

13th April 2024, British Champs Mulgrave Woods – Philip Gristwood

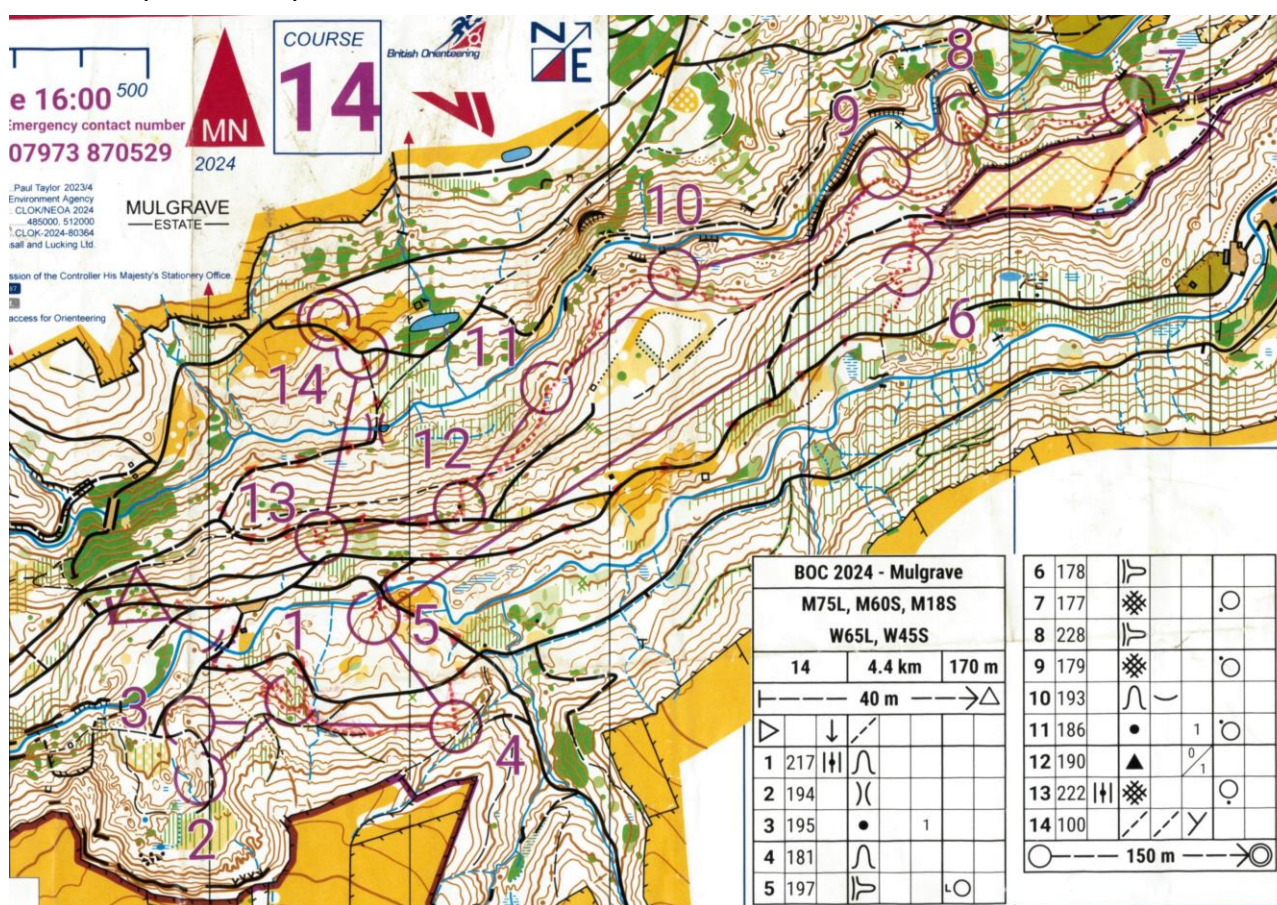
Very early start due to granddaughter minding duties, so one of first cars to event. Lots of trackmat and parked close to entrance but wheels already spinning so ominous.

