

## THE EARLY YEARS OF ORIENTEERING IN NEWCASTLE

Allan Wright

### Prehistory: Stage 1

Dating from about 1953 Newcastle Bushwalking Club held an annual "Walks Trial" as part of the requirements to become a full member of the club.

My only experience of this was in August 1965 (15 miles, 5 controls on a standard 1" = 1 mile map). The structure was something like an orienteering coaching course. There were stops at each control site, where participants would be debriefed on route choice, then sent on the next leg.

Officially it was non-competitive, completing the course being the objective. But the better navigators were still very keen to finish first.

But no one beat the organiser, who did all the debriefing and then raced off to beat the field to the next control site – not surprising when you consider that the organiser on that occasion was Arthur ('Darby') Munro ... more of him later.

### Prehistory: Stage 2 (1966-1973)

#### (A) 24 July 1966

As President of Newcastle YMCA Ramblers Bushwalking Club I was after something like the 'Walks Trial' to improve the navigational skills of club members. (Purely from the safety aspect: if everyone on a walk just followed the leader and paid no attention to where they were going, the group would be in trouble if anything happened to the walk leader).

Having seen a Canadian film about it, Orienteering seemed ideal.

The use of control markers rather than a travelling organiser made it closer to the orienteering of today – and it was competitive rather than pseudo-non-competitive. But like the Walks Trial (and possibly influenced by the storytelling format of the film) competitors only received a map reference and site description one leg at a time.

Venue: Wallaroo Forest

Map: Paterson 1:63360 B/W photocopy with some additional roads marked.

Setters: Allan Wright & Glenn Grantham

4 controls, 5 miles, 25 competitors (mostly teams)

Won by Barry Collier in 68 min.

A re-run in July 1976 was won by Arthur Munro in 65 min.

#### (B) 27 August 1966

Originally advertised as the NBC's annual Walks Trial – but before it was held the Paddy Pallin Orienteering Contest had been announced for the following weekend, so the NBC event became their first 'Orienteering' Contest.

Again, map references collected at each control site. This procedure created a problem as entrants were allowed to do the course clockwise OR anticlockwise – but those doing it clockwise found that the clues ran out partway round the course.

Venue: Sugee Bag Creek

Map: Gosford 1:63360 standard coloured .

Setter: Ralph Kraemer

10 controls, 9 miles

No Clockwise winner

Anticlockwise winners: Allan Wright & Steve Fabris

*After this, future events generally supplied the whole course in advance*

## 1967

RAMBLERS 23/7 **Wallaroo Forest**  
Set: Allan Wright, Glenn Grantham  
1. Ralph Kraemer 2. Wayne Devonshire

## 1968

NBC 18-19/5 **Seaham** – Intervarsity 24 hour  
Organiser: Selby Alley

RAMBLERS 28/7 **Brandy Hill**  
Set: Allan Wright, Glenn Grantham  
1. Arthur Munro & Imants Kavalieris 2. Barry Collier

## 1969

RAMBLERS 27/7 **Sugarloaf Range**  
Set: Allan Wright, Barry Collier, David Penfold  
1. Arthur Munro & Imants Kavalieris 2. Terry Jordan

NBC 27/9 **Kulnura**  
Set: Imants Kavalieris  
1. Barry Collier & Ron Shea 2. Darby Munro

## 1970

RAMBLERS 26/7 **Wattagans: Murray's Run Ridge**  
Set: Allan Wright, Glenn Grantham, David Penfold  
1. Arthur Munro & Imants Kavalieris 2. (Sydney Ramblers Team)

NBC 20/9 **Wattagans: Muir's Lookout**  
Set: Terry Jordan  
1. Bob & Wilf Hilder (Sydney Catholic Bushwalkers)

## 1971

RAMBLERS 25/7 **Karuah #**  
Set: Allan Wright, Dot Wright, Joan Robinson  
1. Bob Smythe, Bernie Gromek & Alan Cole

NBC 19/9 **Cedar Creek**  
Set: Bill Filson, Robert Preston  
1. J Anderson & R Buck (National Parks Association)

