

SOLWAY ORIENTEERS

History notes prepared to mark the 40th anniversary of the founding of the club
Selected landmarks and anecdotes with an emphasis on the early years.

1. Orienteering in Scotland

In **1959**, Baron C.A. Lagerfeld of Stockholm, who had enthusiastically given himself the task of spreading the sport of Orienteering throughout the world, set his sights on Scotland. He had already tried Belgium, France, Germany, England and the USA with limited success. He wrote first to the Scottish Tourist Board and, fortunately, his letter was passed on to the Scottish Council for Physical Recreation (SCPR) and reached the hands of Charles Wilde, a Development Officer, who took up the challenge.

Eventually a team of top Swedish orienteers came to Scotland to demonstrate the sport prior to the first Scottish Orienteering Championships held over the weekend of **23rd/24th June 1962** at Craig a' Barns, Dunkeld. The 9 mile demonstration event was followed by a Women's Open race over 4.5 miles and Junior Men, 5 miles, on the Saturday. The Men's Open race over 7 miles was held on the Sunday, followed by the First Annual General meeting of the Scottish Orienteering Association, attended by 24 people representing eighteen organisations.³

2. Orienteering in South West Scotland

1967: 4-5 March: The Scottish Orienteering Championships were held in Dalbeattie Forest, having been postponed from the previous autumn because of foot & mouth).¹

1967: Formation of the British Orienteering Federation

1968: Ivor Marriott founded a fledgling Solway club, Solway OC. Ivor encouraged teachers to go Orienteering in Ae and Dalbeattie using black & white maps and rags as control markers. A group went to the SE Scotland Championships (possibly in Glentress?) and organised by students from Herriot Watt University where there were a lot of Norwegian students. Unfortunately most of those attending were put off by the experience.²

Ivor found that Beth Gordon, a maths teacher at Dumfries High School, had already held a Scottish Schools Orienteering Championships and the school had won two trophies. A pupil, Benny Gillies, who went on the run an antiquarian bookshop in Castle Douglas, had won as an under 15 and again as an under 17.

Ivor had been to Pirniehall, which was then used by the old Dunbarton Council Education Department as a residential school, giving pupils a week's introduction to simple adventure activities. There he met Chris James, the then British Orienteering Champion, who suggested that Ivor organise a SW of Scotland Championships. Despite protesting that he had never organised an Orienteering event Ivor enlisted the help of some non-orienteering teachers. He and Benny Gillies planned the courses in Mabie Forest and Andrew Hewatt from the Borders acted as controller.

1968: December, SW Scotland Orienteering Championships in Mabie Forest.

1969: The June issue of the BOF newsletter 'Stop Press' said that **Solway OC** had registered its O-top colours as 'brown'.¹ (Subdued colours were the thing then.)

1969: June: British Orienteering Championships in Kirroughtree Forest.^{2, 3}
New three-colour (brown, blue, black) map produced with input from Geoff Peck. Planners Chris James and Ivor Marriott. Controller Chris Brasher.^{2, 3}

There was a thunderstorm during the event. With no mobile phones in those days Ivor went to phone results through and as he approached the phone box it was struck by lightning and the phone exploded.

Prior to the Kirroughtree event Ivor Marriott and Chris James spent time running on an OS map to see if the area would be suitable. On emerging from the forest they had met the local postman and asked where they were. Chris thought he had said Kir-rough-tree.

1976: Ivor Marriott travelled with a party of British Orienteers in a Transit mini-bus to run in Norway and Sweden, including the O-Ringen. The group included Geoff Peck, Carol McNeill, Gordon Pirie and John Disley. The WOC was held later that year in Scotland, where Geoff Peck came 6th.

1976: Ivor, who had been teaching at Annan Academy, went to Liverpool University to get a second degree in Outdoor Education. He was advised that the SW of Scotland had a great resource in the form of its forests and was thus an ideal place to promote Orienteering. SOA and BOF advised that if a national competition was planned then a low cost map print run could be provided.

1977: A Scottish Junior Championships was planned at Mabie Forest. Ian Service, aged 13, a pupil of Douglas Ewart High School, Newton Stewart, won his class.

1978: The first Scouts event was held at Mabie. The Courier printed a photo of the winner, David Finnie, being presented with his prize by Ivor Marriott. Also in the picture were Derek Allan, Colin Stobbs, Peter Finnie, Richard Colbeck and John McFadden.

1979: The programme for the second Scottish Six-Day Orienteering Event, **Trossachs 79**, lists one Solway entry, R Finnie in class M43A.

1979: The original Solway OC having fizzled out through lack of effective support in the early 1970s a new club '**Solway Orienteers**' was founded in late **1979** driven by Ivor and the late David Wilson.²

1980: The Jan Kjellstrom International was held at Dalbeattie and Laurieston Forests with the relays in Mabie Forest. Mark Hill was the training area. At that time BOF hosted an annual dinner for VIP guests including Jan Kjellstrom's parents. The 1980 one was at the Station Hotel, Dumfries. The very Scottish menu included 'Stoved Howtowdie wi' Drappit Eggs' and 'Rumblethumps'.¹

1981: Carol McNeill, six-times British Champion from 1967 to 1976 and International Orienteer was appointed by Outdoor Education with the specific task of introducing orienteering to Dumfries & Galloway schools.

1981 Dumfries and Galloway Schools Orienteering Association (DAGSOA) was formed and with Carol's skills and enthusiasm was hugely successful.

1981: The third Scottish Six-Day event **Galloway 81** was held in Laurieston, Fleet (aka Cally Woods), Drumlanrig, Dalbeattie, Kirroughtree and Mabie Forests. The main officials were mostly provided by ESOC with some from Solway. There were 23 Solway members listed in the results.

