

SMOC in UKOL 2023

The November Classic weekend saw the last two UK Orienteering League events of 2023. UKOL is an annual competition which was created to encourage national participation across a variety of orienteering formats.

This year there were 25 events. Of these events, 17 were forest, 2 sprints, and 5 urban events. Typically, all British Championships and the JK are included, with the remainder being a mix of major and not so major events.



Of the 25 possible events, the best 8 scores count towards the individual league. Individuals are scored based on the standard 5-year age groupings (2 years for juniors), and start at M/W16. The winner in each age group for each event gets 50 points, 49 for 2nd, 48 for 3rd, etc. So, the maximum possible score is 400. There were 9 orienteers who managed the maximum 400 score. Some, as you'd expect, were from age categories with low participation numbers (juniors and the older groups) but there were also some from the biggest age groups like W55 (Jenny Peel SYO), W60 (Jackie Hallet BOK) and M60 (Quentin Harding CLARO).



So how did SMOC do? In true SMOC fashion, we were there, we finished, and we weren't last! We only had four club members who managed to do the 8 counting events: Freya (10th in W45), Ann (13th in W65), Sandra (18th in W55), and Helen (29th in W60).

Although the scoring is the same for each event, it is easier to score points by running those races with smaller fields. At the Scottish 6 Days, I scored a GB-at-Eurovision number of points by finishing outside the top 50, but did much better at Springtime in Shropshire with smaller fields, and even got to the dizzy heights of 45 at some urban events. It is definitely a format that rewards those who just turn up, but to win, you do still need to be a very good orienteer.

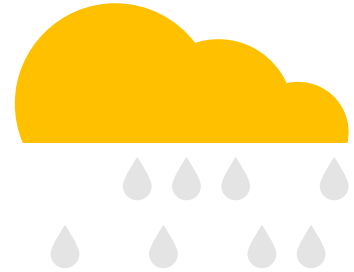
There is also a club competition, which is based on a club's top 15 member's individual scores. There are restrictions on the number of qualifying individuals from age groups, you can see the detail on the website if interested. SMOC finished 69th out of 111 club teams and the scoring club members were: Rachel Thomas, Rosie Shaw, Helen Nisbet, Sandra Mather, Chi Chuen Lau, Lawrence Jones, Dorien James, Ann Harris, Debbie Charlton, David Averill and Freya Askham. No, that isn't 15 people, but the restriction on numbers in age classes would could score meant we did have other club members with points who couldn't qualify as part of the team. There were some club "B" teams in front of us, but we did also beat some bigger clubs like LEI. A few more members at a few more races would have boosted us up the rankings. 2024 perhaps?



Sandra

A SOGGY END TO UKOL 2023!

The final UKOL event was held at Fritham in the New Forest. I always think of the New Forest at this time of year bathed in late autumn sun, the trees resplendent with autumn colours. While the morning of the event was dry, the days leading up to it had been almost unremittingly wet, with torrential rain and floods across the country. We were relieved that the event wasn't cancelled but were unnerved to receive a last minute update to the final details. This informed us that the organisers were planning to affix ropes at stream crossing points, due to high water levels. We had visions of having to haul ourselves across raging torrents, map and dibber held aloft.



It was, therefore, with some relief and optimism, that we awoke on the Sunday to find that the rain had stopped. The 1.7k walk to the start demonstrated that the ground was indeed extremely soggy, so no chance of dry feet. Courses were well planned, on an area of deciduous woodland, heath and open areas, typical of the New Forest. I was happy to have a decent run on W65L, on the green course. I did, however, have two water related issues: the stream crossed en-route to control 6 was up to my knees, and icy cold; one of my last controls was across a stream in a deep channel, which was too wide for my little legs to jump, so it was a case of climbing into the stream and out again. (I confess that I visualise most planners as tall, leggy men, who find it hard to imagine how a gently ageing woman, 5 feet tall, will negotiate physical barriers such as streams and fences).

Ann

