

Rough Wood SEE 16.8.12 comments

After my Walsall Conservation Volunteers bi-weekly work day at Rough Wood, on 7th August, helping rebuild a causeway, I walked round the yellow and orange permanent courses. I was rather shocked to discover that the indistinct path at the top of the map to D2, on the orange and the green and blue course, was almost impassable.

The next day I came back and spent 2 hours cutting back a 150m section, and then carried on doing a 'white paint' which involves, where required, re-stencilling the numbers and re-painting inside a taped triangle. This is quite time consuming as there are 99 controls at Rough Wood. I was also replacing any vandalised nature trail signs and clearing undergrowth from obscuring the O signs.

I also wanted to recheck the only control I had introduced, near the dumbbell shaped marsh bottom right, where I felt I had mishown it 5m too far East and I couldn't remember if I had adjusted the OCAD map. The marsh was much more extensive and I was padding in an inch of water, so I decided to call it a day.

This effectively meant I never did a very recent check of controls in the bottom right of the map. This didn't affect the green, yellow or orange courses which didn't go to this area. It did affect the blue course in that I didn't clear the vegetation at a couple of controls.

I went back yesterday, 19th, specifically to look again at control C3. The map is not quite right in this area. The fence shown is actually about 4 m inside the vegetation. I think the vegetation line is about right as it is on the edge of a linear marsh. The control is on the end of a fence and was visible from the rough open outside, although a bit hidden by a fallen tree. I felt it was perhaps shown 10m too far east. Reading John and Dave's comments later they said the fence extended further and Dave's GPS plot showed it as much as 25m west, which surprised me. I can only really apologise.

I also completed my 'red paint' so I think all controls are now in poppy red rather than maroon.

On Bentley Haye the post and wire fences are all in poor condition and have been overgrown by the vegetation on the boundaries between woodland and open. Some fences that exist are not on the map and most immediately alongside paths are not shown. That alongside the track to the North of C3 had been removed and I had taken it off the map, but I apparently used the un-updated base map.

The event was put on as part of a CATI for Walsall Council. Although 11 persons had booked, only 2 groups turned up. They were largely instructed by the ranger. 2 older men who were regular walkers in the wood managed the yellow but retired on the orange. A lady with 2 young children enjoyed themselves but the youngest had had enough after completing the yellow. A female family group who go to my Saturday morning training session quickly completed the orange and did the green a decent time. I have tried recruiting them before and mum did come on my night street event about 2 years ago. Mum is faster than me and older daughter faster still.

A respectable turnout overall, with almost more non-HOC than HOC.

Barry McGowan