## 1972

RAMBLERS 13/8 **Karuah**  
Set: Allan Wright, Gary Scully  
1. Robert Preston 2. Phil Grazier & Laimonis Kavalieris

NBC 15/10 **Cameron Creek**  
Set: Terry Jordan  
1. Arthur & Margaret Munro

## 1973

NBC 13/5 **Wattagans: The Pinnacles**  
Set: Laimonis Kavalieris  
1. Arthur & Margaret Munro

RAMBLERS 29/7 **Ourimbah #**  
Set: Allan Wright, Chris Paterson  
1. Arthur Munro & Imants Kavalieris 2. Frank Anderson

Contests held from 1967 to 1973 were on standard 1:63360 coloured maps – except #

**1971 – Karuah** (on Karuah Trig side) was on an area which overlapped two maps. Combined by scaling up (by hand) the area to be used by a factor of three to 1:21120. Not practical to go to 1:20000 as the one used only just fitted the page. B&W with only a little more detail than the originals.

**1973 – Ourimbah** State Forest: scaled up by hand to 1:25000 (B&W) because the original Gosford map was too confusing with brown and blue printing not registering correctly.

*These scaled-up maps were hand-enscribed onto Gestentner stencils!*

Ramblers contests from 1968 also had a **shorter course available for beginners** – particularly useful in catering for school students from Newcastle Tech High (where Allan Wright was teaching) and Raymond Terrace High (where Darby Munro was teaching).

**The first suggestion to form an orienteering club** came from two Tech High students (Emilio Suprano and David Smith) who must have enjoyed their 4th place in the shorter course at Karuah in 1972.

Ramblers contests did not continue after Newcastle Orienteering Club started.

NBC continued until 1977 with winners gradually changing from bushwalkers to orienteers: Allan Wright ('74), Robert Preston ('75), Graham Fowler ('76 & '77).

### **Prehistory: Stage 3**

#### ***Events leading directly to the formation of Newcastle Orienteering Club***

Plans for a long bushwalk at Easter 1974 had just fallen through when I received a phone call from Selby Alley. (Selby was involved in starting two bushwalking clubs in Newcastle, setting up the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme locally, and had the knack that in a few encouraging words he could inspire people to become more active in exploring, studying and conserving our bushlands...) He suggested that there could be some Commonwealth Government money for Orienteering – talk to the regional manager of Sport & Rec!

It turned out that the money came from a “Coaching of Coaches” program and it was agreed that an orienteering course fitted the guidelines.

So I spent Easter improving part of the **Wallaroo Forest** map and scaling it up to 1:20000. Sport & Rec arranged some press publicity but also important were the database I had been building up with contacts for people who had entered the Ramblers contests, plus the bushwalking clubs, and Selby encouraging Duke of Edinburgh Scheme participants to try it.

The contest was held on **29 April 1974**, attracting 52 competitors – mostly in teams making 17 “entries” overall.

Won by Les Croft & David Williams (who had come last in my previous course at Ourimbah). The entry included the Regional Director of Sport & Rec (Terry Hunt) who finished 5th. He was sufficiently impressed to agree to a second course, which was held at **Karuah on 23 June 1974**, attracting 96 people (formed into 28 teams).

Two score courses available. The long one won by Margaret and Arthur Munro with 2nd place going to Robert, David and Jeff Vincent.

A very distant last place was a group of reporters from the *Newcastle Sun* – a local afternoon newspaper which closed soon after this, but I don't think the two events were related.

There was some discussion at the Karuah event on the need to form an orienteering club, and to develop an attractive program to attract members.

But how to turn two individual events into a series and a club? Have help!

The first bit of help came from Singleton Army Base.

(Captain?) Rex Wigney had formed an "Adventurers Club" at the Infantry Centre and ran an orienteering course at **Broke** on **28 July 1974**. 1:20000 3-colour map offset printed. 3 courses. 10 entries in Open, 15 in Intermediate. No details for Novice but 80 people in total. 1. Laimonis Kavalieris (NUMC) 2. Ray Dawes (NBC) 3. Brian Coolahan (Uringa)  
More importantly: more agreement to forming an orienteering club.

