. "Kim!" we both cried in astonishment. Leaping onto the drive we waved furiously. Now it was Kim's turn to do a double take but she rose to the occasion with style. "Get in and don't ask any questions" she barked through the open window as the car screeched to a halt. We didn't need a second bidding and piled in, Brent in the front and I into the rear. It was a struggle for me because there was a slumped form stretched across the back seat. I more or less clambered on top of it as the car jerked furiously away. The comatose figure was familiar. It was Miles Piles from the Borchester Bulletin.

When we reached the main road, Kim cursed under her breath, but only hesitated for a moment. She slammed her foot down and blasted off down the Bedditch road. I was thrown from side to side and ended up on the floor. As I was frantically sorting myself and Piles out Kim was speaking in staccato style to Brent as she piled on the gas. I caught fragments. "Surprise visit.....hire car from airport.....visit to lodge.....Piles unconscious.....signs of a struggle.....people in the stables.....Lady Knoll.....COD.....getaway.....better than the movies....." She had a gleam in her eye that I picked up in the driver's mirror. It was said that she did all her own stunts in Hollywood. I only hoped that they had done plenty of takes on the car chasing scenes. "There they are," exclaimed Brent, "Slow down a bit, we don't want them knowing we're on their tail." Things finally returned to relative normality as we proceeded towards the motorway. Piles stirred and sat up, holding his head ruefully. He looked me oddly, then at Brent and finally at Kim. He finally spoke. "Your family are big trouble," he groaned. "but this really takes the biscuit. If you're doing what I think you are doing, then we could be in for an exciting afternoon."

More next month, only from the pages of this hallowed organ.

October 2010

mad hoc

Rocky, Brent, Kim and reporter Miles Piles are tailing a COD vehicle in which Lord and Lady Knoll are unexpected passengers.....

Rocky Knoll in Federation Blues Part Four: The Heart of the Matter

Within a couple of hours our destination was crystal clear. We were heading for Federation HQ, located as it was in a secluded dale in the Peak District. Only Piles had been here before and as we cautiously approached the entrance driveway he gave a sharp intake of breath. "Someone's been busy," he exclaimed "Last time I was here none of this was in place." Kim quietly stopped the car and we all watched as the COD vehicle entered through a pair of high security gates which shut with a clang behind them. All along the visible perimeter of the premises we could see spiked iron railings, clearly newly installed. A CCTV camera stared down at the way in. "So this is where they've been spending all their newly acquired funds," muttered Brent. "Look's like we are going to have another way in".

As luck would have it, getting access to the grounds wasn't so difficult as the fence building was still work-in-progress. However, it did involve a fair bit of crawling through undergrowth. This handily brought the four of us out at the rear of the main building which appeared to be unguarded by any more cameras. "What now?" whispered Brent. "We can't all go in there mob-handed." I considered the situation. "Kim needs to get back to the car quickly in case they leave in a hurry. Probably best if you stick with her, Brent. Meanwhile Piles and I will break in and see what's going on. If we're not out in a couple of hours assume something's wrong and adopt Plan B." "Which is?" queried Kim. "I don't know but you've got two hours to come up with one." I replied. As Kim and Brent disappeared back into the bushes I realised that she was quite capable with coming up with all sorts of wild plans, probably reaching through to the back of the alphabet. "We better not mess up," I muttered to Piles as we edged towards an annex window that looked vulnerable.

A few minutes later we were inside the nerve centre of British Orienteering. The plush new carpets aided our stealthy progress. No expense seemed to have been spared in upgrading what had clearly been grand but rather faded premises beforehand. Piles kept shaking his head in disbelief. Being the weekend, the offices were empty and the ground floor appeared to be deserted. Voices were coming from upstairs.. We mounted the wide staircase and were able to locate their source behind some wooden double doors that looked like they led to a sizeable room. It was obviously a heated discussion. By ducking out of sight into an alcove, we were still able to follow the gist of the conversation. Gradually things began to fall into place. It appeared that the hold that COD had over Father was in some way connected with the O-Ringen. At one point a rather sinister voice quelled Father's objection to Super Controllers being given even greater autonomous powers by intimating that he could get the rug pulled from under the event in a flash if Father didn't co-operate. Mother was the fly in the ointment though. Mr Sinister (I guessed this was probably McElkingday) was clearly unimpressed by his cronies' excuses for bringing her back to HQ as well. "You idiots," he barked. "Why did you have to get her involved as well?". One of the others made a lame excuse. Mother wasn't taking it lying down "I wasted a jar of my best chutney on your stupid heads" she retorted. "What do you expect if you lurk around the stables trying to blackmail my husband?" Piles looked puzzled, rubbed his head and sniffed his jacket. "I thought it smelled funny," he whispered. "I think your mother

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must have taken me out with the same pot. Otherwise I'm sure they would have mentioned my presence at some point." He looked rueful. The argument rumbled on for ages. It seemed to be around a clause that McElkingday wanted to get surreptitiously inserted into membership renewals that tied the renewee into five years of steadily ramped up payments. "We need you to put forward a convincing and strong business case for all our proposals, Knoll," he persisted. "They trust you. They realise that times are tough but they want their sport to be protected and see you as a strong leader. Just think of the prestige this post is giving you." Father had obviously been caught in two minds but ultimately McElkingday had underestimated him. "I don't care anymore about COD's greedy schemes. You can threaten me over the O-Ringen as much as you like. Do what you will. I refuse to exploit the orienteers of this country any more!" The other voice grew even more sinister. "I think you have forgotten one or two things," it purred. "Lycra can burn very easily. Lady Knoll might find it's more than her chutney that meets a sticky end. Don't expect the police will be any help to you. In their eyes you are already a dodgy character. In their eyes you will be answerable for a lot that's already happened here. Mark my words, they'll have nothing on me." It went very quiet and then suddenly there was a shocking shattering of glass. All hell seemed to break loose. I jumped up and rushed to the door.

We unfortunately seem to have run out of space for any more. Rocky will return next month.

