

Saxons Orienteering Club – the first 40 years

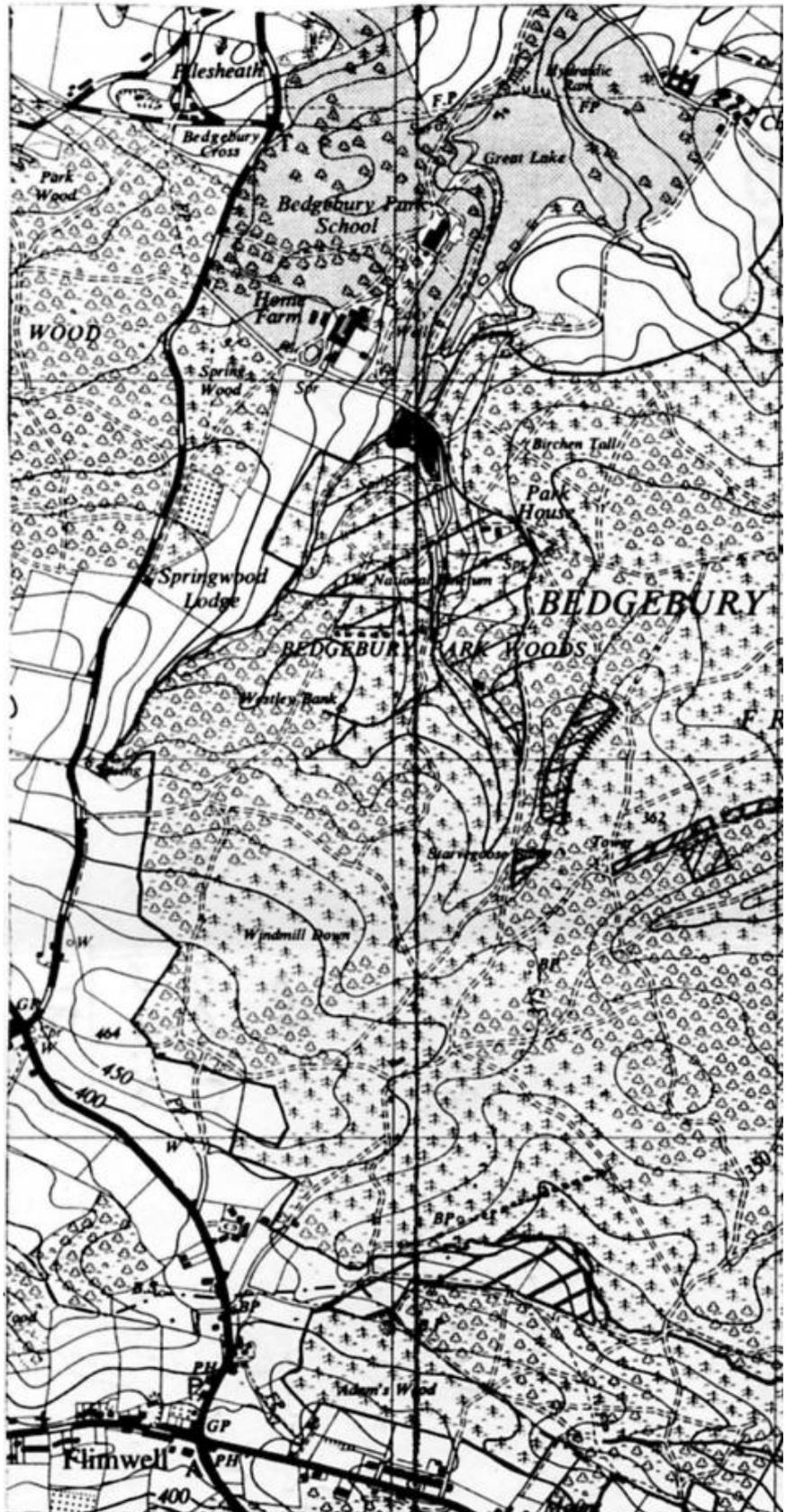
This history is a slightly abridged version of that produced by John Faller in 2004, brought up to date by Jean Fitzgerald.

