

The owls of the Devil's Glen looked in, no doubt, on Emlyn Jones as he prepared five meticulous tracings for the new Devil's Glen map. Winter had laid mapping by the heels and a map was urgently needed for the first of the Leinster Orienteering Championships in May. Planning went ahead on black and white and in the evenings the roding woodcock whirred over the woods. Then the map was at the printers. Leaves fell from the calendar like autumn. A week to go ... days ... then the maps were there. It was Friday; the event was on Sunday.

Ten years previously, almost to the day, Michael Lunt, stimulated by an article in the Observer, organised the first of our now familiar Orienteering events. The map was an unmodified six inch Ordnance Survey sheet. The course, with glorious disregard for wind or limb, plunged from the north of the present map down into the Devil's Glen, across the river, up to the summit, down to the farm, and then like hound on hare across the road to a finish in a distance which even Mike can not remember. The event was won by Niall Rice in the first of many wins. "We had very little idea of fairness in setting courses in those days", Mike Lunt recalls. "A control was once put hard up against a wide ditch. There were only two alternatives: total immersion or a very long run round." Tactics too were different. Was it at the Devil's Glen that Jim Butler, when hard pressed, was seen to hide in the grass until the opposition, missing the control, had passed?

The map prepared by Emlyn, aided by others, particularly from A.F.A.S., represents an enormous stride forward in ten short years. The development of modern maps reflects the unfolding of an almost surprised awareness of the richness and variety which the sport has to offer. Accuracy and detail have become intelligible through

the use of colour, and the orienteer carries with him not only fact but opinion. This is runnable, this is not. Tedious though the modern map may be to produce, it carries with it complete freedom of choice for the orienteer. For the planner it makes it possible to set a course designed, as Mike puts it, "to eliminate chance and to reward skill".

Colin Dunlop (controller) and I poked in the gloom over our fuzzy dye-line print wondering if we were looking for a path or a drain; colour does make a difference. We enter the stage together, searching.

Planner: I have ribboned a control on this knoll here.

Controller: What knoll? (He inspects a gentle undulation on the ridge)

Well, I suppose it could be called a knoll. Where do you want to hang your control?

Planner: Down here. (With enthusiasm, pointing to a cavity in a pile of brashings. The controller, with a patient look, takes the control from the planner and hangs it high. The players leave the forest.)

"The important thing on that first event," Mike Lunt recalls, "was to find features which the organiser could recognise. We were not the least bit worried about whether they could be recognised by an orienteer on the run. The controls were H. Williams' bags and the markers coloured felt pens. Nobody worried too much in those days: we just came out and had a great time."

A great time! A great time? Is there something in that for us? Something perhaps we are in danger of forgetting?

The course was all but set. Worried about one last bearing, I was following, in advance, the track of many feet when, a yard

before me, the leaves erupted and a woodcock rose and curved down through the trees. At my feet was a nest with two or maybe three brown-smudged eggs. The course was changed, the many feet went else-where, and the woodcock sat, merged with the fallen leaves, until we too had gone and the owls of the Devil's Glen flew again over Tiglin.

Aubrey Flegg.

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