November 2010

mad hoc

Mad Hoc losing its troubled edginess? Think again

Rocky Knoll in Federation Blues

Part Five: The Interlude of Missing Inspiration

As Rocky springs into the room, almost immediately he is struck down by that cruellest of blows, writer's block. At this very moment, as the attic keyboard of one aspiring orienteering crime writer falls silent, in a fetid office nearby that of another bursts into life, uncannily echoing the early verses of Ecclesiastes Chapter 3 (or perhaps it was Rick Astley). This reverse symbiosis will be of much interest to regular readers of this column because we now find ourselves at the very nerve centre of finger-on-the-pulse orienteering journalism. A chain-smoking hack with one eye on the clock is typing his daily piece. We read....

Mad Hoc has been accused of many things but prevarication about the bush has never been one of them. If we see a spade we tell it like it is. In short, our aim is to make Belinda Bartmann appear like an unopinionated fence-squatter. This, not surprisingly, makes the Mad Hoc lawyers a trifle nervous but we pay them handsomely enough to avoid ever having to use the words "justice" and "banana" in the same sentence whilst standing outside the Old Bailey.

Nice stuff. I wonder if BeBa reads this column. Only one space between sentences mind.

As is its wont, Mad Hoc has been casting its beady eye over the orienteering world looking for morsels to feed on. Imagine its delight when it chanced upon the latest shenanigans perpetrated by the Federation, the Road Show. Mad Hoc had a fleeting moment of childish excitement at the thought of seeing some of its favourite highways on display (the B3352 through Nedging Frome is a particularly good one) before mundane reality sunk in. Mundane reality that centred on the Federation's policy over sandwiches. There may be no such thing as a free lunch but somebody at Fed HQ clearly knows that there are people like BeBa who will travel a climate-changing number of miles just to get a free sandwich. If only the stuff of genius had continued beyond this point, even diluted one hundred times. However, The Federation knew it had Bad News to dispense, namely its hapless handling of its agreement over access fees with the Big Forest Organisation and the consequential handing over of the souls of all firstborn in order to be allowed to run in some parts of some forests. You can see the way their minds were working. Give 'em the Bad News, but give 'em the free sandwiches at the same time and everything will be alright. If the Road Show was a sandwich it would be a dodgy out-of-date prawn with no mayo. If Mad Hoc was a sandwich it would be a triple BLT with added Red Bull (a project we are still working on).

He's lost it completely with this sandwich obsession. Must be desperate for copy.

Anyway, with the Big Forest Organisation fiasco in the bag, Ant and Dec hurrahed all sorts of stuff we kind of knew already but which was dressed up in a nice new set of Jalases and Trimtex, backed up with a series of dodgy graphs that would conveniently prove anything they wanted provided they were turned through the most appropriate number of degrees. Despite all the flannel the underlying truth was crystal clear; we are all doomed and heading for hell in a handcart. But I'll rephrase that in Federation-speak. The future is bright and the future is Orange (and Brown, Blue, Green, Yellow...etc).

Sorry, we interrupt this stream of consciousness to return to a spark of inspiration on the Rocky Knoll front. There is a flurry of activity as we hear the attic keyboard resuming its chatter.....Rocky sprang into the room and was astonished to see Lady Knoll (*continued next page*)

mad hoc

brandishing.....

No more room for any more. Back next month..

December 2010

mad hoc

Rocky and chums have tracked the COD baddies back to Federation HQ where they are giving Lord and Lady Knoll a hard time. There has been a loud crash.....

Rocky Knoll in Federation Blues Part Six: Plan B

I sprang into the room and was astonished to see Lady Knoll brandishing a weighty brass candlestick which she had apparently snatched from the large boardroom table that stretched across the middle of the stylish wooden panelled room. The window nearest to her had been shattered and shards of glass were scattered across the carpet. Lord Knoll stood by her side and the three COD goons were facing them across the table, their backs to me. In her other hand she was holding a particularly attractive Chinese vase which at a quick glance looked like a genuine sixteenth century Ming dynasty antique, possibly originating from the Oringoring province. Might fetch anything up to £8000 at auction. "One step closer McElkingday," she snarled, "And the fruit of the vain squanderings of Federation funds will be more damaged than your dark soul." The three men froze. I had never imagined Mother in this light before. She was quite magnificent. And she had a thing about Ming, which was handy.

The other aspect of the standoff that caught my eye centred on the second, unbroken window that was opposite the door that I had entered but behind the COD trio. What I could see sparked the realisation that what Mother was doing was in fact creating a diversion. The sash of the window was being stealthily raised by a pair of hands that I deduced belonged to Brent. So this must be part of Plan B, whatever that entailed. McElkingday turned to face me. "Ah, Mr Knoll, I've been expecting you. We seem to be accumulating more and more members of your family. Some of whom are starting to give me a headache." All he was missing was a white kitten. He glanced back at Mother. "Oh, the vase. Drop it if you must. It's worthless tack. Barley Dale market I think you'll find."

I took stock. There were three of them and could be as many as six of us. At the very least we could forcibly rescue Mother and Father from their ordeal. But I had to act fast. This story had to finish by the end of the page due to an unexpected late submission by the Vice Chairman. At that moment Brent leaped into the room and in trice had wrestled McElkingday to the floor. He sat on the prone figure. The sidekicks hesitated. "OK " he thundered. "The game's up. Let my parents go. Nobody's going to play your games anymore. The truth will be out and you and your cronies will be forced to resign." McElkingday began his usual protest that everything was above board but Brent was ready for him. "Shut up! We've been doing a little snooping, Kim and I. One of your vegetables clearly forgot to lock the safe. Quite a lot of handy evidence has been collected. If I know Kim's driving, she's probably already handing it over to Barley Dale Police Station as we speak. Misappropriation of Federation funds is not going to go down at all well with them or the membership, and it's not something you can pin on Father. If I were you, I'd get a good lawyer."

