

Planners's Comments

To say the least, planning this event has been quite a trial for me. Only just over a month ago, our chairman, Gary contacted me to ask whether I would step in at the last minute and plan the galoppen. Pete Ward had already planned the courses for Danby Lodge, but the possibility of nesting goshawks put paid to that idea. It was thought that Cranham would be a suitable late replacement, and as I had mapped the area, he thought it would be relatively straight forward for me to do the planning. I should have followed my first instincts and declined Gary's offer, but alas, I'm not good at saying no!

Initially, I decided to use Sheepscombe, as I believed that land permissions would be easy there, so I planned a provisional set of courses and carried out a few map updates there. Unfortunately, we were eventually turned down, as the National Trust felt their infrastructure would not be able to cope with our numbers. So, I proceeded to plan a second set of courses using the whole of Cranham woods and part of Cooper's Hill. After lengthy deliberation, Natural England decided not to allow the event in their woods, a National Nature Reserve, due to various springtime sensitivities in the animal and plant worlds. So I modified my courses to use Cranham Common instead. After a few more days and a meeting with a NE wildlife ranger, permission to use the common was also withdrawn due to adders and their springtime activities. This left us with the quite small area that we eventually used, and for which permission had already been granted. The courses were modified once again, to fit into the smaller area. In particular, getting the Brown course to fit sent my head into an almighty spin, perhaps in a similar way to the participants on that course who had to criss-cross the area. By this time, the day of the event was not too far away, so Pete Ward, whose role had now changed to controller and I had to work hard and fast to get everything in place. Pete's experience and knowledge came in very handy, given the tight schedule, for which I am very grateful.

Fortunately, we had fine dry weather on the day, although that does not prevent Cranham from being wet and muddy under-foot – it never dries out properly. I apologise for taking courses through the brashings, but it was difficult to avoid this in such a small area. Looking at the finishers, there seemed to be rather a lot that were mud and blood splattered, but most I spoke to seemed happy in spite of this. I hope most of you enjoyed the courses, despite the constraints.

Moral of the story.... next time Gary comes begging, run away fast!

Greg Best