

The Legend

Number 202



O-Ringen Special Edition!!!

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O-Ringen

Special

Edition!!!

The O-Ringen is an orienteering competition that takes place annually in Sweden. Orienteers from all over the world come to the competition and a trip to the five days of the O-Ringen is their Mecca. This race attracts significant media coverage in Sweden and winning the O-Ringen is often considered second only to the World Championships in prestige. (*Wikipedia*)

This year seven gallant members of NGOC, accompanied by fearless Ted McDonald of BOK, went to the O-Ringen to try their luck.

The cover photo shows (L to R, starting at the back): *Tom Mills, Sheila Miklausic, Pat MacLeod, Isaac Gorman, Ian Phillips, Ginny Hudson and Kim Liggett.*

Wikipedia entry for the O-Ringen: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/O-Ringen>

The usual October edition of Legend will be available soon after the CompassSport Cup that is to be held on 16 October

Overview

The Swedish 5-day O-Ringen is a fantastic event attracting around 20,000 competitors. Whilst this might seem like a day out on a Benidorm beach, once you enter the forest there are no more people visible than you might find at a level C event in the UK. On the longer courses e.g. M/W 50 and under, other visible runners are rare at the extreme ends of the course. For us oldies the courses were relatively short. Having said that they were extremely challenging technically, added to the fact that we were still recovering from our trip out (see below). Uppsala terrain is very different to other area's of Sweden. Whilst there are some large features, in the main the areas are flat and the features vague. My example might be that a small reentrant would just about grace a domestic rock garden, in this case a rock garden covering a hundred square miles. Added to this, marshes which I would normally rely on for navigation were dry due to the lack of rain and far less distinctive. The reality of it is that, had time allowed, a week with the Orienteering school would have been a real help as it took most of the week to get accustomed to the terrain. This however does not detract from the fact that it was a great experience, lovely weather, lovely people, the usual amazing organisation, inventive probably never to be seen again IKEA store 'urban' and days of a real buzz. Apart from the event, a great group of friends, seven from NGOC and one from BOK, made a jaw-dropping visit to see the Vasa in Stockholm.

Day Minus 1

What follows is a doctored summary of the 36 hours preceding arrival in Uppsalla. This is an email sent to the travel agent in an endeavour to get some compensation for the outbound journey and subsequent events. I should add that about three weeks after our return we did receive some compensation which covered all costs, which were substantial, but not the loss of training and a day's stay. The agent, however, worked very hard

to recover this money from the tour operator and I would have no hesitation in recommending them in the future.

Email to the agent

1. Using the analogy that if, for example, I bought a product from John Lewis, a fashion item maybe and it was defective I would not seek reimbursement from the factory in Bangladesh. I would rightly get the money back from the retailer. This is and should be the same with our group trip.

2. We were not going on a beach holiday where the loss of a day had no knock-on effect. We were entered into a competition which started with the warm-up sessions on Saturday and Sunday. This had a significant effect and the consequences due to this and lack of sleep meant that the previous months of preparation were completely nullified.

Friday 22 July. Group organised into two groups of four at two locations.

Friday 22. SAS cancelled the flight. We received no notification of the cancellation.

Saturday 23 circa 3 a.m. Called Agent and got a recorded message (rm for future reference). Called emergency number (em for further reference): no reply, called tour operator main number got rm, called tour operator em 15 minutes later, no reply, left message, called tour operator em again later, finally someone answered.

Saturday 23 circa 4/4.30 (lost track). Tour operator refers my call to their resolution team which does not open until 9 a.m. and advises us not to travel to the airport.

Saturday 23. Groups split up and go home.

Saturday 23. Contact agent by phone. Promised to call back this did not happen. Drove to agent's office. Agent tried to contact tour operator but put on hold for, I believe, over two hours. Result: seven of the group of eight can travel the next morning but one of the group could not travel until the day of the group's return. How ludicrous is that!

Saturday 23. Flights, we discovered, were leaving for Stockholm but not SAS. No attempt was made to procure one of these so I booked a flight on BA for an inflated price for the one member left out.

Saturday 23 evening. Called agent's emergency number sent to me by the agent to see if we might be covered for hotel. Got rm. Called tour operator em for same reason, no reply again. Group of four decide to go to airport hotel to stay close to any changes that might take place given the lack of em number response.

Single member of group arrives in Sweden and makes his way to hotel at his expense

Sunday 24. Group of seven arrive in Sweden and proceed to Avis car rental. Receptionist can only find one car on the booking and only a small deposit having been paid. Rang tour operator em, no reply, gave up. Rang agent em, amazed to find that I got a response. Advised to pay the outstanding on the one car and later to pay for the second car which had no deposit paid. This I did.