And that, dear reader, was more or less that. Despite numerous gaping holes in the plot, it looked like the dodgy dealings of COD were at an end. Piles got another scoop, Father was able to stand down honourably, and Mother was able to go back to baking rhubarb pies. Oh, and the world's paparazzi descended on Bambridge when shortly afterwards it was rumoured that one of the world's most glamorous actresses was engaged to be married into English aristocracy. As a result, The Lord "Charlie" Nelson ran out of Old Scroat, much to the dismay of the locals. "It's only young Mr Brent and our Kim," they muttered. "Don't they know real life's not like Hollywood!"

The End.

January 2011

mad hoc

We keep you abreast of all the latest news, gossip, rumours and skulduggery in the ever changing world that we call "orienteering" and which dyslexics (and Swedes) call "orientering"

Here at the Mad Hoc office the seasonal ambiance is not particularly pronounced owing to the unfortunate investment of Uncle Denzil's Christmas allowance on a three-legged nag running in the 2:45 at Borchester. To cheer ourselves up we have been having a little sweepstake on who the first big casualty of the New Year will be. Expectations for honours are high and following the shock dismissal of COD big cheeses after their failure once again to land the Rumpass Sport Big Cup, nobody can feel safe. The spotlight is turning increasingly on Jonny Bettabeware who has yet to deliver a major trophy during his tenure as club Captain despite his early claims that he was "gonna make 'em grovel". Even with a couple of big international name signings the League title is as far off as ever and so the Big Cup might be his only chance of salvation. Bettabeware's forays in the transfer market have been a mixed affair. His gamble on Swedish youth went badly wrong when the m**x (*lass is much safer – Mad Hoc lawyers*) went home lame. The big lad from Latuvania has had a promising start but the question is, can the club afford to keep him in Thierry G headbands? Rumours are also abounding about an interest in the club being shown by a consortium from the Far East. However, Mad Hoc spies roaming the streets of Great Yarmouth haven't been able to give these stories any credence.

"We fear no-one!" blustered Bettabeware when interviewed last week by the Borchester Bulletin's top sports hack, Miles Piles, at a plastics conference in Droitwich Spa. "We are a brand. Everything we touch turns to Gold. I have an entire field of elks. You have to remember that I'm only M21," he blathered on, as a porcine squadron flew past the window. He hadn't finished. "I'm a winner. My record speaks up for itself. I won the Freight Rover Northern Rock Laurie Bradley Trophy. Singlehandedly," he roared. Mad Hoc is impressed, but only by the depth and breadth of the delusional quality of his replies. Still, maybe a good result in the upcoming derby match against Chasers might keep his bacon flying for a while although Mad Hoc predicts it will be all over the bar shouting by Easter, quite literally.

Meanwhile, what of the latest follies at the Federation? Well, what's the best thing to do when you are feeling the squeeze, your Ranking List continues to spew out numbers in the same way as Lancelot on a Saturday night Lottery draw, and the Big Forest Organisation has you by the s**** and c*****s (*steady on, this isn't Radio 4 – Mad Hoc Ed*). It must be time for a new website design. Mad Hoc has spent many a happy afternoon figuring out the idiosyncrasies of the old one and it might even have to admit a feeling of warm familiarity towards it, in much the same way as it has towards the mad ramblings of "Madam H". So it was with some trepidation that it mouse-clicked its way into the new offering only to be met with a view that resembled the country-side outside the window, i.e. a sea of white. After a while the penny dropped. All the stuff that matters has been carefully positioned *just off the bottom of the page*. From a plus point of view this does make it extremely soothing on the eye, representing a huge improvement on being met by inane grinning faces winning some old gong or other several years ago. On the other hand, this sort of subtlety is usually way past the non O-heads at Barley Dale. "We have a few technical problems but once Pisces is in Uranus it will all be tickety-boo" trumpeted a purely fictitious Federation spokesman whose quote handily helped to fill up this paragraph. Warmed now by a couple of glasses of office punch, Mad Hoc feels generous enough to give them the benefit of the doubt.

February 2011

mad hoc

It's a tough world, and somebody has to tell it like it is. Er.....would that be us then?

H&S&Hollywood

Health and Safety? Ah yes! We at the Mad Hoc office know all about H&S. We have the strictest possible rules in place to safeguard the workforce. Absolutely no more than six plugs to a single power socket. A limit of three stacked crates to provide a platform to stand on to close that tricky high window. And all bottles of scotch to be locked safely away in the top drawer of the filing cabinet at night to avoid the risk of broken glass. But above all, just a solid application of good old-fashioned British common sense. We haven't troubled the local A&E department for months, unless you count the unfortunate injury sustained by Uncle Denzil during his last visit involving the open pot of Marmite on the stairs and Barney the escaped office hamster (oh yes, and the visit to the vet).

Anyway, it sounds like the Federation are up to their usual tricks by thoroughly confusing and frustrating the clubs with their high-brow high-jinks approach to H&S. They could do with a bit of Mad Hoc consultancy to help them out. We wonder who thought it was a good idea to introduce a new set of nanny-knows-best rules that can't be satisfied until we've all been on a three year degree course at the University of Droitwich Spa that hasn't even been designed yet. The words "eggs", "grandmother" and "suck" are all passing through Mad Hoc's mind. Especially "suck" which is precisely what these new regulations do. It's a miracle that there is anyone left alive to participate in the sport given we've had over forty years exposure to a whole series of threats that should have wiped us all out by now. Lethal slippery wet leaves, tent pegs that could bring the National Grid to its knees, forests thronged with axe murderers, child molesters and killer dormice (*are we sure about that last one? – Mad Hoc Ed*), we all know the scenarios. It's a wonder anyone sleeps at night. In fact, the most dangerous activity at the moment is to read anything coming out of Barley Dale. Apoplexy at the sheer madness of it all is a significant risk. Mad Hoc has assessed this risk and is making sure there is a good supply of smelling salts and brandy (especially the latter) at hand to administer to the afflicted.

