



Orienteering Newcastle and Tyneside



Issue 2025/4

December 2025

Chairman's Report as presented to the Annual Meeting October 2025

Memorable events for me over the last year have included the excellent Newcastle Urban, the JK, the Scottish Six Days and more recently Pike O'Blisco and the Lake District Mountain Trial.



There is plenty of good orienteering to be had if you are able to travel. Locally, forest and fell events are thin on the ground. In NATO this is due to being unable to get hold of landowners with emails and voicemails not being returned. On a positive note, we still have a few good areas we can save for Nationals such as the up coming event at Beanley. This has been completely re-mapped and geo-referenced so will stand us in good stead for the future.

Next year I'm really looking forward to a new area for us: Berwick-upon-Tweed. Like Beanley we have paid a professional to produce a map for us. This will form part of a weekend with Roxburgh Reivers who will host an event at another new area: Eyemouth. If anyone can suggest new areas or has friendly relationships with landowners then let me or one of the committee members know.



Member numbers are just shy of 100 and we've held 1 National, 1 Regional, 5 Local and 14 Local League over the past 12 months. Gwenda Cavill is our volunteer co-ordinator having taken over from Mary Rack after many years of service. Please consider volunteering in any capacity. Planning a Local League or Local Event is a good place to start. There are more experienced members who can show you the ropes. **Francis Shillitoe Chair 15 October 2025**

Thank you to members who have renewed their club and British Orienteering membership for the coming year and to those who have automatic renewal in place. If you renew manually, please visit the British Orienteering website.

QUICK REMINDER

DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR CLUB MEMBERSHIP

Ignore the "join us" tab on the front page, which is for new members. Log into your members account. You will need your current number and password. There is a password reminder if necessary. Your number is on your membership card or can be relayed to you by request via the club website contact page. Select Member account.

Grampian Mountain Challenge (the heathery one....)

George Hare

In October I took part in the Grampian Mountain Challenge (GMC), organised by Grampian Orienteers (GRAMPOC). The event location was in Deeside near Ballater in an area with a prominent small peak known as Clachnaben. This is the fourth GMC I have participated in with my regular partner Julian Warren from Northern Navigators. It takes place over two days every two years in the autumn, most recently in October. The event used to happen in November but due to a sequence of weather-related issues it was brought forward a month. My first GMC was in November 2014 at Glenshee. We actually had decent weather for the event itself but in the run up it was extremely stormy resulting in the marquee for the overnight camp getting blown away and one of the controls getting washed away in floods – never to be seen again as far as I know. The first two events that I participated in after the move to October were afflicted by very strong winds in 2021 (the windy one) and continuous rain for 48 hours in 2023 (the wet one). These events, and we competitors, are at the mercy of the weather whatever time of year they are put on. So it was with some trepidation that we put in our entry this year, not really relishing a repeat of being blown off the hill as we were at Lochnagar 4 years ago or drenched as we were at Mar Lodge 2 years ago. We were relieved therefore a few days before the event to see a weather forecast that predicted mild or even warm temperatures, light winds and virtually 0% chance of rain! The forecast was still looking good on the Friday night when we arrived in Ballater in preparation for an early start next day.