After this time-consuming 36 hours we finally arrived at the hotel. Exhausted!

Moral of the story: keep a detailed record of events, keep all receipts and travel with a reputable agent, which this one was, but not a crap tour operator.

Tom Mills



*The gang. L back to front: Sheila, Ted, Isaac
Right: Kim, Ginny, Ian, Pat, Tom*



Ian running in

Sweden by . . .



Well! What an incredible experience it was. Firstly there were so *many* people - in fact 22,000 of them who were ably guided, helped, watered and bandaged by a yellow army of volunteers:



The scale of it all was bemusing. Hundreds walking or jogging to the start, the line snaking into the distance:



All my courses were in clear, clean forest where runners could race through the trees unhindered by brambles or nettles or even bracken:



There were several starts depending on your bib. Mine was Suzuki and was always the furthest from assembly; Day 2 was 3.5 km before I even started the course.

Then there were the showers. A field surrounded by a tarpaulin wall for modesty purposes and with a line of showers on some decking. What bliss! showering in the sunshine: so Scandinavian, so naturist. So sorry, no photo.

One of the main challenges in this clean forest was the boulders... when was a boulder *not* a boulder? Moss covered rocks often littered the forest floor but were unmapped, even quite big ones. I finally grasped the fact that a boulder was a *BIG* rock and then, and only then, was it on the map:



Boulder . . .



not a boulder

There was even a **fake** boulder! Yes, my Control 7 on Day 4 was an incredibly realistic 6ft creation of grey plastic and duct tape which sported a huge label in English: "THIS IS A BOULDER". I was so amused by this surreal boulder and pondering the incongruity of plastic boulders in a fabulous forest that I failed to notice the herd of rippling runners who, within seconds, had bowled me off the path, oblivious to this old woman happily trotting along!



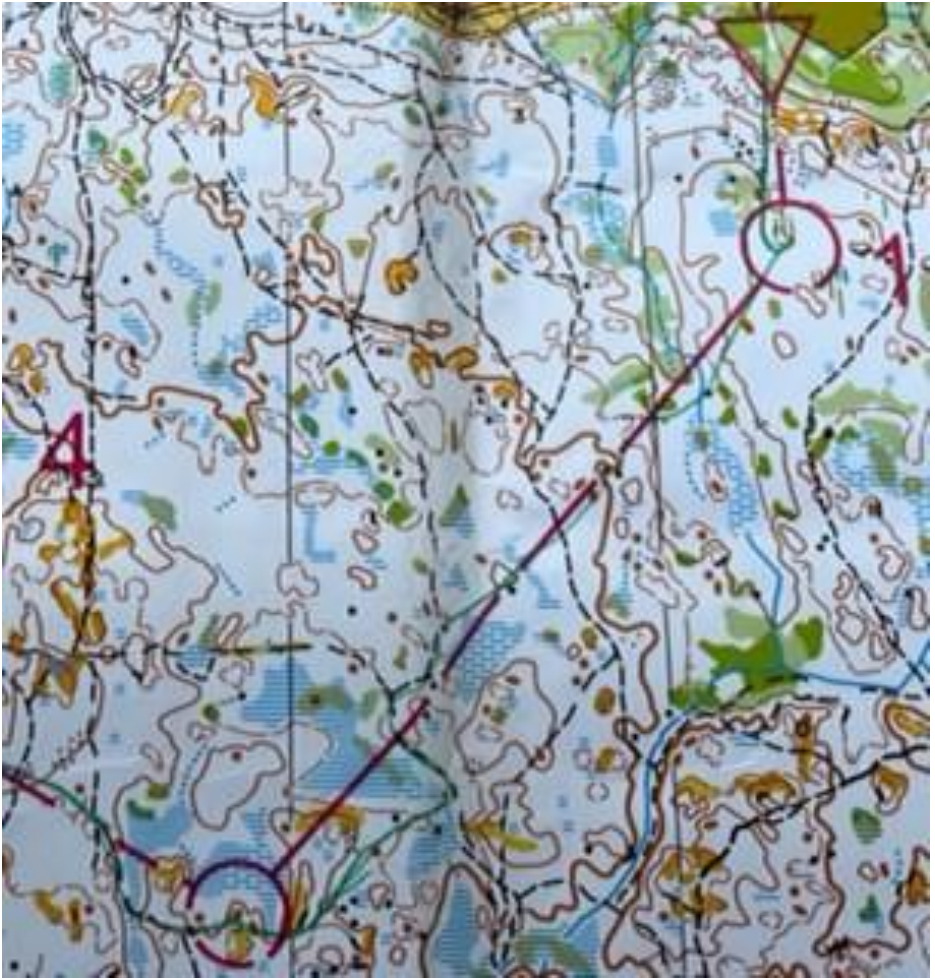
It was my penultimate control but was also very nearly my undoing and I think it was also my only moan. The planner/controller had not planned to avoid the inevitable bottleneck. Consequently, seriously focussed orienteers racing to the finish were channelled along the same route as the slow and old to the same (possibly only) crossing point. Ah well, only one moan is pretty amazing and makes me a proper orienteer!!!!