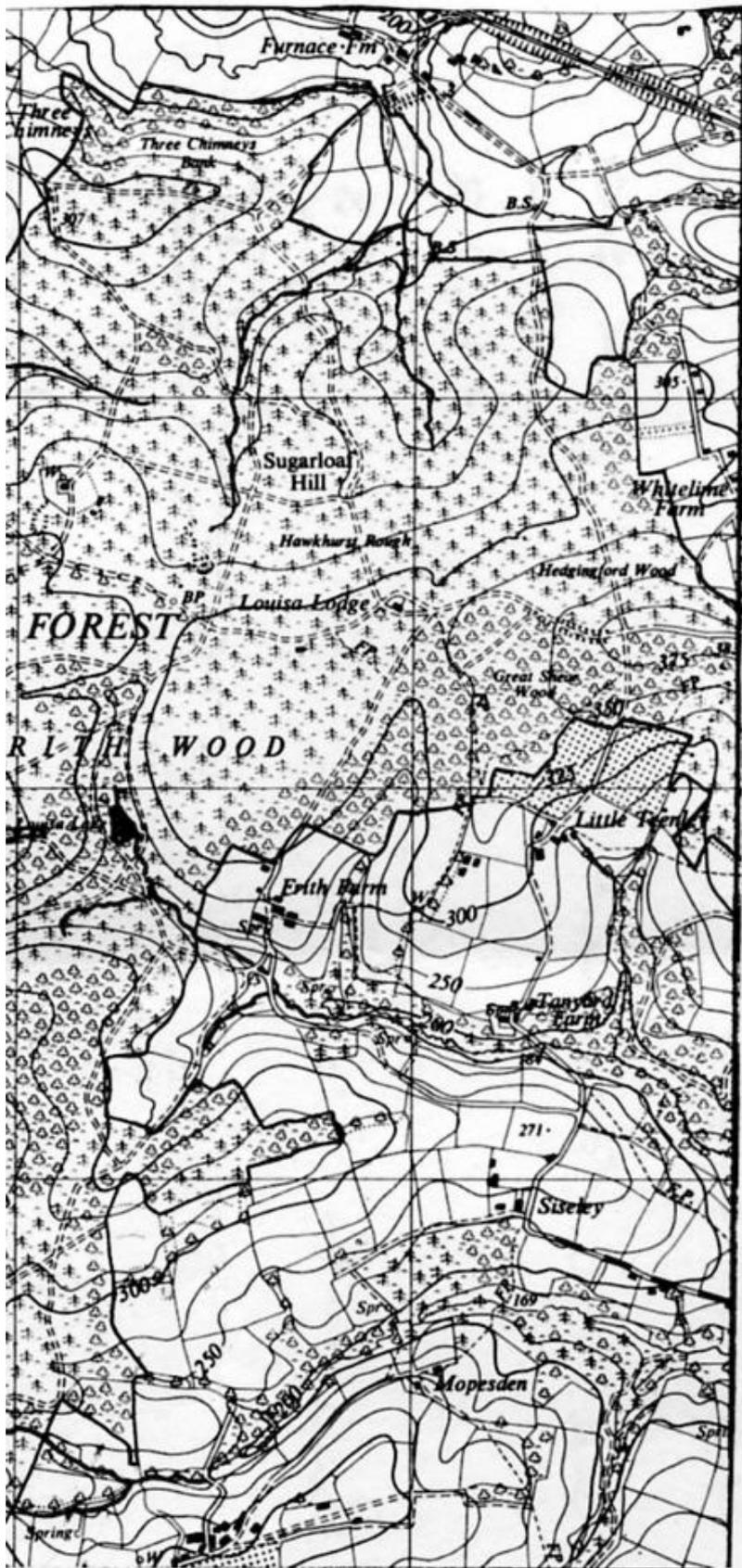
The club was initially formed in 1968 and was called Hastings Competeers Orienteering Association. In 1970 this club was disbanded and Hastings Competeers was formed. It originally had only four members; Dennis Leggett was Chairman, Al Read was Vice Chairman and Doug Deeks was Secretary and treasurer. The fourth member, Alan Kimber, did not stay in the sport for very long. Around 1971, the name was shortened to Competeers and finally changed to Saxons on 1st January 1972.

