

Norbury Park KNC Planner's Report part 1 (written before the event)

Like any event, a score event has to cater for a wide range of abilities, both physical and technical. I started by thinking about those for whom just navigating around paths at night is a challenge. I looked for a path route of around 3 to 3.5km with controls only just off it – 5, 7, 8, 10, 6, 4, 3, 1.

I wanted to tempt as many as possible into the patch of flat runnable woodland which I think is the nicest part of Norbury Park for orienteering. So I added a cluster of controls there – 12, 14, 15, 17, 16.

Then it was just a question of adding a few more controls to tax the fastest. One of the challenges of a score event is to decide whether you can get all the controls and which to drop if not. I think it's a shame if the fastest can decide early that they will reach all the controls, and it's just a question of sequence. My perfect course is one which tempts the best to collect all the controls, but they come back half a minute late.

Based on the SE Nights winning speed, I guessed that around 8km was the length to achieve this. I added a line of controls below the scarp slope – 9, 13, 18 & 19 – and a couple on the other side of the map – 2 & 11. 19 looked the furthest out and the most obvious one to miss, so I added 20 close to it to tempt people into that corner.

I wanted the finish within sight of my car, but that meant it was right in a corner of the map. Starting from the same place would have meant the same run in and out, hence the walk to start from a different location. I took the opportunity of setting a little trap – the most obvious control to visit first was number 1, but this is almost inevitably the last control passed on the way to the finish (unless you do a cross-over) so best left for later.

For the record, I think the optimum all-controls route is 5, 9, 13, 20, 19, 18, 17, 15, 16, 14, 12, 10, 11, 2, 6, 8, 7, 4, 3 & 1 (although there is scope for variation, especially where to take 7 & 8). That comes to 8.0km in a straight line and 260m climb. Heading straight for the far end of the map picking up only a few controls on the way would require a lot of confidence, and I shall be surprised if anybody does this.

Planner's report part 2 (after the event)

Thank you all for coming, and a special thank-you to the “volunteer” control collectors. All controls safely returned, including the SI unit which fell off. I went back and found it after the pub. Just as well I didn't wait until morning, as it was a reflection I spotted – this wouldn't have happened in daylight. Perhaps next time we lose a SI box at a daytime event, we should wait until nightfall before searching for it?

18 controls was the top score. Particular congratulations to young Adam Conway on coming 2nd, just a couple minutes from a win.

Looking at the controls people visited, I find some things to surprise me. I had expected control number 1 to be the most popular; tempting to visit straight from the start, and alongside the most likely route to the finish. However only 38 (out of 45) people went there. The most popular controls were 4, 5, 12 & 14, tied on 41 visits each. I expected 20 to be the least popular, and it was, but worth putting out as 8 people went there, including all the top 4. The last sentence of my “pre-report” proved to be unfounded!

For some, it was your first “Kent” Night Cup event. Obviously not many will choose to travel to deepest Kent on a Thursday evening, but you may like to keep an eye out for the westernmost ones.

And then there's always the Mole Valley street events, one Tuesday per month.