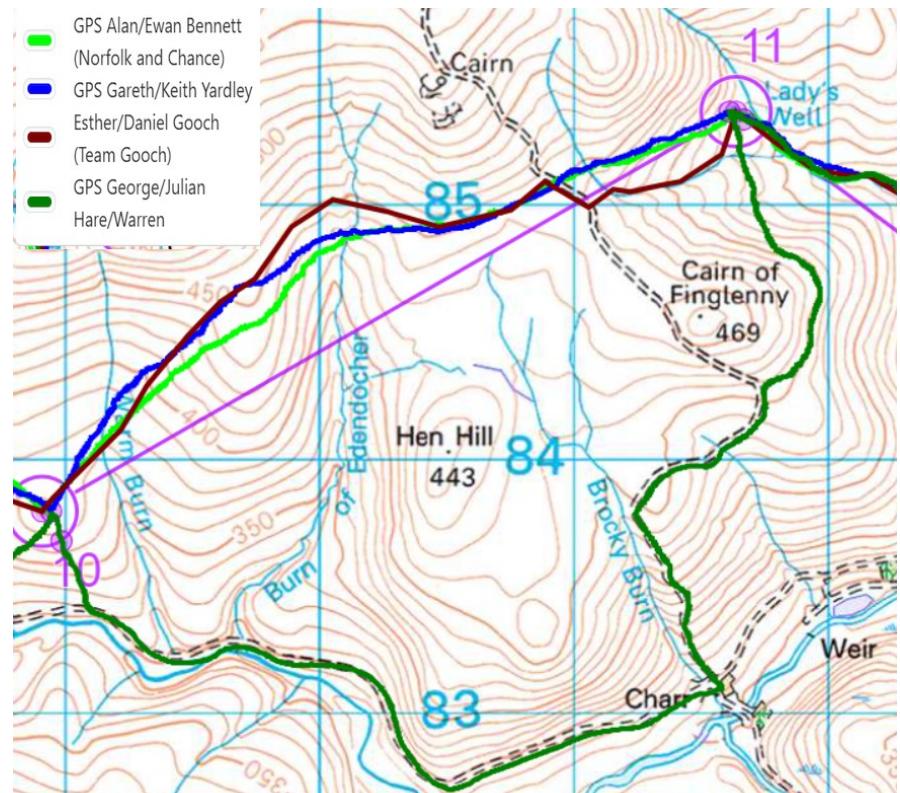
I woke up around 6.30 on Saturday morning and looked out of the window to see – it was raining! A look on the Met Office radar showed a huge swathe of rain across the Cairngorms and we were sitting just underneath it. This had definitely not been in the forecast and led to a slight reorganisation of our gear to get the waterproofs out of our rucksacks before we drove the short distance to the assembly and start for the event at Glen Dye. In fact, we were relieved to find that the rain had almost stopped by the time we got our maps and got underway.

The GMC has some key differences compared to “Mountain Marathon” events such as the Saunders or OMM. The main difference is that the event includes technical forest orienteering as well as the more usual “hill” legs of the course. The forest legs this time were at the start of Day 1 and the end of Day 2 and were in the Glen Dye woods that had also featured on the last day of this year’s Scottish 6 Days. As Julian and I are both experienced orienteers we didn’t have too many problems with these more technical stages. Some competitors are hill runners – much quicker than us over the terrain but not so familiar with orienteering maps and fine navigation,



so a range of skills is helpful. We were given control numbers, descriptions and an “all controls” map and marked up our course before setting off into the forest. We negotiated that part of the course without any problems other than making the classic mistake at one point of starting to follow people to the wrong small hill. Fortunately, we spotted the error quickly and didn’t waste too much time.

On the hill phase of our course the terrain was rough and heathery. It was possible to use tracks up to a point between controls, therefore there were some interesting route choices to go longer to keep on paths and tracks, or cross-country through deep heather. Navigating on a 1:50000 OS map there is no clue as to conditions underfoot from the map, therefore inspection and a bit of guesswork/judgment are required. On one leg (see right) we elected to head for a track which involved some descent and



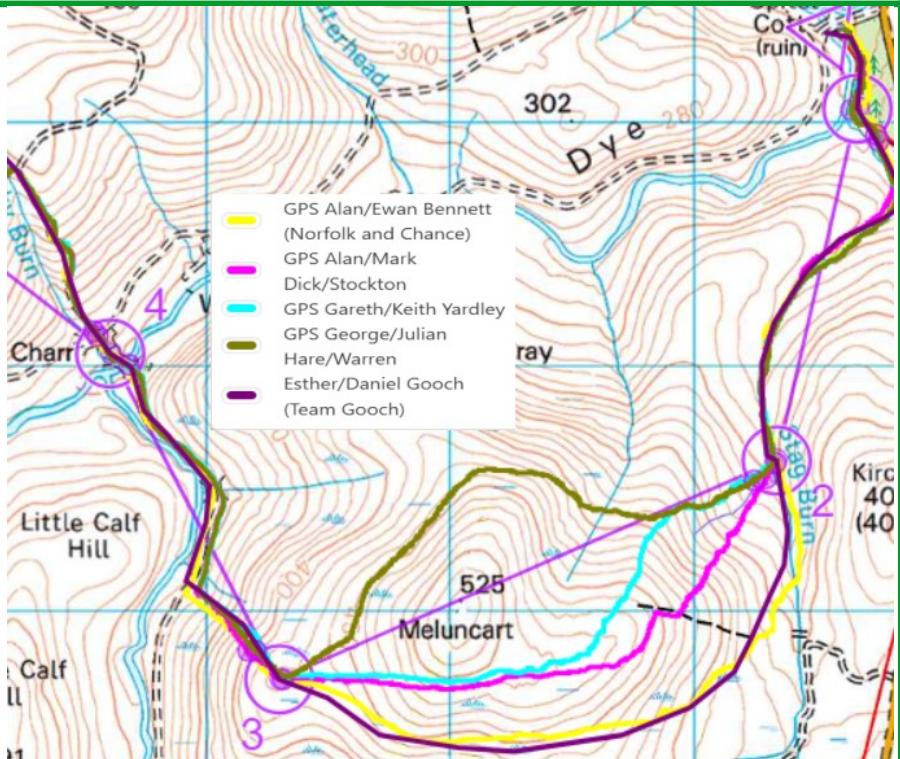
reascents rather than a long ascending traverse across the hill. This choice would have worked OK except the last section of our route took us back into some horrendous heather, so we probably lost any time gained on the easy track running. Overall, we completed day 1 with no big navigational errors and reasonable speed. The day took us over 6 hours though, covering 26km, so we were suitably tired at the end of it, finishing day 1 in a respectable if unspectacular 10th place out of 14 finishers with 2 further teams who mis-punched/retired.

