



Orienteering

Newcastle and Tyneside



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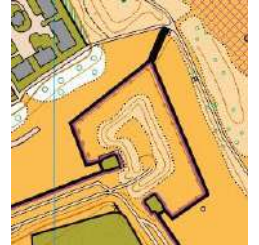
Photo Credit: Wendy Carlyle

Planning Berwick – ultimate challenge – or nightmare? – Fred Miller

In 2025 the club paid for Berwick upon Tweed to be mapped. In a fit of zeal I volunteered to plan the race, scheduled for 6 June 2026. When I started work on planning in earnest, I soon realised there were a number of issues that would have to be faced. This was far from easy.

1. Berwick is a long way from everywhere. 125 miles to drive there and back. There are trains, quicker but can be pricey and you have to factor in time taken to get to the station. The distance and domestic constraints mean casual visits cannot be made. To get the most out of a trip needed careful planning in its own right!

2. The mapper did a decent job, but there were numerous small changes and updates I needed to make. For example, if only for safety reasons, the town walls needed to be more emphatically obvious than from just using the standard thick black line for an impassible wall.



3. Berwick town centre is quite small so this has two consequences. Multiple good legs for 8 courses are harder to find. Getting the length for some is tricky and there are a limited number of control sites good for urban races. The map cannot be expanded to the North, because there is a school and caravan site and yet another golf course in the way; the West is blocked by the Tweed and the railway, the East by a golf course and the sea; and the South by the river.



4. Safety is a major consideration. Although tempting, having people run along the top of the town walls – a 6 metre/20ft plus drop in places – is not a good idea, so the barrier of the walls was used instead to force route choices and the use of the walls carefully restricted. Another constriction is access through the walls – none on the north and just 2 on the East. Also, there is a small, intricately interconnected block of courtyards and alleys butting against the town walls, ideal for urban races, but with passageways scarcely wider than a single person, care has to be emphasised in the Safety Notice! Similarly there are a surprising number of car parks in Berwick, some just for a handful of cars, so again caution needed to be emphasised to competitors.

5. The main road through Berwick, from the North to the Royal Tweed (road) Bridge is very busy and very congested around Castlegate car park. Competitors had to be prevented from crossing this area of busy.

6. East of the Elizabethan town walls is a large open space, a large component of the mapped area. Unfortunately, most of this is a golf course and very much of bounds. This robbed us of some interesting legs to the sea and back and was very restricting. Fortunately, the remnants of some of the older, Edward I, defences form a boundary to part of the golf course so the grassy dunes, knolls, gulleys, and deep ditches could be used to give some controls unusual in an urban race. Also, the mapped area is divided into two distinct parts by the River Tweed, of quite a large width at this point, and therefore another sizeable chunk of unusable map.

7. Using both sides of the Tweed means the river has to be crossed. The main road bridge is very busy, making transitions to controls from the Berwick end undesirable. So an early decision was made to only use the Old Bridge, (and make the Royal Tweed Bridge out of bounds). The Old Bridge is single lane so one way only for traffic.

Initially I had the longer courses crossing the Tweed twice – from Berwick to Tweedmouth and back again. But I dislike dead running (long runs with no decisions needing to be made) – I don't want to give wily competitors chance to think, let alone plan the next few controls! So following a suggestion from the controller I redid the longer courses and had a second start on the Tweedmouth side. Still dead running, but the minimum possible and facing oncoming traffic so safer. Extra staffing is undesirable, but in this case I believe necessary. It also meant a 1.5km walk from Assembly for those on the longer courses.

8. On the Berwick side, the strip along the Tweed from the Old Bridge upstream, between the river and the main road noted in item 5, is fairly narrow and has a paucity of access points. Route choice is therefore limited. With several courses needing to use this narrow corridor, finding different controls to prevent one long procession was not easy!

9. We were running a double-header weekend with Roxburgh Revivers and they bagged the Sunday as Eyemouth is impossible on a Saturday. Berwick is also quite busy on Saturdays, which is not ideal, so this had to be borne in mind for courses.

10. Control loading had to be managed – ideally we want no more than four courses, preferable three or less, visiting any one control. On the other hand it takes time and effort to put out and collect in controls, so we want to keep the total number of controls to a minimum. Some courses, notably the shortest two courses (for Juniors and Young Juniors) and the longest (Men's Open), can lead to a number of unique controls, used on only one course because of their particular requirements. Given the preceding constraints, this was not easy!

