

Clent Hills June Jaunter 22/6/2017

The week running up to this event was, as you all know, very hot with day after day approaching 30C with high humidity. This would have made running (or even walking) unbearable for most so we were probably all looking for a change. As Thursday approached, the forecast was for the weather to break with possible thunderstorms, so we had the equally unedifying prospect of a repeat of last year's monsoon-like conditions with lightning crashing around the hills. As it turned out, conditions were perfect; temperature in the upper teens with a gentle breeze, no rain and good views from the tops.

I had taken over running the event this year as Robert Vickers had decided to step down after many years. For the second year we had also lost access to the Nimmings car park, the traditional start/finish location. With little prospect of getting back into the car park in the future I made the decision to break with tradition and move the start/finish to the safer option of Walton Hill car park and replace Nimmings with a 4th control, thus preserving the route. In another break with tradition I decided to include the event in the Harlequins Summer League, with 25 points available to all finishers.

So it was that 18 intrepid individuals set out to bag Walton Hill, Clent Church, the Four Stones on Clent and Nimmings car park in whichever order they fancied. It was great to see two non-orienteers, Eloise and Molly, turn out to have a go. Apparently a run around Clent is more attractive than a track session... It was also good to see the three Mitchell boys out. Alex running solo and Seb and Arthur running together, shadowed on the road sections by mum and dad on bikes.

As usual we had more going clockwise, tackling Walton Hill first, fresh from the start. It will be interesting to see what people thought of this in retrospect, did it help or not? Most people coped with the new arrangements although Peter Langmaid thrashed around the car park unable to find the finish kite. Andy Johnson (clockwise), although he has run the route before, chose to take a direct route from the Four Stones missing the control in Nimmings and taking a significant shortcut – must have been oxygen debt! Also Sue Howarth (anticlockwise) was late away from work and hadn't twigged that the start had moved so she started a self-timed run from Nimmings with her dog Hector. However, as she ran around Sue met the control collectors, Alison Sloman and Marian White (thanks both) and punched the controls they were carrying. I met Sue as she finished at Nimmings while I was collecting road signs. I got the kit out of the car and set up the download station and Sue was able to produce a set of splits from an uncleared card. However, it was possible to work out what she had done and we agreed on a time of 30 minutes although it was probably a little quicker.

Afterwards 11 of us went to The Vine in Clent village for a meal and a chinwag. All in all a great evening and I'm already looking forward to next year. Perhaps I'll be fit enough to give it a go myself 😊

Andy White