Apart from competing in some other contests in 1974/5 and providing a photographic enlargement of an area for us to use in 1975, the involvement of the army base didn't continue. (I think that was because Rex Wigney was promoted to somewhere else, and not because I won the 1974 NBC contest, pushing his army team into 2nd place.)

A contest at Uffington Forest (near **Clarencetown**) on **11 August 1974** was advertised as being the FIRST for Newcastle Orienteering Club and attracted 41 entries (106 people) *in the middle of a state-wide petrol strike*. Strong support from three bushwalking clubs, mountaineering club, youth groups, participants in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and students from Tech High – all this before the club had officially (legally) formed.

Set: Allan Wright

1. Laimonis Kavalieris 2. Rex Wigney 3. Arthur and David Munro

More "outside help" came on **8 September 1974** when Sydney club NOSH held an event at Murray's Run (near **Laguna**) on the highest quality B&W map we had ever seen. 1:15000

1. Chris Wilmott (UO) 2. Rod Dominish (BOO) 3. Ian Hassall (KO)

No inspiring results from Newcastle, but it was an important "local" event as it helped fill out our calendar and demonstrated that there was more going on in orienteering than just a few events in Newcastle.

Newcastle Orienteering Club still took two more steps to be formed:

A meeting on **11 September 1974** basically established the club and elected a committee to run its affairs and to prepare a constitution which was formally adopted (legally forming the club) at the A.G.M on **12 March 1975**.

**1974 Committee:** Stuart Anderson, Stephen Collard, John Gill, Warren McGrath, James Milne, Jeff Oughton and Allan Wright

#### **NOC events between the two meetings**

20 October 1974 - **Nerong Forest** (near Bulahdelah) 3 courses on coloured Forestry map

Set: Allan Wright, Jeff Oughton and John Smith

1. Robert Vincent (*his first win???*) 2. Rod Bambach

1 December 1974 - **Frazer Park** - 3 courses

Set: Allan Wright and Stephen Collard

1. Laimonis Kavalieris 2. Rex Wigney & Winston Stokes

23 February 1975 - **Wangi Point** - 2 courses Set: Allan Wright

1. Robert Vincent 2. John Flannery, Neil Geddes & Mark Rance

## **NOTICE OF 1975 A.G.M. included:**

### **NEWCASTLE ORIENTEERING CLUB**

This is not just a notice of the Annual General Meeting of the club, but an invitation – a plea, even – that if you are a member, or if you are interested in Orienteering, please come along to this meeting.

The meeting will be making decisions on affiliation with N.S.W. Association (they have recently offered us a cheaper way “IN”); a club constitution (this has been discussed in detail already by the committee, so it is expected that without gagging debate, it will not take long to sort out); arrangements for future contests; election of club officers, etc.

Please come to the meeting and have your say on the issues you feel are important.... Help to make the club the type of club You want it to be.

### **Inaugural Office bearers:**

President Allan Wright  
Vice President John Linehan  
Secretary Rod Bambach  
Treasurer Betty Skilton  
Publicity Tom Jones  
Committee Rene van Dyke, Stuart Anderson

While highlights of the remainder of the remainder of 1975 would be the regular contests and improving map quality, to me it was the increasing number of different people with the “I would like to help” attitude.

