

## Hayhead and the Dingle 10.7.14 comments

In this event I brought into use the 7<sup>th</sup> Walsall area.

The area of the Airport and Hayhead had been mapped 8 years ago by Colin for the activity centre. A simple permanent course had been set up, but the posts had been removed due to anti-social behaviour.

The ranger had wanted most of the paths in the Hayhead wood area shown as not to be used. When I initially approached the ranger he had further concerns on the safety of some of the trees in the Lodge Wood area, near the top hangar.

Last year, however, I was surprised when he was enthusiastic of using the area and linking it to the Arboretum as part of the Walsall Country Park scheme.

I was able then to start mapping east of Colin's map, the old limestone workings and woods of the Dingle and Cuckoos Nook. Only part of the area was on my 1982 1:10000 OS map but I had the 1:25000 map of the whole area. Mostly I used Google mapping and traced the image and then drew it back onto the extended Colin's extended OCAD file.

The big problem was that the area was either open fields, where contours should be fairly accurate, edging onto very mature trees with the canopy covering over the boundaries and the very complex land forms in the old quarry area. Mapping this area took many months. I would take a high scale section of map out with me, draw on the amendments, go home and update OCAD and then repeat the procedure. Usually I would find it still wasn't right and needed another load of amendments. The eastern Cuckoos Nook was more straightforward, but the area is rather green and only really has one path going round just inside the boundaries and only a pair of streams as potential features.

Initially my plan was to have Sunday level D event, but a bit of fixtures confusion, and the fact that the area was rather linear, I decided to go just for a SEE.

About a month ago I cleared all the paths, over a 4 hour period, of brambles and encroaching branches on Hayhead area north of the canal basin/stream. I thought a colleague was doing the same South of the stream, but control 5 remained very overgrown.

Taping the controls a week before the event, due to vegetation growth, I simplified a number of controls, particularly 13 and 14 on the long in Cuckoos Nook. But I think at 14 I had the marsh shown as too extensive and the path should have been marked further East. The water levels in the quarry area vary quite a bit with weather conditions and do dry out, but I think they looked pretty much as mapped on the day.

I was surprised how quickly John managed to whizz round. The long course was the green with a loop into Cuckoos Nook. I was very grateful for John going back out to the far area again after a 20 minute breather, and for Peter and Robert Rose for also collecting, and Adrian for printing the maps.

I think all controls were safely retrieved apart from no7 which went after the last competitor

Some people did fail to find controls but I have not listed this. I did unfortunately get a couple of final controls collected before Nigel had finished.

Now I can concentrate on finishing the updates of Rough Wood and Shire Oak, both of which are being used this Autumn/winter.

Barry McGowan