Apart from that minor incident I had four days of fabulous orienteering and was able solve the boulder conundrum quite

early on and thereafter I used boulders for navigation and attack points along with occasional crags and cliffs.



You can see this on the route choice for Controls 1-2 where there was the usual long leg and by now my boulder navigation was going really well (green line on the map).



I was nevertheless always surprised and thrilled when I arrived on the path, exactly by the boulder aimed for. You can see it on the map. I turned left past another boulder and hit a little path junction by another boulder. They were all in the right places!!!! Turned left again to find another boulder to turn off the path by and to my astonishment, there it was, exactly where it was supposed to be! I must have looked confident as one after another orienteers stopped to check their position with me. Did it delay me? Yes! Did it boost my confidence? Yes! Did I mind? No!

I loved the O-Ringen. I not only completed all my courses but I also learned to run...pride precluded walking down the finish lane; after all I was sporting a *speedy Suzuki* bib!

So, orienteering in Sweden was for me, an affirming, amazing and beautiful experience. I would thoroughly recommend everyone to try and go at least once in their orienteering career. Tom Mills made it possible for all of us so **thank you Tom** for organising the trip and coping magnificently with all those early challenges.

Thank you all for the good company and the memories!

NGOC is a really great Club to belong to; really proud to wear the Club colours.

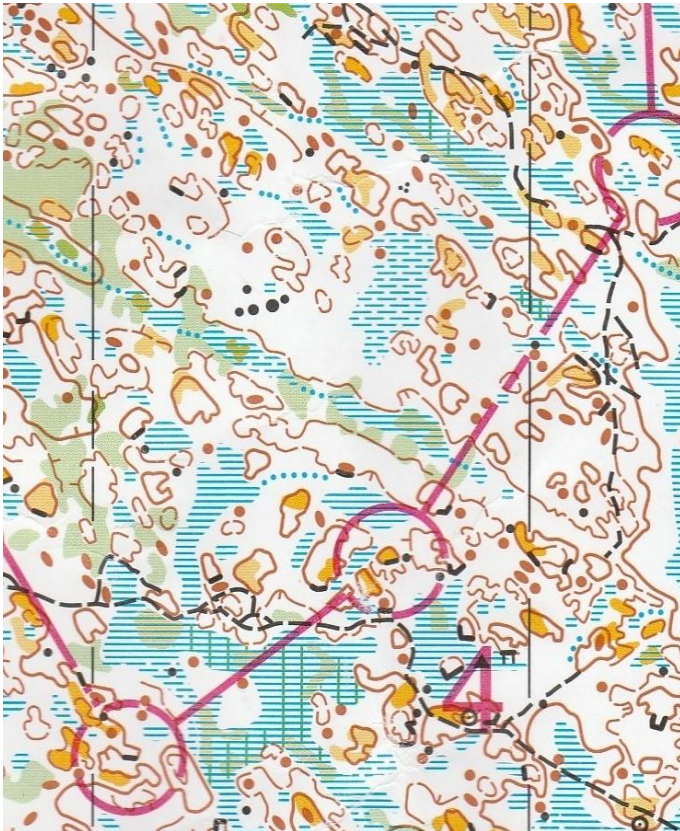
Sheila Miklausic



How to orienteer on Lunsen, and how not to

Lunsen is reckoned to be one of the best orienteering terrains in Sweden, and it was the one which greeted us on Day 1 of 2022 O-Ringen (and indeed on every other day).