Could orienteering feature at this year's Oscars ceremony? *The Antisocial Network* (cert PG) starring Kim Vermillion, who is once again directed by Clint Eastwood, is a surprise front runner in two categories, Best Film and Best Leading Lady. On the face of it, a film about a group of sad aging men who run round forests and whose sole topic of conversation is about maps and mapping, set against the backdrop of the emerging *NopeSport* web forum, doesn't sound like a likely contender when compared to the usual Hollywood heavyweights. But this one is a slow burner, with a script to break down the hardest of hearts and acting out of the highest drawer of the filing cabinet (you know, the one where you keep those ancient copies of *RumpassSport*). Ms Vermillion has featured in previous O films at the, let's say "educational" end of the spectrum (and mark my words, Mad Hoc has been well educated here), but this time she sticks to a family certification in what is probably best described as a RomCom with beards. Mad Hoc won't give the plot away (or should we say –joke alert – OCAD plot away), but take your tissues because you will need them at the end when the emotional truth about the location of Derek's GPS tracker is revealed. KV's acting reaches dazzling new heights in this release and she looks nailed on for the statuette. "If it's anything like as exciting as Quiz Night at the Knoll Towers O-Ringen then I'll be made up" gushed the screenstress at a recent celebrity beetle drive in Malvern. Go Kim!

March 2011

mad hoc

“Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. Do not swerve to the right or the left....”
Proverbs 4:26-27

Ismism

There is no sexism in orienteering. Mad Hoc has trailed through hours of mainly inaudible mutterings made off-mike at previous years' major event commentaries and is somewhat disappointed to report that unlike in football, dinosaurs no longer roam the land spreading their archaic prejudices and rather large droppings. In fact, the most frequent topics of conversation we picked up on related to groin strain and Wilf's chocolate thingy. No ageism either, which is hardly surprising in a sport increasingly contested by members of SAGA. In fact we could find little evidence of any kind of misplaced discrimination. Mad Hoc thinks this must be a Bad Thing. What has the Federation got against isms? Isms make news and any news about orienteering, good or bad, is a Good Thing. Fortunately, in the absence of any real evidence, Mad Hoc has prepared the following transcript to be leaked to the Borchester Bulletin.....

“Well Derek, I see we've got a female planner today.”

“You've gotta be kidding Clive, that's asking for all sorts of trouble. From where I'm sitting I can see a whole pile of unmade sandwiches, a huge heap of unwashed O kit and I can't hear the washing machine going round.”

“Someone explain the course length / climb ratio to her. Women can't get their heads around it. They haven't got the three dimensional spatial gene thingy. Do me a favour love, stick to typing the committee minutes.”

“It's all going to kick off when the first finishers arrive. Barry Barrington's gonna throw a big one.”

“She's a bit fit though. Bet she looks good in (snipped by Mad Hoc lawyers)”

“Cor, yes. A bit (snipped) round the (snipped) though”

“Get 'em (snipped snipped snipped snipped) for the (snipped)”

“(snipped, snipped, hacked, slashed, burned) Droitwich Spa”

That should do the trick (*see me right now! -Ed*)

Arboreal Oddities

Mad Hoc has been writing to its Member of Parliament on the issue of the fate of the Big Forest Organisation. Mad Hoc has lost track over whether the BFO is currently supposed to be the schoolyard bully or our new best friend. Is it poacher or gamekeeper? Is it EMIT or SI? Blur or Oasis? Red sauce or brown sauce (or neither)? Perhaps our MP has some of the answers.

Indeed he has. And Mad Hoc is pleased to announce that he is unflinchingly committed. Unflinchingly committed to safeguarding access rights, environmental protections and public benefits, apparently. Oh, and the Government line of course. But this from a man who made 23 consecutive phantom mortgage expense claims “by mistake”. Maybe he is mistaken about unflinching. Maybe this is mistake number 24. Maybe if Mad Hoc was to hide behind a tree (unsold) and jump out shouting “boo” he would indeed flinch. The public has a right to know the truth. Mad Hoc will let you know how its investigations proceed on this important matter.

For Sale: 1 Moral Compass. Always shows you the right way to go. One previous owner, as new. Apply Mr G. Brown, North Queensferry, Scotland.

April 2011

mad hoc

The column that can never be
accused of seeing both sides of
both sides

Chop chop

After last month's general invitation to most minorities to initiate litigation, Uncle Denzil has stressed that Mad Hoc cannot afford to be too contentious as it is currently keeping its lawyers as busy as flies on a dung heap. However, Edgy Finger-on-the-Pulse Up-your-Nose Mad Hoc is reluctant to hand over the reins to its cousin, Laid Back, Sitting-on-the-Fence Alan Shearer-alike Mad Hoc. This particularly in the light of a recent discovery in one its filing cabinets, the one that looks remarkably like a waste-paper bin. Several hot Federation documents have come to light, no doubt leaked by the anonymous Federation mole, Eric Slowly. Extensive background research (i.e. The Racing Post) has done little to cast doubt on the authenticity of this information and so it is with a heavy heart (nose extending whilst pants start to smoulder) that Edgy Finger-on-the-Pulse Up-your-Nose Mad Hoc reluctantly (now there are flames) shares this with you (*sound of various lawyers rubbing hands with expectation*).

So, what had our furry friend come up with this time? Was it more broo-ha-ha about the Big Forest Organisation, recently switched from the Axis of Evil to a Special Relationship? Was it perhaps malarkey about Event Structure, whose sequence of changing levels is increasingly exciting mathematicians? Or just more guff about the Ranking List? In a word, no not really. But there was a fair bit about impending cuts and the potential sad demise of many "vital" aspects of the Federation's work. Take these, for example.

- The Orange Squash Dilution Advisory, Sampling and Regulatory Body – one of the world's most advanced experimental facilities will have to be closed down.
- The String Course Quango – years of experience relating to Postman Pat and Pepa Pig will be lost, and research into "How long is piece of string?" will also be in the firing line.
- Fixtures Sub-Committee - Billy the Psychic Goldfish, provider of vital information about future weather patterns which is used to help plan when the big events should be on, will have to be "pensioned off" (and I think we know what those quotation marks mean don't we boys and girls?)
- Research into tent peg insertion (part of the Health & Safety portfolio) – crucial on-going investigations into possible connections between over-vigorous "banging-in" and tectonic plate movement will have to be ditched.
- Anything to do with Wales (*OK, we'll risk this one – Mad Hoc Ed*).

