

A very hot weekend in Canterbury



Photos by Abigail Cross



Nobody expected the May Spring Bank Holiday weekend to be so hot. Record breaking temperatures which took orienteers by surprise, especially the organisers of the CRET ([City Racing European Tour](#)) weekend.

But when we, John and I, and our daughter and her family, saw this on the calendar it looked like a good weekend in a city we didn't know. John and I travelled down from Derbyshire on Friday and the temperatures were rising as we moved south. We had decided, thankfully, not to compete in the prologue race on Friday evening. It was already mid 20s then. But we collected our bibs and got a chance to see a little of the city centre.

On Saturday John and I had opted for early starts in order for me, in particular, to be finished so I could go to my grandson's start with him later. The organisers had encouraged people to take water bottles to the start, which thankfully, was quite shady, and provided a bag to dispose of them. Also, water was provided at the finish.

I loved my course, which took me into the city centre, The Kings School grounds, the grounds of St Augustine's Abbey and Christ Church University. However, on my control descriptions and on the ground were tapes leading from the next to last control to the final one. At download I was informed that I had missed the final control, on the corner of the run-in. I quickly ran back to dib, but of course it didn't work as I had already downloaded. I was cross with myself but took it on board that it was my own silly fault for assuming "tapes to the finish" as it most common. But I was not the only one to make this mistake. More on that later.

The rest of the family were travelling down that morning, so to save them time, after I had finished my race, I collected bibs, safety pins and a dibber as they were cutting it a bit fine. I walked with my grandson to his start and we were met on the way by the near start team returning and assuming he had not showed up. We were a few minutes late. But thankfully they returned to the start, hung the start kite up, let him punch the start box and gave him his map and he was off, a little hesitantly at first. I returned to the finish, but had missed John coming in. Rachel and I stood at the corner where the final control was. With the kite being orange and white, it was partly camouflaged by the red plastic barriers put up to mark the run in. As we stood there, we saw a good number of runners miss the final control.

We cheered for other SMOCies and friends as they finished. The commentary team were brilliant. They were calling out the runners names as they finished with encouraging comments for completing on a very hot day. This was only my son-in-law's third urban, but he is quickly getting the hang of it.

In the cool of the inside of the building as we were changing, we heard other runners beginning to fume about missing the final control, and some of these were very experienced orienteers.

With our very hot runs completed, the family adjourned as usual to Pizza Express. Our waitress there was a marathon runner, and she was very interested in our orienteering exploits around the city and we hope she joins the Saxons Club.

The venue for the sprints races was the University of Kent. It was a good opportunity to get some practice in before the British Sprint Championships. Lots of shade was provided with a huge open awning and lots of trees in the finish arena. The morning sprint was mostly around the university's residential accommodation. The second sprint two hours after the morning sprint focused more on the university buildings with a couple of different levels which caught some people out. For both sessions there was a fast run in from the final control, and as on Saturday, the commentary team were calling out the runners names as they finished. Everyone in the club got around safely. But the finish run in of the day had to be that between my granddaughter and her father, who stormed the last few metres, cheered on by SMOC members and I, and also encouraged by the commentary team too.

All results for the city race, both the sprints and the overall results can be found on the Saxons Club website, along with Routegadget.

The contentious last control which so many runners missed and many complained about, meant that the results of the city race had to be reviewed by a jury. Eventually on Tuesday evening I received an email saying that the jury had concluded that *"the route taping, along with the surrounding noise and crowd barriers on that turn, combined with the heat of the day and tiredness of the competitors could have led to confusion and mispunching at that control. Importantly the jury found that no competitor received any unfair advantage by not punching control 100."* And so I was reinstated to 2nd place. Unfortunately, this did mean that some people were then placed in a lower position on their course.

Despite the very high temperatures, it was a great weekend put on by [Saxons](#) and [Dartford Orienteers](#). Now that my family have had a good opportunity to sprint round a campus, they are better prepared for the British Sprint Championships in Bristol.

Rosie



Photos by Hazel Gleed

