

Organisers report JK14 – Day 2 Merthyr Common (and a bit on permissions for days 2, 3 and 4)

Large events such as the JK basically need five things, a great terrain, good maps, an arena, sufficient parking and good weather. From the early days we knew we had a world class area and good maps and, despite best endeavours, the weather was not really under our control.

Land permissions for a high moorland area are complex, given the number of owners, users and other interested parties. All were very supportive of the event and indeed continue to be. In the end, the issue that took up more of my time than any other and had a direct impact on all of the competitors was nesting birds.

Our original arena site was significantly further to the west than where we ended up. The reason the arena was moved was due to a pair of breeding peregrine falcons (a protected bird) on one of the cliffs above the original arena site. Other protected birds also decided to breed near to the Elite Start on day 2 and on the Day 3 and 4 terrains. Whilst negotiations were successfully held with various parties it took a lot of time and, for days 2 and 3 resulted in moving the arena and losing a large amount of quality parking.

If you were wondering why you did not simply walk along the road to your starts on day 2 it was to avoid the Peregrines. You did however have the privilege of walking along an historic tramway for most of the way.

Whilst we always knew there would be some long walks from the furthest parking on days 2 and 3, moving the arena resulted in us having to do some very careful measuring to ensure that we could now park over 1,300 vehicles on the quarry roads. In the end we made it, just.

So the arena was a late compromise, but you are always going to have compromises somewhere on a large event.

As SWOC is a small club we were always going to need helpers from other clubs so a big thank you to SLOW, HOC, MWOC, WCH, ERYRI and probably others who helped us out on the day.

On the day my biggest problems were an ill team leader, a few technology glitches, some individuals who did not download or were out for a long time and some injured runners. The sort of thing you would expect, although try to avoid, at any large event.

A big thank you to all the orienteers for keeping the site so clean and tidy. Once the tents and infrastructure had gone you would not have known an event had taken place. Finally, on the Monday morning after the event, (relay day) the peregrines could be seen feeding on the slope above and flying around the eventual arena site.

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