It consists of very largely flat, forested terrain, uniformly covered in boulders, small knolls, small clearings and extensive marshes. The maps for each day were pretty much identical, 7,500 scale, at least for us oldies, and 2.5m contours. A typical section of the Day 5 map – one that I'd prefer to forget – looks like this:

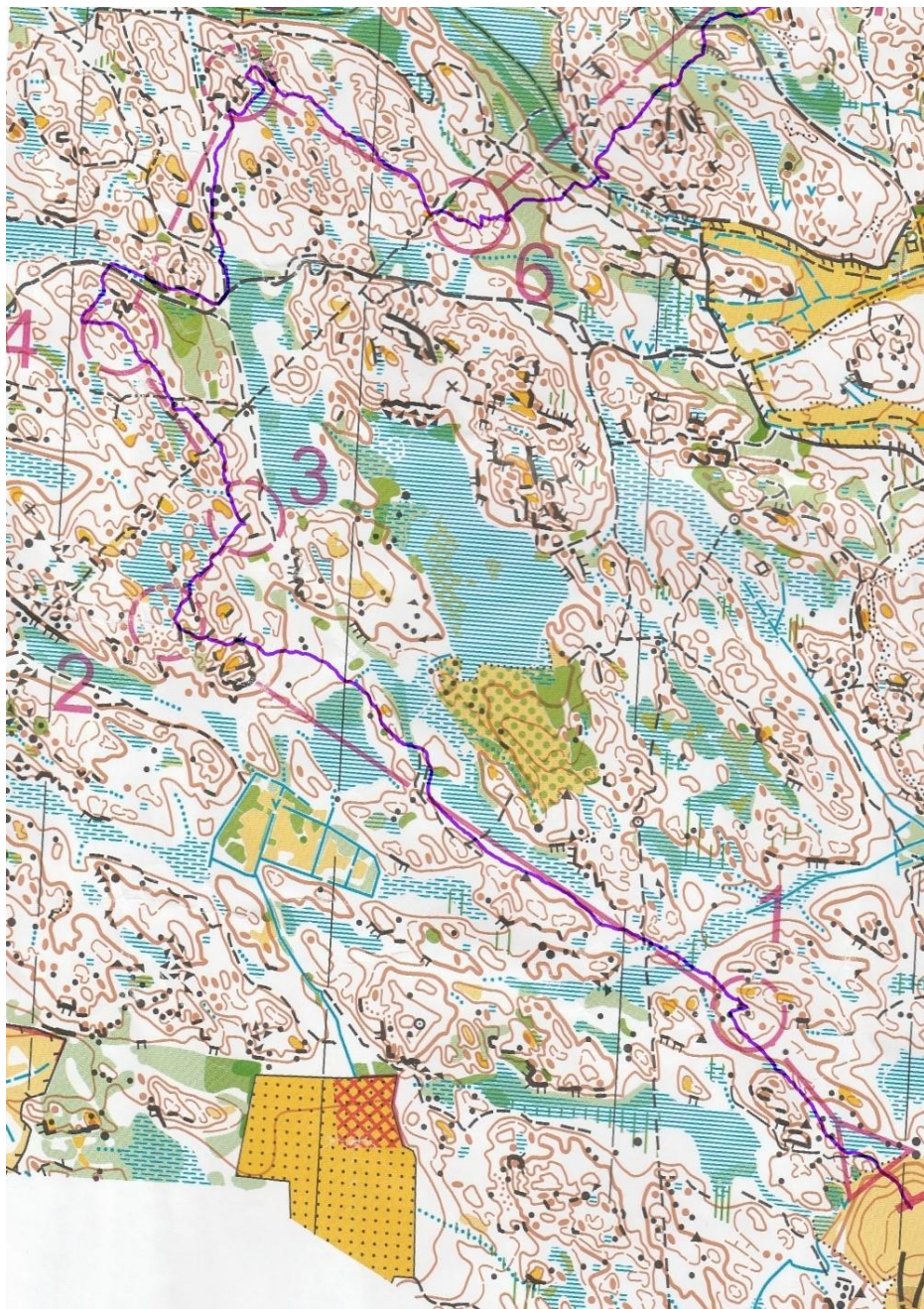


Day 5

Lots of small form lines, which at 2.5m contour intervals are no more than minor bumps in the landscape, and lots of marsh, which following the dry summer, was largely indistinguishable from non-marsh. Add to that sometimes three screens on top of each other – marsh, open ground, vegetation – and it's easy to see why Lunsen is such a challenge. On the other hand, and something I failed to take into account, the going was generally very easy, compared to our bracken- and bramble-ridden forests.

There was ample advice to be had - look for the major features, follow the line, plenty of excellent YouTube sessions on orienteering in Lunsen – but it was nevertheless quite a daunting prospect when picking up your map in the excellent start system and wondering how you were going to find your way through this seemingly featureless (if you compare it to the path, contour and prominent point feature-rich Forest of Dean) terrain.

