

SMOC Club Championships 2021

In recent years the SMOC Club Championships have been held in the Spring. COVID, however, has thrown all schedules to the wind. The 2021 titles were not decided until December 2021 at the event held at Shotover Country Park, near Oxford, organised by TVOC. Despite the rise of Omicron, thick mist and cold, uninviting conditions, nineteen plucky members made it to the start...and all but one retiree finished, without a single mispunch between them, which is more than could be said for other competitors.

The club's highest ranked orienteer, David Cavero, was the only theoretical contender for the open title – so he decided instead to run his normal, Brown course, achieving a decent result. This left two contenders for the open, both running up from the veterans' class. It was no surprise that Richard Pownall added to his list of club titles, although Ian Byrne didn't disgrace himself. (Ian was also competing in the JOK championships, but the less said about his result there, the better.) The ladies open class on the Blue course was unopposed; Freya Askham had a decent run to fully justify her title.

SMOC has an unusually old age profile; maybe there's something about being based in a New Town that keeps its members young. The Green course attracted as many veteran men as tackled the open; Paul Rushmer ran well to take the title, although Dorien James was hampered by an injury incurred between the car park and the start. Competition was fiercest among the four veteran ladies, with Karen Vines taking the honours, only slightly ahead of Helen Nisbet. Gill Hanson and Ros James had steady races.

The Supervets were also well represented on Short Green. As a former open champ, it was perhaps no surprise that Steve Hardy won the men's race, although last year's veteran champ, Martin Cook, was just two minutes behind, with Charles Taylor-Keane some way further back. Steve would have won the Short Green course, except that our other M21 on the day, James Nisbet, decided that after a two year break he needed to let himself back into the sport by running a shorter course. Ann Harris, relieved to have found all the controls in the right order after some recent disqualifications, had a steady run to take the ladies' honours. Relative newcomer Sue Rae put in a sterling performance to get round a course that was a lot harder than she's used to.

SMOC's age profile doesn't really offer juniors much of a challenge. Milly Askham, consigned to an orange course, duly romped round to win the trophy. Her brother Richard was not all that far behind.

Overall, most people were pleased to have made the trip down to Oxford and were rewarded by receiving a souvenir TVOC 50th anniversary bandanna!

Only the handicap result remains to be determined – this will be announced when the trophies are handed out at the SMOC Summer Social.