11. Because of the very narrow passageways and intricate detail mentioned in item 4, I considered having the map printed at 1:3,000 instead of the standard scale at 1:4,000. The size and shape of Berwick meant that 1:4,000 would not work with the size of paper we normally print our maps on, so a larger size had to be used.

12. Individual desired controls sometimes needed specific permission to be used, and this was not always obtainable. Cue quite a bit of shuffling to find and fit in alternatives. And thanks to those who willingly gave permission.

13. The remnants of the mediaeval defences immediately East of the Elizabethan town walls were quite enticing to add an unusual flavour to an urban event, with their hillocks and deep ditches. Therefore several controls were planned to take advantage of these. However, 3 weeks before the event the rough grass had grown much taller and thicker, and with it vicious nettles found a ready home. It was so bad that some controls had to be hastily relocated to more accessible parts. This lost some technical difficulty, but meant a flavour of that area could be obtained without too much harm.

Did I succeed in juggling all these conditions and constraints to make decent courses? Of course, the ultimate arbiters are the competitors, and from comments gleaned, it seemed yes I did! Aided, I must emphasise by a really good Controller (Robin Sloan from Roxburgh Reivers), and sterling work from Gwenda Cavill (Organiser), Joanne Field and Les Cavill (Starts) and the unflappable Paul Boyles on Download, with their helpers Sue, Alison, Peter, Tim, Allie, Laura, Frank, Kim, Patrick & Jim from the club, Colin (INT) and Trevor and Hazel (MDOC) . Thanks to all and maybe others. All in all, well done us!

Fred Miller

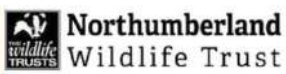
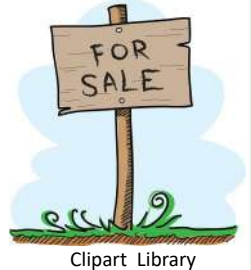
Berwick Gallery ~ pictures by Patrick Smyth



Simonside

Along with a recent CompassSport magazine edition it is time to highlight the sale of the Simonside Estate and its effect on orienteering. CompassSport reminds us that in orienteering nationally the venue is unfortunately notorious for the horrendous weather conditions at the British Championships 2004. Memories of cars being tracted INTO the car park, let alone out again, torrential rain, toilets falling like skittles, a marquee nearly taking off and shoe eating mud persist in some minds.

However, those more familiar with the area, as the CompassSport author points out, are aware of the beauty of the area, with its rolling moorland, spectacular views, woodlands and historic sites. The Rothbury Estate, as the wider area of some 3500 hectares is known, includes the Simonside Hills but also further moorland, farmland and river banks is up for sale.



Fearful of the possibility of this large area being broken up for commercial enterprises purely for profit to the serious detriment of

wildlife, Northumberland Wildlife Trust together with the national grouping of Wildlife Trusts negotiated an option to buy the estate for £30m by September 2026. Fundraising has been ongoing for while and has passed the halfway mark. Records on the donations site show several donations each day so it all adds up. Donations can be made at:

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/appeals/rothbury-estate-nature-and-nation>

A notable contribution to the fund came from a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £5m (subject to completion of the purchase) and an endorsement from Sir David Attenborough.

With ownership of the actual area used for orienteering in the past already secured, the club's Permissions Officer, Paul Boyles, recently reported that "they were overjoyed that we want to use their area." What remains is confirmation of the extent of the SSSI and months excluded from use in respect of ground nesting birds.



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Article suggestion: Frank Shillitoe
Sources: CompassSport Magazine
Wildlife Trusts Fund Raising website



This year's Summer holidays multiday event will be in the Lake District. That makes it the nearest area of such activity for club members (others being Scotland – usually highlands and north every two years and Wales every four.)

Sun August 2nd to Fri August 7th

The next rise in pre entry fees comes in on July 13th.