Long walk to assembly area across rough fields, but downhill so could have been worse.



Another 500m partly uphill to the start, but arrived before first runners setting off. Interesting start, a 50m long tunnel between the call up line and the actual start line, so you couldn't see which way anyone was going.

All nice tracks until near to control 1, then headed into the terrain to try and find the correct re-entrant. 3 re-entrants on the map but lots more on the ground. Made a real pigs ear of trying to find the right one losing about 10 minutes. Finding control 2 not difficult but going down the steep slope to get to it was. 3 was a nice short path run and control easily visible, but unfortunately on top of a 10 m high steep sided spur! Next was a longish slog trying to contour on a rough gently sloping hillside, and control rather sneakily hidden at the end (fortunately saw other people finding it). Having had a lot of rough went the slightly longer track route to 5 and fortunately it was easy to find.



Control 6 was a long leg, approaching 1km, but with a nice track going nearly all the way. I made the mistake of attacking from the south which meant going through a lot of brambles, not a good idea. Could have gone slightly further up a path and maybe avoided the brambles? Then a stagger up a very steep slope to the top of the hill. At least most of the way to the next control was flat,

but unfortunately flat with short grass was coupled with lots of puddles so guaranteed to get wet feet. Also unfortunately, the last 30 m to the control was about 15 or 30 m vertically down, rather too steep for comfort. The next 4 controls were all on the same steep slope and in theory one could contour between them. With muddy bits, fallen trees and bits of undergrowth this was a joke. Leg times were definitely on the long side! A W65 on the same course was going in parallel with me and I managed to save her from sliding down the slope on one occasion. Control 12 marked the end of trying to contour, but involved going up an exceptionally steep slope. Surprisingly the uphill suddenly turned to exceptionally steep downhill, basically I had just gone over a very tall ridge which was not very obvious on the map. Luckily there was a bush on the ridge which confirmed my location and meant I hit control 12 below spot on. Leg 13 looked good, a big path almost to the control. Reality was less good. The path was uphill, and when I got to the end of the vegetation where I needed to turn left to pop into the control I could see people scrambling up a cliff-like slope towards me. It was scary going down but fortunately easy to find the control. Unfortunately (a word I have used before!) it was back up the hill. Being near exhausted when I hit the path I decided to take the longer but less steep path around rather than climbing further and going over the top. It was a mixed blessing, less climb and easy navigation, and the added interest of going through another tunnel. The long downhill track towards the bridge just before the last control was a mudbath – it might have been better to run in the woods. From the bridge the next 130m or so was another steep uphill stagger, and then the run in to the finish was more of the same.

Initial result, 3rd out of 3. Hardly surprising as I was one of the first starters. I don't recall ever before having such a physical course or being so exhausted at the end. Unsurprisingly I ended up near the bottom, but not last. 2 hours 3 minutes for a 4.4 km course with 170 m climb. I actually went 6 km and my only real problem had been finding the first control.

Horrendous climb back up to the car park pushing buggy until a helpful young lady took over. As expected I needed to have a push to get from grass to trackmat, luckily only 2 or 3 metres.

A long day. I had also been on Jury duty for the World Ranking Event as I am an IOF Event Adviser, but fortunately there were no issues to be considered. The highlights of the day were Hugh Scarbrough winning the M10A class and Graham Gristwood (Honorary Life Mole) winning M40L by over 10 minutes.

Results can be found [here](#).



Aforementioned granddaughter – Maya Gristwood – practising for when it's her turn to stand on the top step! [Ed.] *Photo credit Philip Gristwood*

Hugh and Graham receive their trophies from Steve Cram (BOF President). *Photo credits Mark Cheesman*



Not that Hugh would know much about Steve Cram's famous past but Graham certainly would. Orienteering was introduced to the UK in the 1950s and was heavily supported by renowned Olympians including John Disley and Chris Brasher – great to see Steve following in their footsteps ☺ [Ed.]