1982: By this time, Solway was organising a very full calendar of events throughout the year, including 7 'Colour Coded' events, run as the Galloway Gallopen series, as well as 'Badge' and schools events. (Colour coded events offered a full spread of courses, White, Yellow, Orange, Green and Brown. Blue was added later and Light Green had not been invented then. Badge events were run in age classes and

counted towards the BOF National Rankings.) One of the Badge events was designated as the SW of Scotland Championships.

Sample Fixtures list for early 1982: 10 Jan Galloway Galoppen, Dalswinton; 7 Feb Badge Event, Fleet Forest; 7 Mar Badge Event, Laurieston Forest; 14 Mar Scottish Schools Champs, Dalbeattie; 4 April Galloway Galloppen, Dalbeattie; 8 May Regional Schools Champs, Laurieston.

1983: DAGSOA ran a full 53-seater coach to the SOC in the Trossachs and North Achray. New burgundy and green Solway O-suits with an embroidered badge were introduced.

1983: December, Carol McNeill left after being the main driver behind Solway's rise from being founded in 1979 to rank No.1 in Scotland for BOF registered members, having five juniors in the National Squad and able to host the largest national events. On her leaving, Ivor Marriott said, "In Carol, Solway found not only a world class competitor, but the finest coach we are likely to know - a complete orienteer whose understanding of our sport is without equal."

1984: Anne Salisbury took over from Carol McNeill but teaching other outdoor pursuits as well as orienteering.

Solway reached the final of the CompassSport Cup held at Ogden & Ovendon Moor, near Halifax, where they came 4th behind SYO, DEE and SN.

David Marshall, former Solway member, selected for the BAOC team in Nordic Cross-Country Skiing at the 1984 Sarajevo Winter Olympics. (David later rejoined Solway on leaving the army.)

Kerry Clenaghan (now Willacy) 1st place in W11A Scottish Series and radio interviews after the Scottish Schools Champs.

1985: Moira Cumming W15 British Champion. Four other juniors travelled with Scottish Junior Squad to the Swiss 6 Day event.

1986: Membership list dated 27 March shows 246 Solway members.

Anne Salisbury 1st W21E at the British Championships at Achilty North.

1986: Scottish Orienteering Championships - Individual Mabie Forest, Relays Hills Wood. 882 individual entries, 190 relay teams. Included a Scotland v Ireland International. Fourteen Norwegian orienteers chartered a plane to Carlisle to attend and stayed with club members.

1986 September: First Mabie Knoll Bagging Competition, an evening event with a tie between Anne Salisbury and Derek Jardine, then an M13, with Derek taking the trophy by virtue of having no penalty points.

1988: Anne Salisbury left to take up a new post at Plas y Brenin, the National Centre for Mountain Activities. Teaching of orienteering in schools was left to the remaining staff in Outdoor Education and the DAGSOA squad was disbanded with nobody available to take on the responsibility.

November: Ian and Seonaid Robertson launch their very successful Saturday morning fun events at Mabie Forest, offering courses for beginners and something for more experienced members. Saturday mornings enabled schools to bring groups.

1989: Solway reached the CompassSport Cup final again, held at Castle Carr, also near Halifax. In those days there was only the Cup competition and the final was

reached after a series of regional elimination rounds. The Trophy for smaller clubs and a single first round came later.

1990/1991: Last Galloway Galloper series results published April 1991. The name was subsequently changed to the Solway Orienteering League.

1991: The eighth Scottish Six-Day event **Southern Upland 91** was held in Ae Forest, Pulnagashel Glen, Bowhill Estate, Penninghame, Dalmacallan and Mabie Forest. Solway provided almost all of the Central Organisation with support from RR.

1992 January 2nd: Mabie Knoll Bagging Competition (MKBC) introduced as a New Year novelty event.

1992-1998: With no club coach, retirement from the sport of early members, the rise of interest in alternative outdoor activities and other distractions, there was a gradual decline in membership over this period. The Solway O-League series fell away in 1993 and Colour Coded events became part of the West of Scotland O League series (WoSOL). That later merged with Central and East of Scotland events to become the South of Scotland O League.

As the remaining members were unable to sustain the full Colour Coded event series, the monthly Saturday morning events became the mainstay of the club's events. A typical year would comprise six events from September to March, a regional schools champs in April and four or five summer series evening events in May/June. The club would host a round of the Scottish Orienteering League every two years with a SoSOL in the intervening years. With changes taking place in schools and tightening of budgets the school groups fell away and club membership declined to below 100.

1999: Scottish Orienteering Championships - Individual Keir Hills, Relays Kirkhill. Sportident electronic timing was demonstrated for the first time in Scotland on the String Course at Keir Hills. Negotiations were completed in Dumfries that evening for the Scottish Orienteering 6-Day Event Company to buy it for use at Highland 99 and the World Championships, which were being held in Scotland at the same time.

2007: Ian and Seonaid received the British Schools Orienteering Association Award for Services to Schools Orienteering.

2007: Solway bought their own SI kit. Ian and Seonaid retired from running the Saturday morning events and other club members took over fully.

Major events hosted by Solway in the last ten years:

2012: Scottish Score Orienteering Championships - Drumlanrig (Solway is due to host this again in 2022)

2013: Scottish Relay Orienteering Championships - Maxwellton Estate

2019 Jan 2nd: 28th running of the MKBC

2019 May 25/26th: Scottish Orienteering Championships - Individuals in Dalbeattie Forest, Relays at Drumlanrig Woods

Sources

¹ Clive Allen, British Orienteering Historian

² Ivor Marriott, founder member Solway OC and Solway Orienteers

³ 'History of The Scottish Orienteering Association', Bob Climie, OBE, 1990

Other notes from D McQuillen's files including old newsletters

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