As you can see, things must be getting really tough at the Federation if stuff like this is on the line. Mad Hoc predicts widespread unrest will be afoot once this hot news hits the street. Mad Hoc is cutting back too, it must be added. Why, only last week it cancelled its subscription to *Big Lycra, er... Dog Walker Monthly* (*see me etc – Ed*). But there's no need to panic. Mad Hoc won't be shooting itself in the foot like a headless lemming with one hand tied behind its back any time soon, it can tell you!

Apropos of something else

There's been a bit of a flutter about the renaming of well-used maps to make them sound like new areas. What's the fuss? Good commercial sense, we say. Tavie Boyne's Carbuncle should have far more clout than over-familiar Brown Clee Hill and we say hooray to the Gok-like makeover of Sandwell Valley into Doggers' Delight although we realise this may not be everybody's cup of tea.

May 2011

mad hoc

“Just 'cause I said it, don't mean that I meant it”

Well, rumour has it that it might work for you, Adele Adkins, but it didn't go down so well in court for Mad Hoc.

Orienteering Watch

Who or what is up and down this month in the sport of orienteering?

5 UP Gallop in Salop

OW is pleased to see that the big biennial bank holiday weekend multi-day extravaganza is back back and this time it's got attitude! Using at least one area from which some competitors in the extremely tough 1968 Midlands Championships are still being waited for, the focus is really on the demanding social programme that is the main course to the orienteering's hors d'oeuvres. The organisers are to be applauded for their daring originality in trying to pull the punters in so although the bump 'n' grind ceilidh may not butter everybody's parsnips who could resist the appeal of the naked 3-legged Quiz night? What with a cheese auction and Belinda Bartmann's classic lapping Merlot from a dog bowl routine, in OW's opinion only an added spot of dwarf tossing would make this the perfect weekend (*I've warned you about this before – Ed*).

4 DOWN The Federation Ranking List

Apparently it might be suffering from creep. Just like some of its members. OW doesn't really know what this means but is nodding its head with gravitas just in case.

3 UP The Beryl's Bottom Permanent Orienteering Course (POC)

OW misguidedly became quite excited when it thought POC referred to Piece Of Cake but although the truth fell somewhat short, at least it wasn't as bad as Particulate Organic Carbon. The climax of the annual POC challenge was, according to the Borchester Bulletin, “a squeaky bum barnstormer”. Organiser Scott Bob had set a deadline of midnight April 15th for attempts on this season's records and all eyes were on dark horse Andy Black who was rumoured to have spent weeks in a special preparation programme that included tantric yoga, acupuncture and eating three Shredded Wheat in one sitting. Black's time looked to have stolen the lead at the last gasp but he was sensationally and controversially disqualified for using under-length shoelaces.

2 DOWN Micro-Indoor-Orienteering

OW is a sucker for a romantic wedding and was hammering the Kleenex last Friday whilst watching the Royal Big Bash. It was doubtful however, that moving mature trees from where they belong (i.e. in a wood) to an indoor location, however big the building, is really going to lay down the way for the next stage of bringing the sport into the public eye. Every Boy Scout knows it's not wise to pitch camp under a beech tree – and likewise, one shouldn't ever watch a marriage ceremony from under an indoor maple. Don't say that this column isn't educational.

1 UP Kim Vermillion

There's no stopping this girl. Fresh from scooping her first Oscar in *The Antisocial Network*, she's now become the figurehead for global orienteering in her new role as an IOF special ambassador. Advance orders for the 2012 IOF calendar have already rocketed in speculation and OW is expecting extensive and nonsensical press coverage of her kissing babies in third world countries whilst walking through earthquake-affected minefields. It's a long way from naughty goings-on on Malvern Common or as they* say in Sweden, det är en lång väg från stygg rumpitumpitumpi på Malvern Common. But speculation about her appearing in *Celebrity I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here* is wide of the mark – it looks like it's going to clash with the big wedding (her own, dummy!) An invitation? OW lives in deluded hope.

*Swedes

June 2011

mad hoc

Probably not even legal

X, Y and Mrs Z

Mad Hoc has been plagued with eligibility issues recently. According to *Big Lycra* (no need to Google, just accept that there's a market for that sort of thing), it is now eligible to claim a year's supply of free leggings following a special prize draw that has taken place recently. It has a telephone number to ring (there's just a teensy-weensy bit of small print to go through) to make that claim. What could possibly go wrong? On top of that, controversy has arisen over eligibility for the West Midlands String Course Championships (once again sponsored by Mad Dog Breweries), which took place at the recent Knoll Towers O-Ringen. For the sake of anonymity we shall refer to the protagonists as X and Y or to be accurate; X's Mum and Y's Mum. The race was won by X with Y in second place but immediately afterwards an appeal came in from Mrs Y claiming that X shouldn't have been eligible for the prize (a collection of 100 colourful Old Sroat beermats). The details of the appeal were not made public but Mad Hoc has exclusive access to this information, leaked by sources that it cannot possibly divulge or Eric Slowly would be seriously compromised. The thrust of the appeal was three-fold. Firstly, Mrs Y alleged that X had prior knowledge of the controls, having been exposed to over 20 hours of Peppa Pig videos leading up to the event. Secondly, since X had spent some of the school holidays with his granny in Hartlepool, he didn't qualify for at least two weeks local residence out of the last three. Finally, and most damningly, it was alleged that X had *seen the string before* when it had been coiled up in a neighbour's garage. Faced with such grave and subsequently substantiated evidence, the jury had no option but to disqualify X and award Y the prize. X's Mum was having none of this and put in a counter-claim that Y could not possibly be eligible as they did not possess a British passport, despite being only 3 years old, and was also Welsh (via one grand-parent). The latter point appears to have been mainly diversionary but at this point the jury obviously panicked and awarded the prize to the third placed competitor Z. The dispute rumbles on but it may be a fruitless cause because, according to Z's Mum (are you still with this?), young master Z's baby brother has already eaten several of the beermats and most of the rest have been swapped for a Lego model of Borchester Town Hall. Mad Hoc is willing to denote some of its free leggings in way of a replacement prize, mainly just to see where this one goes next. No doubt the Federation will come up with some kind of fudge here which will satisfy no-one let alone Mrs Biggs (ooops, there goes one of the super-injunctions).