To crown it all, on Day 1 Ted McDonald had the first H75 start, at 08:30, with me 4 minutes behind. So no trails or runners to follow. My plan was simple: walk most of the time, and follow the line, trying to pick off the more prominent features as I went. It worked! Head right of the early and larger knoll, and look for the collection of boulders. It was kind of the planner to give us a fairly easy and short first leg. Then 1 – 2, head over the path and along the flat bit to the first bump, and go slightly left to the very prominent crags, with the flag on a miniscule and in reality indistinguishable marsh below another crag on the far side. Crags were becoming the best features by which to navigate. And so on, until the penultimate control, where I faffed around in the circle amongst boulders and knolls until I found the right one. Result, 18th out of 50+ runners, and only 37 minutes behind the leader.

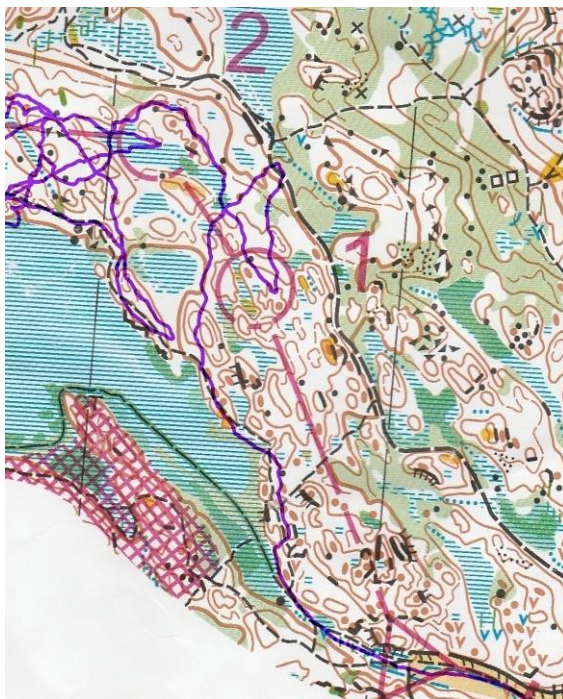


Day 1

Day 2 was on the same area, a bit further north, and now I was supremely confident that I could do this. So I decided to try and speed up a bit, and try and take advantage of quicker routes – which meant the few paths on the map. Huge mistake. Decided to take the path to the left, along the edge of the so-called marsh, to the narrow joining marsh just after the path bend, then turn in past the big crag to the control, another miniscule marsh. However, I over-ran the attack point – simply couldn't work out what was marsh and what wasn't – so turned in late, and overshot the control, to be saved by the path beyond, from which I could relocate and get back to control 1.

Control 2 should have been straightforward, but I had already screwed up, so needed to make up time. Took a bearing and headed off towards 2, maybe pace counting, but probably not – I can't remember – but normally it's the first discipline discarded when in a hurry! Clearly, I got pretty close, skirting around the edge of the circle, but not finding the 1.25m bump I was looking for. Now, instead of thinking “missed it, relocate to the path again” I wander off all over the place getting increasingly lost, and quite unable to relate what I am seeing to the map – as this extract perhaps shows. What it doesn't show, and I'm embarrassed to admit, that 1-2 took 59 minutes, and I ended up relocating from a point some 400m or so beyond my control 4; having been put right by a kind lady who punched the control I happened to be standing by at the time, I navigated successfully and directly 4-3-2-3-4-5 ... and then completely screwed up 6, again being unable to relocate effectively in such uniform terrain.

Greatly chagrined by Day 2, on Day 3 I slowed down again and got round with only one small deviation. Then the pattern repeated – disaster on Day 4, very average final day.



Day 2

So, around here in the UK you can just about afford to be over-confident, and to forget the absolute basics of orienteering – compass, pace, relocate – but if you orienteer in Lunsen, or anywhere with similar uniform and highly detailed terrain, but with few really distinct features, you'll soon find yourself lost in every sense of the word!

Pat MacLeod



How did I do that?