- 16 March 1975 **Wallaroo Forest** (Allan Wright and Greg Nugent) 3 courses B&W  
1. Dick Mountstephens (BOO) 2. Arthur Munro (NOC)
- 20 April 1975 **Sugarloaf** (Stephen and Phillip Collard)  
Open: photo-enlargement with some corrections 1:22500  
Shorter courses: Coloured spirit duplicated 1:10000  
1. Robert Vincent 2. Rod Bambach
- 29 June 1975 **Jesmond Park** (Allan Wright and Tom Jones)  
Coloured spirit (‘self-destructing’) 1:10000  
1. Robert Preston 2. Russell Smith  
(B course: 1. Terry Farrell)
- 20 July 1975 **Astley’s Tower, Aberdare Forest** (Rene van Dyke and Russell Smith)  
4 courses B&W 1:12500  
1. Robert Preston 2. Allan Wright
- 3 August 1975 **Jesmond Park** (Allan Wright, Rod Bambach & Rene Van Dyke)  
Beginners course for 50, following a talk given by AW to the  
Australian Council of Health, Physical Education and Recreation  
1. Bob Gilbert & Brian Oakley 2. J & M Geggie, J James & L Campbell  
*(A faster time by Robert Preston while collecting controls was not counted – he wasn’t a beginner & was just there to help!)*
- 17 August 1975 **Nerong Forest** (Stuart Anderson & Warren McGrath) 3 courses  
1. Ray Dawes 2. Brian Yates
- 21 September 1975 **Jesmond Park** (Allan Wright) Over 130 competitors  
2 equivalent beginners courses *(but could do both)*  
Over 130 competitors  
3.3 km - 1. John Savolainen 2. Bruce Gow  
2.8 km - 1. Denis Lyons 2. Bruce Gow

19 October 1975 **Nord's Wharf** (Allan Wright and Brian Yates) B&W 1:10000  
4 courses 110 competitors 1. Robert Preston 2. Robert Vincent  
*Most people arrived by car. Denis Lyons reached Nord's Wharf by sailing  
across the lake from Eraring (and would have won the "B" course except he  
missed two controls).*

16 November 1975 **Uffington Forest** (Arthur Munro) B&W 1:20000  
3 courses, 91 entrants  
1. Robert Vincent 2. Russell Smith

7 December 1975 **Awabakal Reserve** (Dudley) Allan Wright and Rod Bambach  
1:5000 B&W 4 courses  
1. Robert Vincent 2. Dave Lotty  
*("A" Course included the infamous choice: Swim 30 m across Redhead  
Lagoon to the control you could see - or run 700 m around the edge?)*

**1976 began with two 'Daylight Savings' courses** (*our first, and in bush; not round the streets*)

20 January 1976 **Munibung Hill** (Bernie & Warren McGrath) 1:6336 B&W 2 courses  
=1 Denis Lyons and Allan Wright (3.6 km in 1:00 in pouring rain)

3 February 1976 **South Wallsend** (Allan Wright) 1:10000 B&W 2 courses  
1. Laimonis Kavalieris 2. Arthur Munro 3. Terry Farrell

22 February 1976 **Kings Hill** (Rod Bambach) B&W 1:20000 (Long) 1:10000 (Shorter)  
1. Robert Vincent 2. Allan Wright 3. Darby Munro 4. Denis Lyons

28 March 1976 **Dudley Beach** (Robert Vincent) 1:10000 4 courses  
B&W with dark green hand-shaded (*it needed it!*)  
1. Ray Dawes & Greg Osland 2. Brian Yates

1976 AGM

President	Russell Smith
Vice President	Rene Van Dyke
Secretary	Allan Wright
Treasurer	Betty Skilton
Committee	Ann Chegwiddden, Gary Jeffress, Tom Jones, Bernie McGrath, Robert Vincent

In addition to belonging to NOC, some local "clubs" sprung up, probably trying to mimic the local area clubs in Sydney. There may have been some potential for event organisation or team competitions, but it never quite developed far beyond the feeling of pride in belonging to a group with an interesting acronym: NLO (Northlakes Orienteers), UHOO (Upper Hunter Occasional Orienteers), TKO (Tacoma-Kanwal Orienteers), MACRO, BH (Bunyip Harriers), NNN (Northern Newcastle Navigators)

11 April 1976 **Wangi Point** – RELAYS (Allan Wright and Denis Lyons) B&W 1:4000  
1. Ray Dawes, Gary Jeffress and Greg Osland  
2. Warren McGrath, Terry Farrell and Stuart Anderson

2 May 1976 **Jiliby** (Danny Holmes, Denis Eyre and Graham Fowler) B&W 1:10000  
3 courses 1. Robert Vincent 2. Denis Lyons