A salutary tale

Talking of fudge (a great favourite of Uncle Denzil) Mad Hoc is reminded of the time that thought it would be a good idea to take some of Gladys Golightly's lucky fudgecake as an emergency energy supply during the very challenging COD Long-O. On a long leg through the tortuous vegetation of Grist Wood, blood sugar suddenly fell to dangerously low levels. It was at this point that Mad Hoc discovered that lucky fudgecake doesn't travel too well when crammed into O-trousers on a hot sunny day. Such was the state of the comestible that the only apparent option, at least to Mad Hoc's increasingly confused mind, was to remove the said O trousers and suck the almost liquid substance directly from the pocket. It was at this point that Gladys's daughter Cynthia happened to come around the corner and discover a man with no trousers standing in a clearing feverishly licking a brown sticky mess from the upper part of the removed trousers. And so you see your honour, it was all a terrible misunderstanding brought about by an unfortunate chain of events and I promise it will never happen again (no need to Google, just accept that this is the true version of events).

July 2011

mad hoc

Point to the legend, point to the east,
Point to the yellow, red and green.....
Maybe these maps and legends
Have been misunderstood, been
misunderstood.
REM (Maps & Legends, 1985)

GOOs

The missive that Mad Hoc received recently entitled "Fungus on the Lickeys" brought tears to its eyes. Speaking from experience, it's a painful and embarrassing complaint, right up there with Stiperstones, but one which fortunately can be cleared up with the appropriate medication. Talking of complaints, we have been following the latest load of whingeing from the Grumpy Old Orienteers (GOOs) on MopeSport. Nothing is too small for them not to have good old moan about it. Goodness knows how they would have survived in the old days when maps were so bad you were best off taking a duffle bag with you packed with sandwiches, thermos and the like, prepared for vague control descriptions like "Nowhere (in the middle of)", "Gum tree (up a)" or "Shropshire". Our club was so poor we had to make all our own orienteering equipment out of cereal packets, empty washing up bottles and sticky backed plastic. Did we complain? No, we were never happier than when bashing a few drawing pins into a lump of wood for one of our homemade control punches, guaranteed to draw blood if handled at any more than fifteen minute kilometres. Ah, those were the days.....

Now, where were we? Oh yes, MopeSport. Basically this is a forum for cowards. GOOs go on there and let rip at the world in general and can a single one of them be brave enough to sign their intolerant ravings with their real name? Can they heck! What's all this fancy-dan Papa Pingu, Madame Merlot or Knackered Partridge rubbish? Codswallop! Even worse, they have to embellish their pretentious drivel with some clever-clever and meaningless tag line like "The smoothest elbows? Moi?" Is that really supposed to be cool? Just exactly what does that add to the sum total of human knowledge and achievement? We rest our case. Mad Hoc doesn't do cool.

What about the latest brickbats? Live TV coverage of orienteering from Sweden. We say "Wow, incredible, at last, etc". You can guarantee that there will always be someone who will say "It's so boring, the courses are rubbish, it's not in English (duh!), the graphics were in horrible colours, ... ad infinitum". We say "Get a life!" And then you also get insults that are aimed at other people which are all based on in-jokes and information the rest of us are not privy to. We say "Get a life!" Finally emoticons. Give them a rest. Use the English language with imagination and respect. Mad Hoc has met the inventor of the Internet emoticon* and this isn't where he expected it all to end up. We say "Get a b*****g life!"

Oh dear. Time for a glass of milk and a lie down.

The big wedding

You know which one we mean. Mad Hoc was gutted not to receive an invitation. Nevertheless our spies were able to fill us in on plenty of the details. Ms Vermillion's dress will no doubt be eagerly copied by many this summer – the combination of silk and lycra certainly creating a first in this field. Decking the church (the lovely old St. Gristwood's at Beryl's Bottom) with brambles, gorse and rhododendrons was also an idiosyncratic green touch. The hymns were wholly appropriate; *Lord, have I been running so long?* and *Seeking the lost* to name but two. The bride was apparently radiant (*now that's a surprise!* – Ed) and the couple departed for their honeymoon aboard a carriage drawn by 500 trained hamsters. Actually we made that last bit up (it was 1000).

*This is true. Google "emoticon, Scott Fahlman"

September 2011

mad hoc

You won't read this in
RumpassSport
You probably won't even read
this here

The French Connection

Mad Hoc has been trying to follow what's been going on in the orienteering World Championships in France. Normally Mad Hoc would pay as much attention to such shenanigans as it would do to the rabid drivelling of Madame Merlot, i.e. Not A Whole Lot. However, on the recommendation of Uncle Denzil, and in the interests of research, it decided to tune in this year to see how our gallant British runners (of whom we had such high hopes) would fare. Actually, Uncle Denzil's exact words included the phrases "Swedish Live TV streaming" and "very fit women", so it is possible we misinterpreted what he meant. Nevertheless, it certainly provided a few hours of entertainment in the office.

If Mad Hoc closed its eyes, the commentary sounded a bit like something from the Eurovision Song Contest. Without the songs. And without all that voting malarkey. The euro double act were speaking mainly in English, but every now and again they lapsed pointlessly into French! At the sight of any French competitor on the screen, the commentator would completely lose it for a few seconds. This reached its apogee with the joint appearance at one of the TV controls of not only eventual bronze middle winner Gonan (FRA) but also the godlike figure of eventual winner Gueorgiou (FRA). There was a serious danger that the critical mass of world-class Frenchmen appearing simultaneously on one screen would be exceeded (should the other home favourite Adamski catch them up) and this had Mad Hoc locking the office supply of alcohol safely away in case of an explosion.