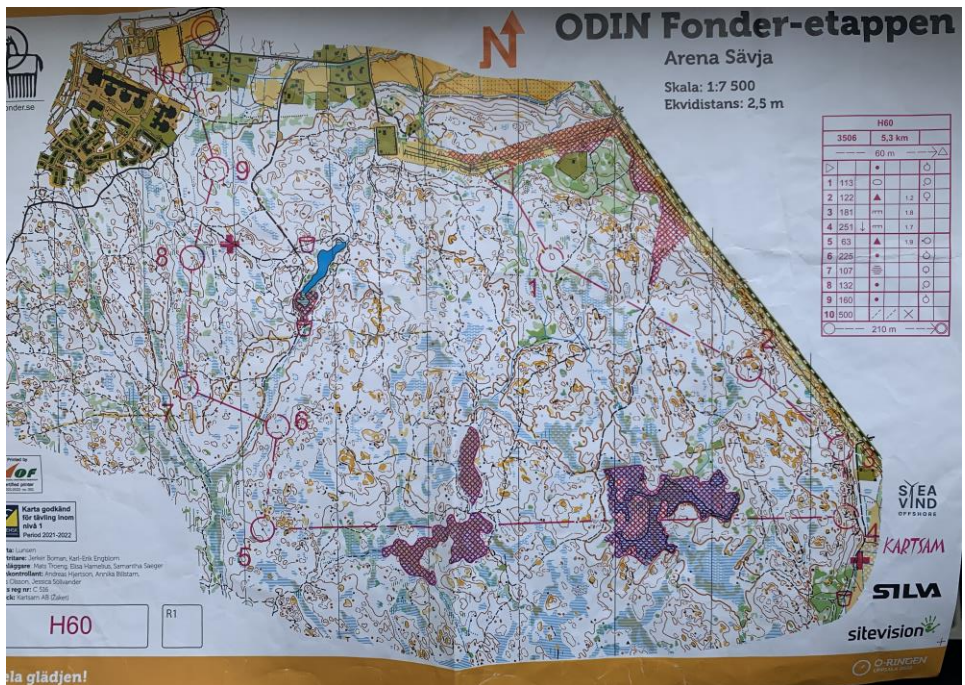


Where did we put our kit?

An enjoyable Day 3

Uppsala IKEA car park, about 40 minutes' drive from our hotel in Taby, Stockholm, was the place to catch the bus to Day 3's competition area, Odin Fonder-etappen Arena Savja. Savja is a suburb of Uppsala, slightly south of the town.

This arena was to be used for one day only and an amazing amount of work had been completed to cater for the vast numbers of competitors taking part.



Day 3

Day 3's event was my most enjoyable, probably because I was becoming more familiar with the Swedish mapping, but also it was the day of fewest mistakes for me. I ran M60, 5.3km and the map was 1:7,500 with a few more paths than previous days, making relocation slightly easier when needed!



Ian running in

Day 3 starts were also at a more reasonable time, mid-field. There were plenty of other competitors around in the woods. I was third off on Day 1 and almost last off on Day 5.

Fantastic event, over all five days. Something to be recommended to all serious orienteers and hopefully an event that I can do again in the future. Thanks must go to our Team Captain, Tom Mills, who organised the whole event on our behalf. A fabulous and complex job that seemed fraught with transport problems due to the economic climate, but we got there and all thoroughly enjoyed the event.

Ian Phillips



Free shooting at the event



Ginny's (now aka Annie Oakley) grouping (left) compared to Pat's (right).

A successful Day 5

Although there were many contours on the competition maps, the interval is only 2.5m and my Garmin traces show that there was virtually no climb on any day. The landscape around Uppsala is solid rock that has been smoothed by glacial action leaving many small outcrops dispersed in marshy forest.

There are multiple possibilities for parallel errors and on my first three days I lost touch with the map 3-4 times costing an average of 21 minutes. However, on Day 4 I made only one minor mistake costing 2.2 minutes and this run pulled me up the chasing start list just ahead of Tom and Pat. Tom caught me shortly before 2 and kindly shouted 'over here', but I was sure the control should be further ahead and kept going. Tom passed me and punched 4 just ahead of me. Between 5 and 6 we crossed a prominent path and I followed it for a short distance but the track kept disappearing as it passed over exposed rock. However, I turned off near a junction and followed a bearing through vague and poor visibility forest to find 6 safely. Later I learned that Tom had left the path a bit later and lost touch on his way to 6. There were no easy legs but I managed to make no errors and was delighted to finish 14 of 54 in M75L.

Interestingly, 86 M75s ran the short course each day, and so I can view this result as 14 of 130, which seems OK to this M79.

Ted McDonald



An athlete (Ted) prepares for his run with a “Big Whopper”

Maps, asking for help and the Vasa

As for me, I was so glad to take this opportunity to experience the infamous O-Ringen and in particular the legendary Lunsen forest. Even the presenters of the marvellous O-Ringen YouTube channel were clearly in awe of Lunsen and they gave us many unnerving lessons on how to navigate its particular features in the preceding months.

Even so, I was completely baffled and bewildered on Day 1 and have to admit to a total failure to understand the representation of terrain on the map. I had been warned many times, you lose contact with the map at your peril, it being impossible to relocate, but it all looks the same: these wonderful, lichen-covered, lozenge-shaped glacial slabs, all lying parallel with no discernible differences. I couldn't resist scrambling onto them all, for the view – not helpful!

