

Planner's Comments

Calder Wood SoSOL – 15 May 2016

I hope you enjoyed Calder Wood irrespective of the time taken on your course. The sunshine and bluebells were tremendous. It was a great day to be out. However, I noticed that a lot of people took a long time on their courses, and most people had numerous "pinks" on Winsplits, so I would like to take the time to explain some of my planning and analyse the results. I hope it helps you and me.

My initial visit was to walk the plateau, which showed the map to be reasonably accurate (not perfect, but not bad). There were a few small trods which would not normally be mapped (subjective) and a degree of natural regeneration that could have been mapped by converting some rough open areas to semi-open (subjective). I thought the map was good.

On this basis I checked the BOF Guidelines and old SoSOL results (including Calder Wood results) and then planned all the courses, only to discover on my second visit that the lower slopes were often impassable despite what the map said. There was also more "green" than mapped. I therefore embarked on both a map update (more than 150 changes) and total re-plan, which was more than I wanted to be doing with my holidays.

My first planning decision was a safety decision, to use the two tunnels to access and egress the area. The walk to the start tunnel was long enough, so I placed the start there rather than walk you further into the area (at least another 500m to retain the correct distances for the white and yellow courses). This had an impact on the green, short green and light green courses, as I wanted to give you a few controls in the nicest and most technical northern part of the map (surely this is why most of us orienteer).

On reflection I would probably remove legs 7, 8 and 9 from the light green course (go from 6 to 9), but that would only reduce "clean runs" by approx. 4 or 5 minutes. It would not address the long times further down the results.

When I re-planned short green, I added controls 2 and 3 to force you to go round, not down and up, the steep slopes to control 4. This increased the distance by about 300m on paper, but saved you from an unpleasant route choice. If I had removed controls 9 and 10, it would only save 3 to 4 minutes, which again would not address the longer times further down the field and would leave the course lacking TD5 legs.

I now accept that the full green course was too long, but my philosophy was that if there was a short green there was no reason to dumb down the full green. I also wanted to provide you with the best technical orienteering (in the north of the area), so the resultant distance

was at the upper end of the planning guidelines (sorry). However, a shorter course would not eradicate the long times further down the results.

On the blue and brown courses the impassable, or at least very unpleasant and unfair, lower slopes is the reason why you had several easy legs around the far west of the area (near the housing estate). I purposefully reduced the route choice temptation here to provide fairer and more pleasant running. I also believe in switching speed and technicality to lull competitors into a false sense of security or even oxygen debt. I believe brown had sensible lead times and blue was only a few minutes too long. However, the long times further down the results were not ideal.

On the TD5 courses, I tried to vary the challenge of each leg (fast or slow down, long and short, contours or bearing, route choice and attack points, etc.) and suspect some found the variation too challenging. I also suspect a lot of people did not use attack points enough, especially just prior to dropping off the plateau lip. Only you can analyse what you did well or not so well (don't just blame the map).

Another approach I took was to plan the TD4 and 5 courses to have parallel legs (akin to gaffling), and I suspect a significant number of competitors may have been led astray by a fellow competitor on a similar course / leg. You should always have a plan plus attack point and then execute it (that also means you should do your own thing and ignore those around you).

There were a few map corrections that I did not spot, in particular the extra green around controls 143 and 165 and the pond in the marsh 100m north of control 163. If any of these confused you, I apologise. However, I would gently remind everyone that the vegetation was mapped as indistinct, so should not be a primary means of navigation or attack.

I am more concerned that Winsplits shows "pinks" almost everywhere, which cannot be explained by the course lengths, and I do not think the map is that bad. I would therefore welcome (polite) feedback.

Ken.