Every now and again there was a brief glimpse of one of our gallant British runners (of whom we had such high hopes) standing still and peering at their map. Sadly, their technique at the drinks control was indicative of their lower position in the race. Too polite! Not for them the grabbing of several cups in quick succession, the contents of which were criminally spilt all over O-tops or even over heads. It wasn't cricket. If it was we might have stood a chance.

The most tragic thing to happen involved the top runner from Finland in the women's Long race. Mad Hoc won't mention Minna Kauppi by name for fear of embarrassment (*.....what?*) but inexplicably this former world champion gave up and retired in the general direction of her home country without finding a single control. Let's just spell that out again. Didn't. Find. A. Single. Control. She'll never be able to show her face in Beryl's Bottom again. Or vice versa. Not that Mad Hoc really cared but apparently Uncle Denzil was distraught at her disappearance from the screen. Quite what upset him so much about a blue blob moving around a map in hopeless circles is beyond us.

Orienteering was clearly never designed for spectators so there were plenty of shots of stalks of grass waving in the wind, the odd tree ("*Number 1, the larch.....the larch*") and spectators sitting in the sun. The most excitement they got on the day of the Long races, apart from the result everybody expected anyway, was the sight of the Norwegian who lay inconsolable and spent on the finish line for ages having blown a sure fire medal in the last couple of km. The officials didn't really know what to do with this shuddering heap of sweaty Nordic flesh apart from taking his limp hand in order to dab for him and then politely placing a bottle of water nearby. After a while they ambitiously removed its cap as if chronic dehydration and heat exhaustion might be combated through some rather unlikely osmosis. After another polite delay they just gave up and started pouring whole bottles of water onto his head. We never saw the final outcome of these attempts to revive him but let Mad Hoc just say that this sort of embarrassing behaviour would never be forthcoming from our gallant British competitors (of whom we had such high hopes).

So what has Mad Hoc learned. Well, it has learned that you can never have too much "pre-warning", and it has also learned that Swedes really do have no emotion – in the face of the most exciting women's Relay ever (*and that's a fact!*), the Swedish commentary on the live feed veered dangerously backwards and forwards between thoughtful and bored, even at the extraordinary climax when the French commentators were in Spinal Tap level 11 territory. We can't wait until 2015.

October 2011

mad hoc

Does the American Guild of Music have an AGM AGM?

It's just a thought.

And just another thought

'Tis the season of the AGM. You might not get overly excited about this but Mad Hoc has a long memory and there have been some memorable moments in the history of the club's Annual General Meetings. One of the main problems with AGMs, apart from the fact that they are traditionally as dull as a very dull thing, is that nobody wants to attend them for fear of being elected to some horrible post or other for an insufferable number of years. In a flash of inspiration in the early days of the club, Harry Barrington came up with a two-pronged solution. Firstly, the meetings would always take place in the back room of the Lord "Charlie" Nelson at Bambridge, and would serve up a free pint of Old Scroat to every attendee. Secondly, members who did not attend would be automatically appointed to one of the posts. This masterstroke ensured a full quorum every year and, as the meeting progressed, plenty of well-oiled debate mainly centring on election of officials.

Harry's plan wasn't entirely successful at first. Due to the confused state of Membership Secretary Gladys Golightly's records, who had them mixed up with the church register of baptisms, marriages and funerals, the 1971 committee consisted of several infants and no less than three people who were dead. Amazingly, the club functioned much as normal for the whole of the next year without anyone really noticing. After that things ran more smoothly but there was tendency for village folk to turn up to the meeting regardless of whether they were club members or not just in case they ended up with an unexpected job. Consequently the AGMs soon became huge and, due to the free beer, very popular. Popular with everyone that is except landlord Frank Bearden.

Things really started to get interesting on the rare occasions when there were several people standing for a single post. Not all the jobs were that enticing but, for example, the Press Liaison Officer role provided scope for a degree of literary licence that usually appealed to several people. The trouble was, conducting a complicated ballot in the jam-packed and distinctly merry atmosphere of the pub's back room was a recipe for disaster. Quite how the voting system ever got to be a multi-round eliminator is lost in the mists of time but it was not uncommon for a single election to take up to an hour. On such occasions the meeting was liable to run on into the small hours. To adjust for this the start time of the meeting was gradually brought forward until it reached early afternoon. For a few years the AGM became a whole day affair held at a weekend and taking over most of the village until the electoral system was reformed. This didn't go without its own hitches, leading to the inexplicable appointment of a boiled egg wearing a small hat to the post of club coach in 1986. Results improved dramatically that year until the egg was "accidentally" eaten during a training weekend. COD were suspected of fowl (sic) play but nothing was ever proven.

Thankfully, in recent years the committee members have on the whole been both alive and human. However, there have been some idiosyncratic posts to be filled. Take for example that of D*****g Prevention Officer, the job brief of which cannot be published in this family organ except to say that it plays a vital role at Bandwell Valley summer evening events. Orange Squash Dilution Inspector is another, not to mention String Course Character Artist. My goodness, some people think that things run by themselves. Even at this very moment somebody is probably slavishly producing a life size cut out of Peppa Pig, thus ensuring that the club continues to function like a well-oiled machine. Long live the AGM!

mad hoc

And finally

It seems like there may be trouble brewing as a result of the latest campaign by Mad Dog Breweries to promote Old Sroat. Advertisements which state that the ale will increase buttock firmness by an average of 9% had already come under close scrutiny last year but now the company has run into trouble over its fresh claims that drinking Old Sroat will improve ones sense of direction by 29 percent. "It's all true, we've done the research and there's no doubt about it" said a spokesman for the company who just happened to be wearing a white coat, carrying a clipboard and sporting a wild stare. Speculation that drinking twice as much Old Sroat improves sense of direction by 58% is unfounded although it is rumoured that experiments along these lines are continuing at laboratories connected with the Lord "Charlie" Nelson near to Beryl's Bottom. Watch this space.

