

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS – AGM 2016

When I was first appointed chairman three years ago Lindsey Hensman said to me “oh that means you’ll be chairman for the JK year”. Well that’s interesting, I thought, but it’s a long way off. Best not think about it.

Well that particular chicken certainly navigated its way home to roost with a vengeance. For me and, I know, for many of you the JK came to totally dominate the 2015/16 orienteering year. Although Claro didn’t directly host any of the days, we provided a wide range of the supporting services and indeed through Mike Cope we had the overall coordinator. The vast majority of members were involved in one way or another, not least by braving the gales and sleet up at the starts on Kilnsey Moor. We can all look back with pride at a job well done but also with great relief that it won’t come back to Yorkshire for a few years. I must admit that at a personal level I felt totally burned out after some months coordinating equipment and needed a break from orienteering after also planning two events at the end of May and supporting the CompassSport Cup round just days after. I’m sure that I’m not alone in having that response.

At last year’s AGM we said that we’d do our best to keep the rest of our programme going and not let it suffer because of the JK. You must be the judges but I feel that we very largely succeeded in that aim. More of a distraction was the dreadfully wet winter that we endured; let me pay tribute to the patience of Tim Moon, Allen Banister and the Timble team in dealing with the inevitable deferral of the biggest event in our club’s calendar, the CompassSport Cup. Thankfully Yorkshire Water and their tenant farmer were entirely cooperative but it was a big administrative upheaval too.

Each of our other Level C events were successful too; the Superleague at Brimham, the night event at Killinghall Park, and the urban league round at Ripon were well-received with good entry levels and positive feedback from competitors. They put a smile on the treasurer’s face too.

We’ve established a successful pattern of mid-week evening events too, with good attendances at our autumn and winter lamppost events and a variety of formats and venues for our spring terrain events. The lamppost format has now spread and is being used by other clubs as far away as York and Stirling.

The former Schools League has had a shake-up, in particular it has moved to a series of Saturday afternoon events in proper orienteering terrain around Harrogate, been opened to secondary ages, and seen to be clearly run by Claro. For next year we plan some minor adjustments, specifically calling it a Junior League as most schools have seemed indifferent to our work and because we’ve had some singleton entries representing some schools. My thanks particularly to our coaches Jemima and Richard but also to the many others who’ve gone along to support and help. Awards for this competition were presented at the club picnic at Pannal Meadows after an enjoyable low-key race organised by Ruth, thankfully dodging the showers.

Allen Banister has overseen the CCOL Club League, covering a range of events within an hour or so travelling distance of Harrogate, but support has been mixed and we’ll be discussing later in the agenda proposals to reinvigorate the League.

Our new e-News ‘Weekly’ has proved very popular and a ‘must read’ item to know what’s going on in and around the club. I’m also delighted to say that our website is constantly updated and kept relevant. More on communications later in the agenda.

Let's remember these jobs that go on behind the scenes, the hours that go into mapping our venues, the time spent programming the SI boxes often with a very tight turnaround between events, the care and maintenance of equipment that can be scattered across our patch and beyond, the onerous work of visiting pubs to set up our social events, managing the flow of paperwork to and from British Orienteering, twisting folks' arms to act as officials at our Level C events, organising relay and CompassSport Cup teams, and the many more volunteer tasks that are done unseen. Then of course there's all of the jobs on the day of our big competitions. My thanks to all who do them – you know who you are.

As a committee we shall need to look at streamlining some of these jobs to reduce the workload on our volunteers. Some of you will know that Vince is no longer competing on medical advice and will be splitting his time between Harrogate and Portugal; let's remember that as well as being our secretary he's also published the Clarion, been a mapper, an organiser, a planner, a newly-appointed controller and had a huge job this year coordinating the JK signage. I too now have more responsibilities that will mean I shan't be as visible at evening events as before. Plans are in hand already but more needs to be done to reduce and spread the workload.

Well that was year 26 in the life of Claro. It was also year three in my time as chairman and the club constitution limits the chair to just three years in office. My thanks to all the members who've supported me during those three years and helped to make my orienteering so enjoyable and such a positive experience.

Stan Appleton

(Footnote: members at the AGM subsequently agreed to extend the chairman's term by a further one year to September 2017, as permitted by the club constitution.)