

# **THAME URBAN RACE**

## **Planner's Comments**

It was an honour to be the first to plan an event on Mike Shires's excellent new map of Thame. Very early in the planning process it became clear that courses 6 and 7, and hence the start and finish, would be in Cuttle Brook Park, whilst the most interesting urban terrain is in the Lea Park Estate to the north east. Getting courses 1 to 5 out of the park, into some interesting bits of the estate and then back to the park without too much repetition imposed some fairly serious constraints, particularly on course 5.

Control 143 was moved around the corner during the event, and this affected competitors on courses 1,3,4 and 5 for around 20 minutes. There is a lesson to be learned here, as this was the only control in the entire urban portion of the map which was not robustly fixed to the terrain with either zipties or gripples. Apologies to those affected.

Finally, it is a pleasure to thank Charles Bromley Gardner, the controller, who made a number of very useful interventions to ensure an enjoyable event for everybody.

Ben Green  
TVOC

## **Controller's Comments**

Well done to TVOC for putting on a great event. Jon and Glynis Wheatcroft harnessed valuable support from Thame Town Council, especially use of the Town Hall, and we saw the effect of engagement with the local community in the number of residents who took part in an orienteering event for the first time. Surprisingly, not all were taken to any new areas!

I also wish to congratulate Mike Shires for his first major map from scratch, and to Ben Green for his first major planning task. Both passed the test with flying colours! In particular, Ben posed some good route choice decisions, which were still being discussed afterwards, and included long legs that required detailed concentration on navigation. The main restraint was the limited area with controlled traffic management for the Under 16s, and so their courses had to be on the short side.

During the event, there were two issues that required my attention: first, we were quickly notified that control #143 was in the wrong place. Well no, it

hadn't been placed incorrectly. But true enough, it had 'walked'. We believe not due to an irate resident, but rather someone who may have thought that they were being 'helpful' by placing it in a more obvious location. We got it back in place, as it was close to the Town Hall, within about 20 minutes. The control appeared on Courses 1, 3, 4 & 5. Only one competitor failed to find it (who has been reinstated) - a second admitted that he had actually completely missed that control accidentally! After careful consideration of the options (e.g. voiding the courses at the extreme, or voiding the legs to and from that control), having discussed their reactions with a number of affected competitors (and no-one protested at the time), on this occasion at a Level C event I supported the decision that the sport was best served by leaving the results as they stand. Analysis of the split times shows who is likely to have been materially affected by this control having been moved, and allows those affected to identify how badly their result was impacted.

The second issue was identified by even fewer competitors: Barley Hill Primary School, marked as Out of Bounds on the map with a surrounding uncrossable fence, was actually open in the second half of the morning! None of us expected that. Most experienced orienteers will have read the map correctly and not even gone near it. But some competitors were reported as going through. I believe that these would only have been residents of Thame, who would have known about it. We could not have opened it ourselves for the complete competition time, and the only option would have been to have placed even more volunteers at the entrances to have prevented ingress by apparent competitors. Again, analysis of the split times identifies no competitor who was obviously quicker than normal on the relevant legs. So no action was required. A map point for all: a marked path going through an Out of Bounds area is still Out of Bounds: we should probably have been clearer on the map with a screen over the whole school, rather than leaving the wooded areas as such.

Charles Bromley Gardner  
BAOC  
Controller

### **Organisers' Comments**

Mike Shires not only produced the map, but also secured the Town Hall for us at a preferential rate and obtained generous sponsorship for the event (in particular from Thame Town Council). He is also TVOC's publicity guru, which involved not only his usual facebook campaign, but leafletting every household in the town and displaying several prominent roadside banners. We owe him a debt of thanks.

We did all the time consuming pre-event 'invisible' stuff that fortunately wasn't needed, like liaising with the First Aid team, preparing printed details of A&Es & emergency plans etc. The TVOC Team Leaders organised the on-the-day stuff with their teams of willing club volunteers. We were particularly pleased with the Red Arrows fly-past - on time at 10.17 - on their way to another running event in the North East.

We were fortunate in having a planner who is a parent and readily agreed that having children being timed to run across roads with a (theoretical) maximum speed of 30mph was not a good idea. (We appreciated the parent who thanked us for doing this. Apparently the rules aren't always followed.)

What did we learn?

- That however hard we try to make our language accessible to beginners we don't always succeed. "Courses close at 14.00" can be interpreted as "We are open for entries/starts until 14.00". "Navigate around Thame, choosing your own route" can be interpreted as "We have put some controls on the map. Visit them in a sensible order to minimize distance travelled"

- That in spite of urging pre-entry, & saying "Enter any course you wish" it is very difficult to do so for an Urban League Race!

- That toilet signs need to be bigger, bolder and more numerous than you could imagine.

We will try even harder next time.

Rumseys enjoyed your patronage. We hope you enjoyed their chocolate!

A very big thank you to all of our sponsors especially the Town Council, who would like this to be an annual event...

And "Thank you" too to those of you who found the time to say thank-you. It does make a difference.

Glynis & Jon Wheatcroft

**Lost Property:**

Khaki 'Craghoppers' cargo shorts.