

Relay Planners Comments

We were involved in the original discussions around finding an appropriate area for a British Relays event a couple of years ago. Beaulieu wasn't the first area that we looked at, but as soon as we visited it, we knew that it had a good variety of terrain to offer – something which isn't always available for shorter courses.

We planned the courses to take the competitors through the different areas so that the constantly changing vegetation would not allow runners to settle into their stride. We particularly liked the complex area of rhododendrons (thanks Roger!) to the east of the Estate land where we hoped to challenge competitors on the longer courses before or after they ventured out onto the fast terrain on the heath. The runability and visibility through the woodland within the Estate varied considerably. It was unfortunate that the area immediately to the north & east of the start was probably some of the roughest underfoot, but it didn't last for long. The exit and entry routes to the event field were restricted so it was difficult to avoid this.

The whole area had dried out considerably compared to the saturation state in January when there was standing water over much of the heathland. At the time of the event it was the driest we had seen the area. This speeded up the running times slightly bringing them very close to recommendations. Unfortunately the rhododendron bushes had sprouted by about a foot in all directions during the last four weeks, making some of the vertical green striped areas less runnable than they were previously.

Quite a few competitors seemed to be keen to test out the crossability of the uncrossable marshes, whilst others heeded the warning in the program. The courses were planned so that they could be easily avoided.

We did try to include spectator controls on the Men's and Women's open courses, but we decided that this would compromise the courses too much, so this had to be abandoned.

It has been a privilege to be able to plan the courses here, and to be able to visit and enjoy the private woodland. Thanks particularly to Roy the gamekeeper for his advice, to Hedley Calderbank and Peter Robson for their attention to detail, and to Colin Hicks, Roger Pleasant, Graham Harrison, Terry and Di Smith for their efforts in producing a map, much of which was brand new, given the rare occurrence these days, of being able to use an area new to orienteering. Bill Davidson's efforts were very much appreciated in organising the map bagging party while we were away on holiday. Thanks also to the forest team, who made our job so easy on the day and to the competitors for running our courses; we hope that you enjoyed them.

For anyone who likes reading and would like to know more about the history of the New Forest including the Beaulieu Abbey Monks (albeit in a fictional form) we can recommend 'The Forest' by Edward Rutherford.

Ian & Caroline Moran