

Shire Oak WEE 12.2.15

Although I had installed a permanent Orienteering course on Shire Oak some years ago, I had not released it as I was not completely happy with the map.

Shire Oak is part of the set produced produced by Peel mapping in 2008, all of which are now in use, Pelsall Common by WCH.

I felt there were a number of substantial multi contour features that were not shown, the contours were not always quite right and I felt the map showed too much as dark green.

I did update survey work in 2011 for the events held in that year, but put it to one side whilst I worked on the Arboretum Country Park, Hayhead and the Dingle, Walsall University Campus and Rough wood.

After Rough Wood Dave asked me to put on a WEE at Shire Oak, which I happily agreed to, but asked for later in the season so I could do the required work, particularly when the vegetation was down.

In the last 4 months I have spent 6 sessions up there. I printed my survey maps in two halves at 1:2250 A4 size. Peel had produced the map at 1:5000 with form lines so I felt obliged to try to get a lot of detail correct. It's a very complex area. I have problems in deciding how to show an area. Vegetation is meant to be on open and white areas, if it's green I don't think you are supposed to use vegetation on top.

Thick gorse is dark green, but below this is a bit subjective. I expect when I next go I will change the colours again. Apologies to competitors who felt I had got it wrong.

It's only a small area so the course needed to be convoluted. I tried to keep the red lines crossing at not too acute an angle and to position the numbers to give maximum clarity.

By 4.45pm on the day I was all ready, the tent was up. Where were the punters?

Duncan Birtwhistle was first to appear from WRE, then Ray Collins from WCH.

Duncan hadn't bought his kit and I was surprised when he appeared ready to start in a pair of shorts, a small hand torch and needing to hire an SI card! He whizzed round OK in 52 minutes however,

Then Colin Palmer cycled up, a car load from WRE and a Martin from Carlisle/NEC.

Finally HOC's started turning up from about 6.30, citing dreadful traffic conditions.

I was using the old style punches requiring setting (thanks Peter) and had decided they would switch off at 8.30. The last competitor went off at 7.22.

I had been concerned that holding in the very North of HOCland in February was asking for trouble. I had been expecting to have to cancel if the weather had closed in.

I'm not certain if the HOC WEEs should be held on a Saturday evening rather than midweek to ease travelling.

The final turnout of 19, however, made all the effort justified.

Thanks to Peter, Marian, Adrian, Dave and John for control collecting.

Barry McGowan