November 2011

mad hoc

*"..for whom the bell tolls.
It tolls for thee"*

Serious words for a serious moment

Where are they now?

It is November 2021. Rocky Knoll looks back at what happened to some of the characters whose exploits were chronicled by Mad Hoc over a decade ago.

Lord Knoll: In 2015, and like his father before him, sadly perished in a bizarre gardening accident, this one involving a ride-on lawnmower and an exploding gnome. His unique collection of lycra was donated to the nation. Six years later the nation still isn't quite sure what to do with it and it is said to be currently languishing in the bowels of the British Museum. Obituaries for the Earl were lavish in their recognition of him being the greatest ever domestic innovator in the sport of orienteering. His final controversial initiative, the use of smart-dibbers that accrue Tesco Club Card points, was instrumental in significantly boosting event attendances across the country, from both competitors and protesters.

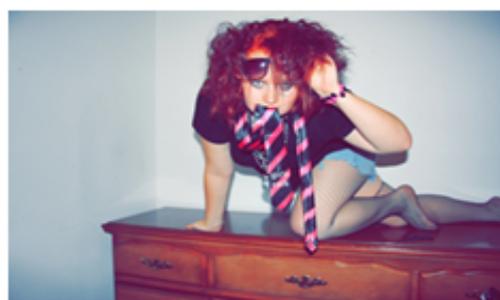
Lady Knoll: After the sad demise of her husband, she embarked on an unexpected late career in the food industry by developing from her own recipes a wide range of rhubarb dishes, including pies, tarts and crumbles. In doing so she single-handedly resurrected the once-mighty Borsetshire "Rhubarb Triangle" and brought much fame to the area through the branding of products such as the Bambridge Banger, a unique rhubarb-flavoured sausage.

Brent Knoll: Succeeded his father to become the Eleventh Earl of Borsetshire in 2015. Shortly afterwards created the extraordinarily successful international Knoll Towers O-Ringen franchise, now successfully running in more than 20 countries worldwide, which combines top class multi-day orienteering with big-money quiz nights, cabaret and cheese auctions. Regained ownership of the Knoll Towers estate in 2018 but spends much of his time in California with his young family.

Kim Vermillion: Obviously being married to the future Lord Knoll she became the new Lady Knoll replacing the old Lady Knoll on the death of the old Lord Knoll when her husband became the new Lord Knoll (oh for goodness sake concentrate!) Never far from controversy in her various campaigns promoting the sport of orienteering at home and abroad, her Hollywood film career continued to prosper and she won her second Best Actress Oscar in 2016 for her starring role in the orienteering rom-com *When Barry met Sally*. In 2017 had twins (son RJ (Rocky Junior) and daughter Minna).

Barry Barrington: Even more pale and tremulous following the 2014 scandal involving Kim, the new lightweight MADO O top and The Views of the World. Shortly afterwards handed over the chairman's post to his son, Garry Barrington, thus maintaining its continued link to just one family spanning almost 50 years.

Belinda Bartmann: Best known in recent times for her role in co-ordinating the social side of the International Knoll Towers O-Ringen franchise. Said to be the second most scary co-ordinator of social events at international orienteering events, much to her disgust. Still has a regular column in RumpassSport magazine, which staggers on despite all of the resulting court cases.



A young Belinda Bartmann at an early club AGM

mad hoc

Miles Piles: On the strength of his repeated scoops mainly associated with MADO, spent some time at one of the daily Red Tops but returned from the Street of Shame because it was too dull compared to the provinces, especially the immediate environs of Bambridge. Back as chief reporter at the *Borchester Bulletin* he hit the jackpot by revealing the big story behind the scam at the Colwall Sheep Races, breaking the MADO O-top controversy and recording the Knollgate tapes with Lord Knoll, shortly before the peer's fatal accident. Rumoured to be currently investigating a racket involving illegal Polish rhubarb pickers.

Ringo McElkington: Released from jail in 2017. Rumoured to be currently behind a racket involving illegal Polish rhubarb pickers.

COD: The Coventry Orienteering Development was controversially declared to be part of orienteering's Axis of Evil along with Emit punching and Peppa Pig (boy, did he turn out a wrong 'un) by Garry Barrington during his Chairman's inauguration speech in 2015. Membership strangely boosted by large numbers of Polish rhubarb pickers.

Eric Slowly: After bankruptcy brought about through taking out numerous unsuccessful super-injunctions to protect his identity, Slowly decided to "go public" since which time, ironically, no publication has ever managed to get his name right. The Views of the World repeatedly referred to him as Ricky Slowworm during the 2014 MADO O-top crisis.

Jason Twinge: Thought to have resigned in disgust from the club over thirty times in his on-going struggle against Belinda Bartmann to put Droitwich Spa firmly on the orienteering map. Has yet to see a single event held there and has been issued with a restraining order banning him from approaching within 200m of local celebrity Ashley Giles' house, who Twinge is convinced is the key to getting the Droitwich Spa O-Festival off the ground. Currently has his map collection ordered in order of height above mean sea level at Newlyn, Cornwall.

Professor Colin Pullover: Took early retirement from the University of Droitwich Spa in 2013 under something of a cloud. Since then has been available for comment on any subject imaginable or (mainly) unimaginable. Is still trying to re-establish contact with the Boogie space probe which sent back pictures of an orienteering control on the surface of Mars in 2006.

Hugh Brians: Sadly savaged to death by a flock of red kites during a Welsh 6-day event in 2020. "A most unusual case, it's almost as if they singled him out personally," commented Colin Pullover (Mrs), an expert.

Rocky Knoll: As always, remains on the case.....

This has been Mad Hoc, I've been Rocky Knoll. We're all off for a pint of Old Scroat down at the Lord "Charlie" Nelson. Thank you and Good Night.