

The second of the coaching days was held on Sunday 16th May at Fassifern Ridge, and was developed to practise rough and fine navigation skills. The emphasis was to know where you were at all times. The “No Compass” exercise was designed to encourage reading the terrain. The compass helps steer you in the correct direction but you must maintain the link between the map and the terrain.

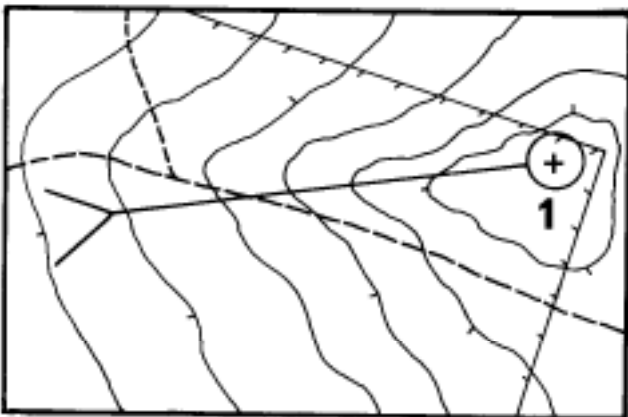
A small number of participants allowed for some one-on-one instruction. I must also thank the volunteer helpers, Denis Lyons, Malcolm Roberts and Melanie Simpson.

In previous newsletters I’ve been focusing on Route Choice. In the next section of newsletters I will be detailing some more techniques orienteers can use to approach the control with greater confidence.

Picturing the Control Site.

It is possible with practice to use the information on the map to form a mental picture of what the control feature and its immediate surroundings will look like. One then has an idea what to look for and will recognise the control feature rapidly without having to see the flag. Here are some examples of control sites and notes about them to illustrate these points.

1. A very simple example. The tree root mound.



Control site: on top of a hill near the N side of the of top, and in a fence corner.

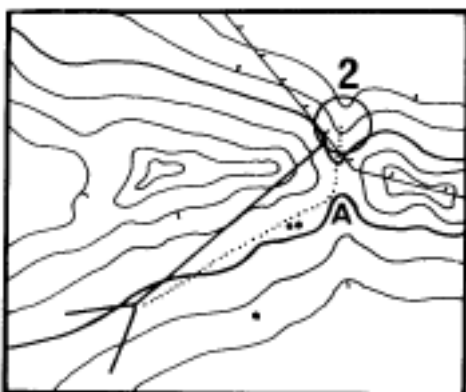
Attack point: could use path/fence junction but probably would be faster to use the ridge on the left of the path, and as it flattens out follow the top of the slope.



The tree root mound will then be in the fence corner which will stop you missing the control and overshooting it to the left or the right.

This sketch gives an impression of how you might imagine the control site to look. You will recognise precisely where the control will be long before you see it.

2. The gully.

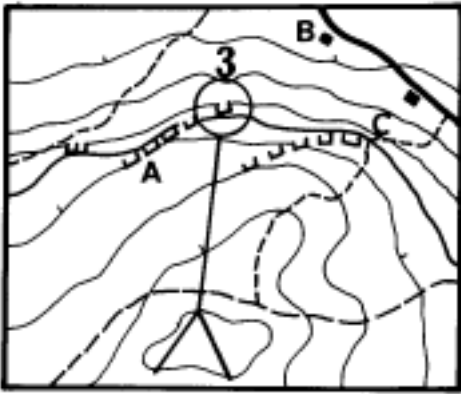


..... route

Control site: large gully on the N side of a ridge. A fence crosses the gully above the control. You will be coming over the ridge and downhill into the control.

Attack point: the gully (A) on the same side of the ridge as you is a good attack point as you can go up the gully, over the ridge, cross the fence and then look for the control. So go along the side of the ridge, trying to keep at the same height (contouring) until you find the large gully, perhaps noticing the group of boulders, and then proceed as above.

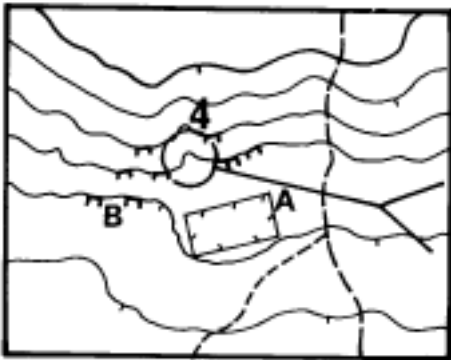
3. Rockface foot.



Control site: one of a whole series of small rockfaces which are in two parallel lines across a hillside. Vague shallow gully below the rockface looks difficult to recognise - the only feature to be confident of identifying is one of the lines of the rockfaces.

Attack point: as stated above no really good one. Best is to aim to hit the line of rockfaces to the left of the control at (A). By noticing the rockface is one of a line of rockfaces you have changed it from a small point feature to a large line feature (called extending the control). Also notice the use of aiming off. Work out in advance what will happen if you miss the line of rockfaces - to the left you should see the path, the large rockface, and to the right the hut (B). An alternative approach would be to go to the path bend (C) using the small paths, and then use this as attack point.

4. Small gully.



Control site: a small gully, at the foot of a slope in a line of small rockfaces. There is a fenced area on your left as you approach the control, with a flat area between the fence and the control, and the control is where the slope starts after the flatter area.

Attack point: fence corner (A). You only need to see it. There is no need to go right to the fence corner. This applies to all attack points. You use them to identify exactly where you are. You often only need to see rather than go right to an attack point. The control is only 30 m from the attack point but be careful not to be drawn into going parallel to the fence and ending up at (B).

Now you should be in a position to find every control without wasting time by making mistakes. One ingredient is lacking - concentration. It is no good knowing exactly what to do and what to look for if you don't actually do it. One of the most frequent causes of mistakes, even by very experienced orienteers, is a lack of concentration - particularly as you get tired. This is something you must always be aware of and guard against. An orienteer should have the concentration of a deer to react rapidly to any stimulus. Assuming that you are going to find all the controls without making a mistake means that we can now proceed to a more esoteric section on time saving.

- Geoff Todkill