The first event organised by Hastings Competeers Orienteering Association was staged at Frith Wood (Bedgebury) on the 7th September 1969. Robin Harvey (Harvey maps) was the winner of the 'A' course in 87 minutes. A black and white reproduction of the O.S. map was used and cost £3.6s (£3.30) for 250 copies. A copy of the map is reproduced alongside. The entry fee for the event was 2s 6p (12.5p). Eighty one competitors took part in this inaugural event, 27 being from local youth organisations. Orienteers from 20 different clubs also took part including from Guilford Orienteers, Happy Herts, Mole Valley, Southern Navigators and Southampton OC, all clubs that are still in existence today. There were also 4 competitors from Medway Maunderers and 3 competitors from Spyderys, a club situated in the Brighton area. Both these clubs later merged with Saxons. In the results of this event there was a promise:

'For our next event we aim at an accurate colour map. Chris Brasher, help!'

The second event run by the club was held on 27 September 1970 again at Frith Wood but this time with an improved map (see colour version below). 112 competitors ran one of the four courses on offer. It took the printers three attempts to produce the map at the correct scale. An interesting statement in the legend read 'Impenetrable areas (dotted legend); otherwise penetrability varies with season and personal fortitude'





The 1971 accounts for Competeers OC showed subscriptions from members as £14.50 with £11.25 going to SEOA and BOF so leaving the Club with the handsome total of £3.25 per member. The net assets of the club at 31.12.71 were £7.96, this being transferred to Saxons OC when it came into being on 1 January 1972. The inaugural Saxons event took place at Vinehall Forest on 30 January 1972 in the snow. The first night event, a closed event for Hastings Youth Service, was held on 19 February also at Vinehall.

The club had by now grown to 34 members. A newsletter was started and was produced initially at 8 week intervals, which considering that it was produced on a typewriter with copies produced on a Gestetner was quite an achievement. Newsletter number 4 included a first draft of the club's constitution.

By summer 1972, Newsletter number 5 advised that David Hayman had been appointed SEOA Training and Development Committee Chairman making him the first Saxon to hold an SEOA post. Mapping of Broadstone Warren and Mereworth were under consideration, the latter being used for the first Saxons Badge event on 12 November 1972.

By the end of 1972, Saxons membership had grown to over 50 including the Bagness family who were to be one of the main players in the development of the sport.

The first AGM was held in the Eight Bells Inn at Hawkhurst on 23 February 1973. D.A. Reid was appointed Chairman, with D. Deeks Secretary and Treasurer and B. Lawrence on the management committee. The merging of Medway Maunders OC and Spydars OC with Saxons took place during this year.

In October four 'Come and Try it (CATI)' events attracted over 850 competitors of all ages and sizes. Wouldn't we like to have this enthusiastic support for the sport today!