<https://www.lakes5.org.uk/>

White Rose Weekend 2026

Eborienteers and Cleveland Orienteering Klub

51st White Rose Weekend

28th - 31st August 2026

Venue: Scarborough, North Yorkshire

<https://www.eborienteers.org.uk/white-rose>

Friday: Night Score Race

Saturday: Middle Distance Race

Saturday: Hill Race

Sunday: Classic Distance Race

Sunday: Prizegiving for these events

Sunday: BBQ (Bring own food/drink)

Monday: Sprint Race

Other entertainments

Quiz

Orienteering Maze,

Pace & Bearing Competition

Mountain Bike Orienteering Event

Compasspoint (Kit retailers)

Friday to Sunday.



The Orienteering Foundation is a charity whose purpose is to promote and support Orienteering.

As part of that mission, a Coaching Day will be held again in November in the Lake District led by Duncan Archer, whose elite orienteering career began in the North East.

Lakes Coaching Day 28th November 2026

Simpson Ground, Newby Bridge

Expert coaching is offered to individuals from Light Green (TD4) to full TD5 standards from 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Cost is £13 for individual registration (No EoD).

Comprehensive details available at:

<https://www.orienteeringfoundation.org.uk/lakes-coaching-day-28th-november-2026>

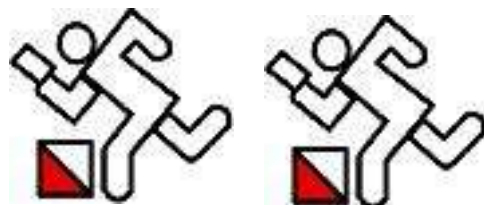
The following day there is to be a LOC event (Cumbrian Galoppen) at Roanhead, nr Barrow.

Spring Local Series

A short series of Saturday morning events took place between March and June on wider Tyneside with a league table to give a competitive edge. Class leaders are shown below.

NEWCASTLE & TYNESIDE ORIENTEERS SPRING 2026 LOCAL SERIES - Scores												
Name	Class	Club	7/3/26 Wylam		18/4/26 Newburn		23/5/26 PercyRit		13/6/26 Seaton Sluice		TOTAL	BEST
			Pos	Pts	Pos	Pts	Pos	Pts	Pos	Pts		THREE
Patrick Smyth	M65	NATO		100	*	4	102		4	102	304	304
Mary Rack	W65	NATO	7	99	5	101		100*			300	300
George Hare	M60	NATO	2	99		100*	2	99			298	298
John Phizacklea	M50	NATO	1	100			3	98	2	99	297	297
Fred Miller	M75	NATO	3	98	2	99	2	99	3	98	294	294
		NATO	4	97	2	99			3	98	294	294
Sue Metcalfe	W55	NATO	9	97	11	95			1	100	292	292
Class Leader Award		Ran up one				* Organiser Bonus						

Altogether 47 individuals took part at one or more events and 80 runs were recorded.



Summer Local Series

This Wednesday evening series will begin at Ponteland on 15th July, followed by Caroline Pit (Slatyford) July 22nd Nuns Moor July 29th No event August 5th Tynemouth August 12th Wallsend August 19th Whitley Bay August 26th



British Orienteering Ranking List

523	Francis Shillitoe	7346	1249	1216	1209	1219	1242	1211
727	George Hare	7137	1218	1179	1181	1222	1168	1169
858	Laura Hindle	7031	1214	1169	1168	1182	1160	1138
921	Lewis Balfour	6974	1208	1160	1129	1156	1176	1145
1238	Patrick Smyth	6668	1110	1100	1110	1133	1112	1103
1968	Joanne Field	5975	951	1020	1039	972	1012	981
2129	Mary Rack	5794	935	955	945	1008	967	984
2134	Fred Miller	5786	989	967	944	993	944	949
2156	Sue Metcalfe	5763	910	1034	987	927	960	945
2171	Jane Malley	5750	949	990	988	964	940	919
2206	Kim Sanderson	5710	964	930	917	1015	922	962
2276	Roy Dawson	5630	985	1017	955	915	886	872
2769	Catherine Dawson	4894	782	788	804	935	791	794

The ranking list is derived from results of regional events and above (as long as at least 10 class runners' times are listed). Ranking position in the list regards total points from the six most recent scores.

Position

Total

Above: Club members with a complete set of six scores. Position is out of 5043.

Druridge Bay

The event planned for Druridge Bay on 12th July has been moved to 15th August to avoid clashing with a Music Festival.