By that stage of the day the weather was fairly amazing for October in the Scottish Highlands – high teens temperature and sunshine when we arrived at the mid-camp and, after a welcome cup of tea, put up our tent. Remarkably no midges either! An attraction of the GMC is that you don’t have to carry your overnight gear. It is transported



for you, so you only have to carry a day sack with you on the course. Better still, the event organisers provide an evening meal and you can get a beer in return for a contribution to the local mountain rescue! This means you can change into dry clothes (not necessary this year) and have a reasonably comfortable night in the tent before tackling day 2.

The weather was fine again on Sunday, if a little misty at first. We were still in reasonably good shape so made decent progress. We had a leg (see right) that took us from one side of a hill quite near the start to the opposite side of the hill. There were no mapped tracks or paths, so it was a gamble whether to go clockwise, anticlockwise or over the top. We looked at the contours and agreed on anticlockwise and set off through the heather. Luckily for us when we got the far side of the hill there was a reasonable traverse sheep/ deer path we followed,



saving us quite a bit of time and effort. This gained us a few minutes giving us the flip side of our Day 1 route choice when we probably lost a few minutes. After some further climbs and a long descent through thick heather, we made it back into the forest, only to encounter – more heather! The first leg of the final forest stage was in fact in rough open, but conditions underfoot improved after that and we finished the day in just over 5 hours, covering 22 km. without any significant mistakes.



Our overall position on course C was 8th out of the 10 pairs that completed both days of the course. There was quite a bit of course-swapping by other teams on day 2 with several pairs dropping from C to D and some from B to C as day 1 was perhaps more arduous than some competitors had expected. Therefore, the number of teams completing 2 days of the same course as we did was somewhat lower than the overall headcount.

Great credit and thanks go to GRAMPOC members who put the event on – a huge effort for the club with many tasks during the event as well as organising and planning courses, which cover a wide area of open hillside. Visiting each site to plan, put out and collect controls takes multiple days. Lots of logistical effort to get permissions, set up assembly/overnight camp too. Cups of tea on offer at the end of both days were gratefully received.

For anyone interested in more details of the courses and our route, there are Routegadget results here [2025-10-11 GMC 2025 Clachnaben Day 1 Hill](https://www.routegadget.com/routes/2025-10-11-GMC-2025-Clachnaben-Day-1-Hill). (4 separate “events” for 4 stages)

Despite a slight excess of heather this year I would thoroughly recommend the GMC or other “mountain marathon” type events to anyone who enjoys orienteering and wants to try something a bit more “long format”. There are a few other 2 day events each year such as the Saunders and OMM, and various one day “long-O” type events such as the Lake District Mountain Trial and Tim Watkins Trophy on offer.

Geoge Hare

British Schools Orienteering 2025

This years British school championships was held at Hopetoun house near Edinburgh. I went with my brother and daddy (He is too old to run at the school's event). My brother is in high school and I am in primary school.

This years orienteering was great, it was the first time I have been there. It was also a bit scary as you have to go by yourself and I was only 8 years old (in year 4). The youngest category is for year 5! On the way in I saw a few coaches and mini buses. When we arrived I saw a few people going in pairs then I realised that they were in the same school so me and my brother couldn't go together.