- 6 June 1976 **Jesmond Park** NOC's first full coloured properly printed map  
David Jackson, Barry Hancock, Mark & Warren Bretag (from AW's class)  
1: 15000 5 courses - over 175 competitors  
1. Chris Wilmott, 2. Dave Lotty, 3. Andrew Lumsden (GO) 4. Denis Lyons
- June Long Weekend Australian Championship held at Moss Vale.  
Robert Vincent in the "official" N.S.W. team.
- 20 June 1976 **Singleton** (Ray Dawes) 1:20000 B&W photocopy - 4 courses  
1. Denis Lyons 2. Gary Jeffress 3. Robert Vincent 4. Marg Elcombe (KO)
- 4 July 1976 **Soldier's Beach** - CCO's first contest, adding to the "local" events
- 18 July 1976 **Wallaroo Forest** - re-run of 1966 course (and a 1.5 hour score course)
- 1 August 1976 **Awabakal Reserve** (Ladies Special! Kate Buchhorn, AnnChegwiddden,  
Jenny Massie, Gina Roach) 16 controls on 6 lines on the map!  
1. Graham Fowler 2. Arthur Munro
- 8 August 1976 **Abernethy** First Hunter Valley Championships  
(Russell Smith and Rene Van Dyke)  
Probably also the first local event where competition was in age classes.  
Thus the "A" course had three winners: M19A Tony Radford (NOSH);  
M17-18A Robert Vincent (NOC); M35A Dick Mountstephens (BOO)
- 15 August 1976 **Glendale** (Bernie and Warren McGrath)  
1. Ray Dawes 2. Terry Farrell 3. Gary Jeffress
- 29 August 1976 **Cocked Hat Hill** (Terry Farrell and Stuart Anderson)  
1. Robert Vincent 2. Denis Lyons 3. Graham Fowler
- NOC began with aiming for one event a month, and at this point we have reached two to three per month. It looks like we miss September, but in fact that month saw the NBC contest and NOSH running a National Badge event on a coloured map of Murray's Run.
- 17 October 1976 **Jesmond Park** (Allan Wright)  
1. David Jackson 2. David Jordan 3. Barry Hancock 4. Kate Buchhorn
- 24 October 1976 **Wyee** (Graham Fowler)  
1. Alf Britton 2. Denis Lyons 3. Terry Farrell 4. Robert Vincent
- 28 November 1976 **Munibung Hill** (Terry Farrell)  
1. Robert Vincent 2. Denis Lyons 3. Arthur Munro  
*For a short time there was a weekly newspaper "Sporting Green" in Newcastle/Lake Macquarie and I supplied a page about orienteering every week. I took several photos for this, and will always remember Robert finishing this course funning flat out through a lantana patch!*

## Map Standards

When comparing today's maps with the early maps we used, I wonder how we ever made the sport a success. Colour was a major factor – though our first coloured maps really didn't have anything like the detail we expect today.

The first coloured map we used was actually a Forestry map (Nerong Forest). Black, blue and brown were as you would expect – but the coloured shadings all over the map actually represented different groups of tree species! Today it might serve as a base map – but back then as one of 4 or 5 'new' maps prepared in a year, it served its purpose.

The second in colour was Jesmond Park (1975 edition) – done on a Spirit Duplicator where later applied colours overwrite earlier colours, and the map produced fades quite well in sunlight. After that came the more traditional offset printed maps and then OCAD – the story from here probably being much the same as every club.

## Schools

Cessnock High School was the first Hunter region school to offer orienteering for sport.

This began in 1975 under the direction of Russell Smith and Rene Van Dyke who themselves first tried orienteering at the club's Frazer Park event in 1974.

Rene was somewhat immortalised in a radio interview about orienteering at school: when asked how often children got lost, he replied "*Not often enough!*"

I ran two sessions of orienteering at Tech High in late 1975, then regularly from 1976 (building up to once a week all year round for many years).

I organised the first Hunter region Schools Orienteering Championships through the Secondary Schools Sports association in 1977 (Jesmond Park, courses set by Robert Vincent). Over the years several people set the courses, but usually it was Denis Lyons as setter and me as organiser. That continued for 25 years until I retired. Geoff Todkill and Colin Bailey kept in going.