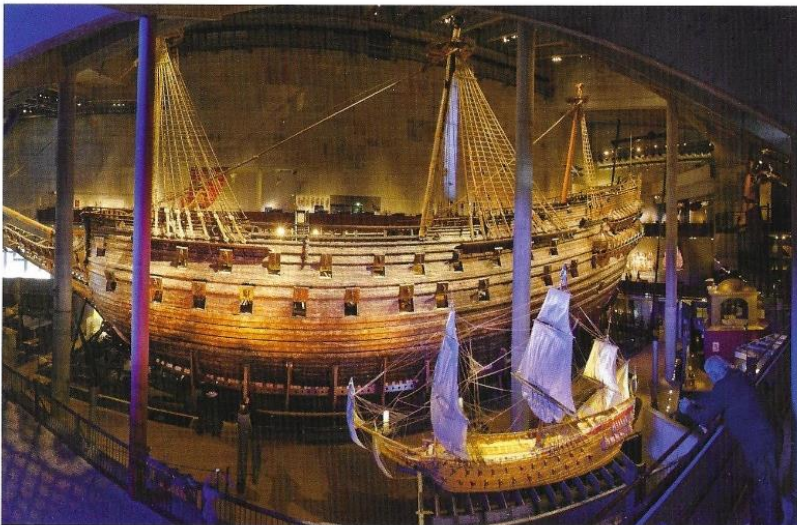


Really??!

I had two dilemmas: firstly, when is a bare slab, totally open to the sun mapped as open ground, and when is it just a contour line in white forest? I never got that! Secondly, how soon can one reasonably ask that event-photographer where you are? I should've swallowed my pride much sooner!

Result: 58/60!! But each day was better and I thoroughly enjoyed the conspiratorial mini-conferences at various control sites with anyone that lingered too long. Basically, find any control and lurk in wait; the answer will arrive any minute, but prepare to be surprised by how far out you are. Such fun!

On the rest day, tempted as we were by the lunatic event on two floors of IKEA, darting between spinning customers and searching behind sofas and in laundry baskets, we decided instead to go into Stockholm, which proved a delight. The biggest surprise for me was the Vasa museum, displaying the remarkably intact body of the salvaged warship, Vasa, which sank on its maiden voyage in 1628 in Stockholm harbour, where it lay for 333 years, all but lost. In very dim light, for preservation, you enter the museum at the foot of its bow, frankly resembling a massive blue whale, and catch your breath at its magnificence. There it is, 90% intact with its original timbers and intricate details of a royal trophy ship for all to admire.



At 69m long with model in front, a marvel

We spent several hours wandering around the various exhibitions of surviving artefacts, models of its construction, the extraordinary salvage operation and ongoing preservation. But here's the thing, of course, why did it sink? Apologies for the spoiler, but basically, unchallenged design faults – too narrow at the bottom? Not enough ballast? A proud and stubborn King who demanded an extra deck of cannons? It was bound to topple over, but crucially, no one had the courage to speak up or be open-minded enough to listen. What a story!

It was a thrilling week - I left O-Ringen and the Vasa, wanting more for sure.