I was also quite scared at first but when I started to go I felt ok. The map was great and a good amount of controls they chose an amazing area for the event. It was also the first ever time I have been by myself. As I went to the 7th control I saw a huge deer, it was like a horse! (It ran away. I think it was scared of me). I had quite an early start so when I downloaded I was 2nd but at the end I turned out to be 4th. I am not too sad because I am in year 4 and the rest of them are in year 5. I saw these people that I think they thought it was a score event, they were just dibbing all of the controls!



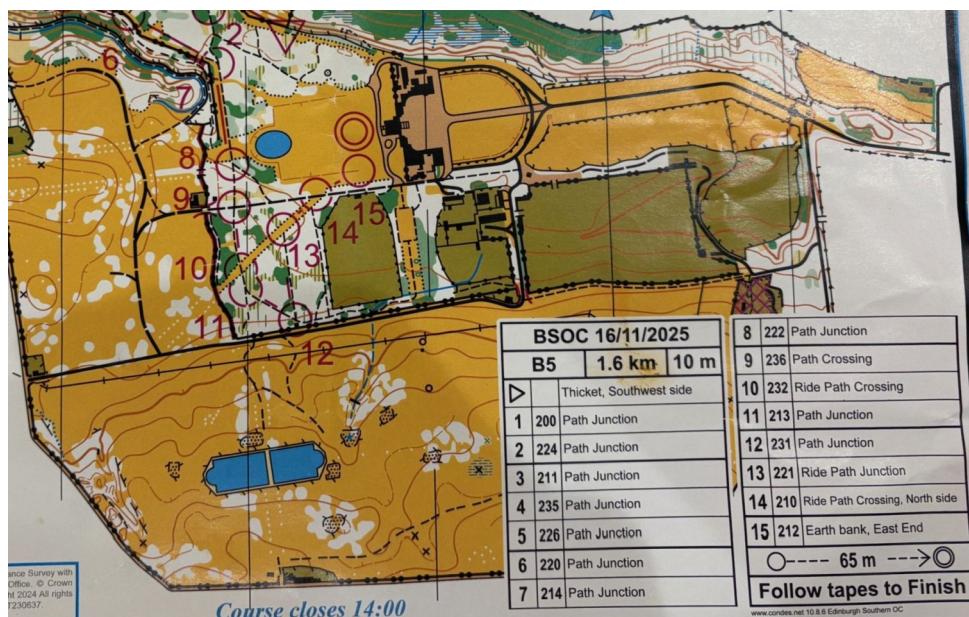
Alistair Balfour (M08)

Year 5 Boys

1	Fred G	Nether Green	9:27
2	Sebastian C	Guiseley	10:06
3	Joby P	Baildon	11:19
4	Alistair B	Stamfordham	11:43
v			
15	Matthew O	Aboyne	40:12

Year 7 Boys

1	Will F	High Storrs	11:01
2	Joseph T	Silverdale	11:14
3	Joe J	High Storrs	12:24
4	Callum S	Dunblane	12:34
5	William B	Ponteland	13:17
v			
16	Rafe C	Silverdale	29:22



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geograph.org.uk/p/1298259
Hopetoun House Deer Park

Festive Orienteering 2025



Newcastle & Tyneside Orienteers
Christmas Party

Tuesday 9th December 2025



at Concordia Leisure Centre, Forum Way, Cramlington, NE23 6YB
From 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. Meet in the first floor bar.
Quiz, Presentations, Clip n' Climb

Clip n' Climb booked 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Participants for Clip n' Climb are advised to be present in good time
(Priority to juniors and young adults)

A Buffet (provided) and Bar from 7:00 p.m.

Cost (payable on the night) Seniors: £5.00 Juniors: free
(costs part funded from the Club Membership Fund).

Festive Frolics at Plessey Woods 21st December

<https://www.newcastleorienteering.org.uk/event/festive-frolics-at-plessey-woods/>



Featuring the Plessey Challenge mass race, mini-Challenge open to all, similar to the Challenge but shorter, and a range of other courses.

Boxing Day Charity Score

Houghall Woods, Durham

26th December

<https://northern-navigators.org.uk/>

https://www.clok.org.uk/Future_events.htm

CLOK New Year Team Score

(Relays)

Hardwick Park, Sedgefield

4th January