

## Planner's thoughts – pre-event

I've run footO events at Hogmoor several times, originally in its army training area days, when all the paths and tracks were either loose sand or stoney and rutted – quite impossible for wheelchairs. A couple of years ago, during another foot-O event, I was surprised to find the hard-surface path, perfect for wheelchairs and with a good view of interesting contour features. With the British footO championships nearby, it seemed a suitable venue for the TrailO champs. Fortunately it had a pretty good footO map – thanks MapWorks – and a LIDAR plot, so I hoped producing an adequate TrailO map was just about within my capabilities.

A few thoughts on the controls and how I expect people to solve them.

Time Control 1: fairly easy, but “easy” time controls are hard because you feel the need to rush them.

Time Control 2: I think the first problem here is quite hard, and likely to produce mistakes if people try to match their speed at the first station. I expect a few Charlie's instead of Bravo's.

Course control 1: the description is between walls, and if you look closely at the map, you should realise that there are only two walls (neither of them straight). If you know the rules of TrailO well, you will know that the correct kite would be in the middle of the shortest distance between these walls, which would correspond with Echo. Even without appreciating this subtlety, Echo is also the centre of the circle. However I tried to encourage a wrong answer by putting three kites in a line through the more visible, but longer, gap between the walls.

2 & 3: 2 is straightforward. TrailO course nearly always have to include a number of controls which are really “fillers”, but the competitor doesn't know which controls they are, so does have to think about them all. No trick here, the obvious kite was correct.

3 is a reasonably simple Zero, but it's not quite obvious as it's very hard to see the knoll with the circle on it. Sufficient however to realise that the two kites which can be seen are on a different mapped hill.

4: supposed to be in a ditch, but actually in a mapped marsh (more like a pond on the day). However the ditch is difficult to see, and the marsh/pond does have a line of water running parallel to the ditch; not really expecting to fool anybody.

5 & 6: 5's control description is hill, the circle is in the middle of the mapped hill, and the hill is obvious – or is it? The part of the hill closest to the path is free of undergrowth and very obvious, but there is then a marginally lower bramble-covered continuation. If you don't read the map carefully to see that the mapped hill includes the bramble section, you would be tempted to choose the kite in the middle of the bramble-free half of the hill.

6: quite a hard control, two kites both on spurs. Can – I hope – be solved by contour reading; another option is distance and angle judgement from the end of bramble-covered part of the hill. The other issue with 6 is that if you correctly choose the left-hand of the back two kites, there is a risk of answer Alpha, but because it's an A-E shared with 5, the correct answer is Bravo.

7: three kites on what looks like a spur, intended to trick you into thinking about which kite is the correct height. However, they are all on the wrong slope, behind the marsh instead of in front of it.

8: probably the hardest control. First thing to realise is that the kites are only 6-7m apart, so (provided they are in roughly the right area), it can't be a Zero as the correct location would inevitably be within 4m of one of them. Second thing is to notice that the contour/form line

combination suggests a steep slope, with a relatively wide spur behind it. Bravo and Delta are right on top of the steep slope, whereas the other three kites are further back, corresponding better with the circle position. Then you can use pacing and/or bearings to choose between Alpha, Charlie & Echo. Looking very carefully at the map, you may notice a little kink in the form line by the track you are standing on, which can only be the drainage channel nearly in line with the Alpha kite – small features like this are only likely to appear on the map if they've been especially added for a reason! But I hope you get the same answer if you pace down from, or take bearing from the start of, the path to the west.

9: more of a time-waster than a difficult control. The roof of the ruin is all that is visible, and given that the ruin is mapped at around 5m square, both kites are too close to it for a Zero. But it might take a little while and viewing from several angles to convince yourself of the answer.

10 & 11: two adjacent spurs with circles on the map; two adjacent spurs with kites in the forest. But there are three spurs, and only one of the spurs has both a circle and a kite.

12 & 13: 12 is possibly confusing because the kite is on a knoll that hasn't made it onto the map, but it should be clear that the correct hill is much broader feature – and higher.

13: not too difficult, but with higher ground visible behind the kite, people may take a while to convince themselves that the kite really is between the mapped hills.

The other quirk of these control is that the kite for 16 may be seen while you are solving them; but the 16 kite is not visible from the decision point so A-B is correct for 12 & 13.

14 & 15: 14 is a feeble attempt to get you thinking about which of the three kites is the correct height up the re-entrant, when it's fairly obvious that they're all in the wrong re-entrant.

15 is slightly harder, it's supposed to be "saddle", that is the highest point of the pass between two hills. In fact it's about 8m before the saddle, but the vegetation makes it harder to notice that the ground is still rising behind it.

16, 17 & 18: 16 requires you to work out which lump is which. Do remember to answer Charlie rather than Alpha (since it's an A-C with 17 & 18).

17 & 18: a harder repeat of the 10/11 trick, with a line of spurs, circles on two of them, kites on two of them, but offset so that only one is correct and the other Zero.

19: filler control, a very obvious Zero.

20: hard to solve from the decision point. But you can walk down the track towards the finish and becomes easy. A trap for anyone rushing under time pressure.

### **Planner's thoughts – post event**

Didn't we have a lovely day! Although in some ways it was a shame, as some controls were easier at some angles of the sun than others. The first finisher told me that the further of the 17/18 kites was almost invisible, so I rushed over and added a second kite to the stake, which helped only slightly. 20 minutes later, the sun was shining on it and it stood out like a beacon.

The long start window may have added some unfairness, but on the other hand it enabled the event to cater both for people wanting to get off home and for people coming from the Relays.

My thanks to everyone who helped, which was a good proportion of the competitors, and congratulations to the new champions.

*Ian Ditchfield*