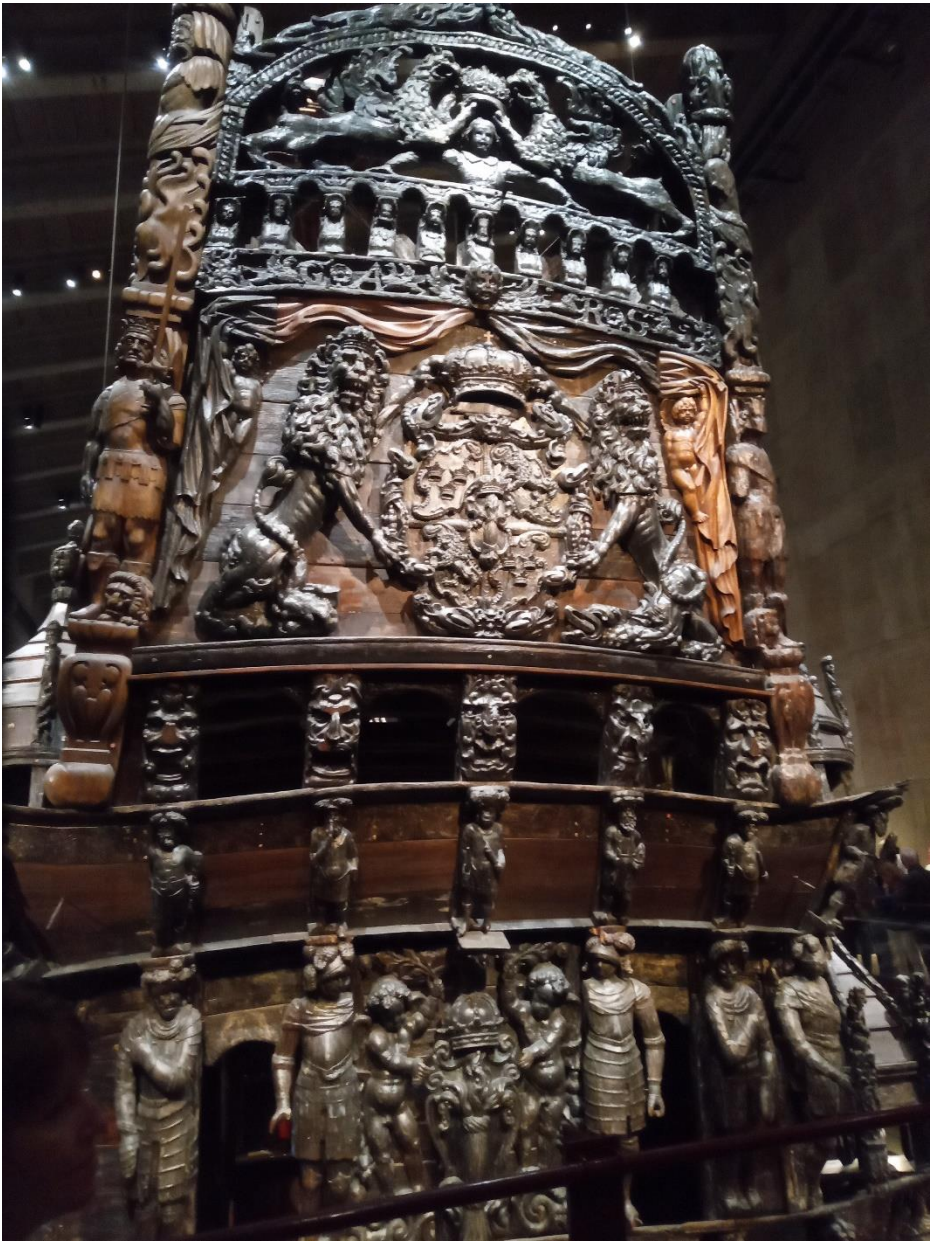
Ginny Hudson



Ginny running in



Port side of the Vasa



The stern



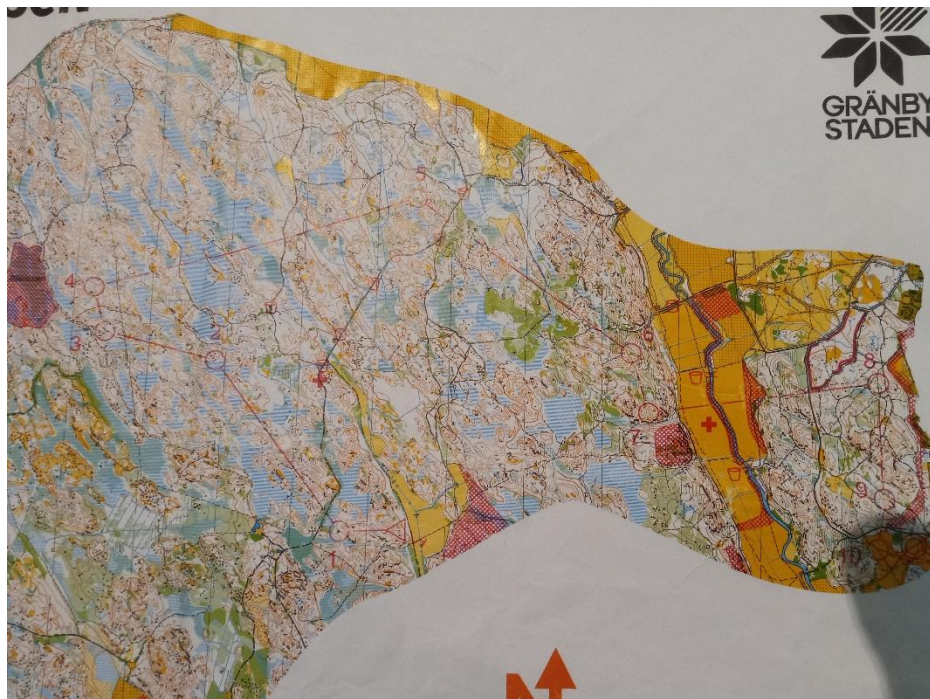
Tom's Day 3 M75 map at 1:7,500



Isaac's M17-20 Day 5 map at 1:15,000



Tom's Day 5 map at 1:7,500



Isaac's Day 1 map at 1:10,000



View approaching assembly