FRITH WOODS COURSE B

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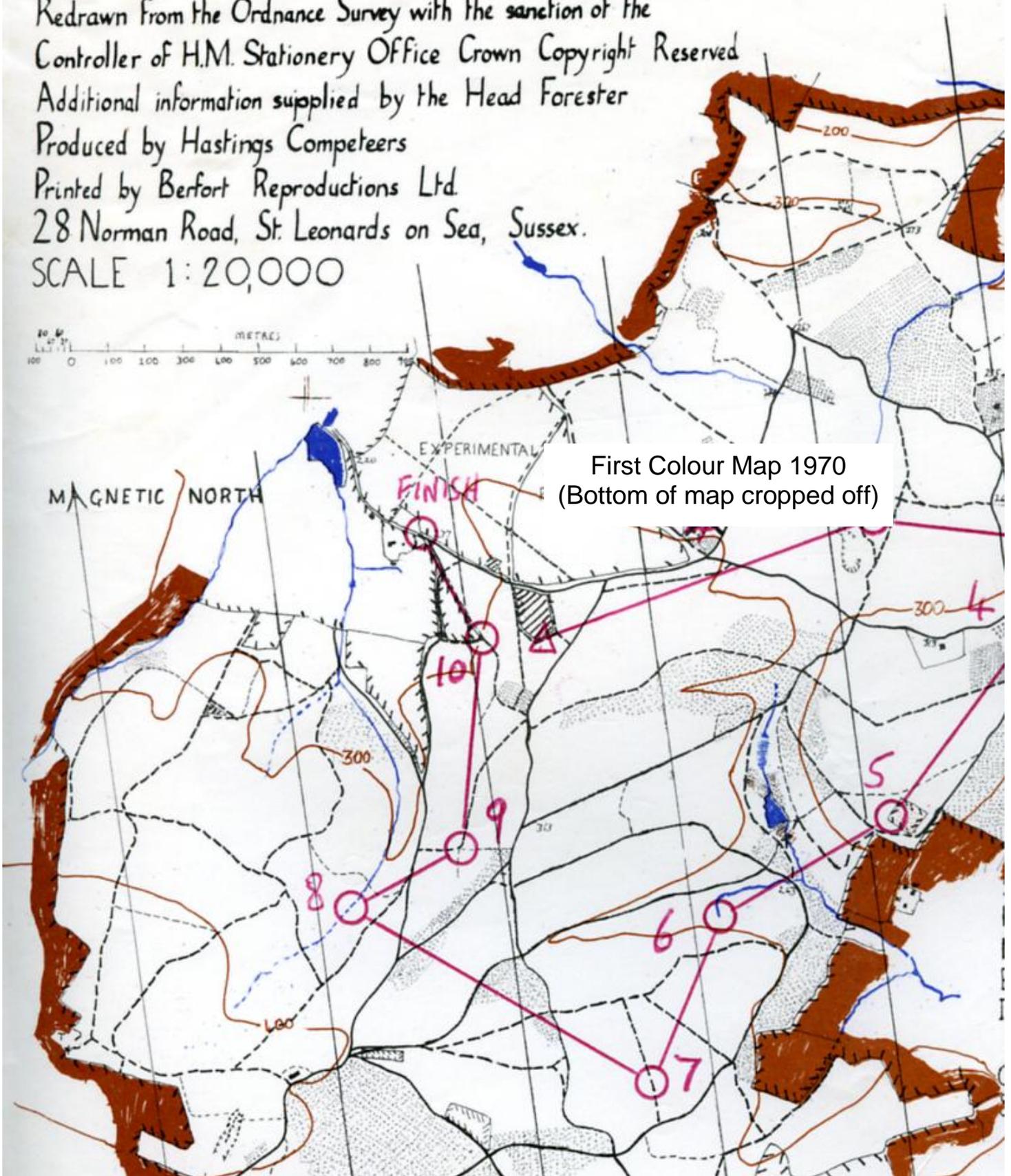
Additional information supplied by the Head Forester

Produced by Hastings Competeers

Printed by Berfort Reproductions Ltd

28 Norman Road, St. Leonards on Sea, Sussex.

SCALE 1:20,000



First Colour Map 1970
(Bottom of map cropped off)



1974 saw the start of the Saxons Club League. Notable in the results were these names from the past and present:

- 1 Tim Bailey (M21)
- 6 Doug Deeks (M35)
- 11 Isobel Martin (Bailey) (W17)
- 20 John Bagness (M43)
- 21 Brian Lawrence (M35)
- 38 Barbara Plant (W35)
- 46 Martin Bagness (M13)

At the end of the year, results from the league indicated that the club had 93 active members. Martin Bagness subsequently gained fame through his planning of Karrimor and Saunders Mountain Marathon Courses.

In 1975 the club staged a Badge event at Starvegoose Bank and in addition to the regular newsletter a News sheet was started. The club's first international tour was arranged resulting in 12 members taking part in the Swiss 5 day event. During the year, Maggie Dye (W19) was selected to represent the GB 'A' team against Norway.

In 1976 the club agreed to host the 1977 JK relays and much effort was expended in surveying and preparing the map. David Wilson, who was to become a prolific mapper and the main source of maps for the club for many years, joined the club. His multi-maps were quite famous, particularly the map of Abbey wood which nicely fitted around the 1:20 000 map of Oaken Wood.

In 1977 the western membership decided to form a new club based on Portslade Community College to be called Southdowns Orienteers. In spite of this parting of the ways, the membership of Saxons exceeded 120 including group memberships from 5 schools and 2 youth organizations. Saxons and SO came together to host the successful JK Relays.

In 1978 mapping took on a major importance with plans proposed to map Hemstead, Bedgebury, Angley, Shoreham, Orlestone and Mereworth Camp. In addition, negotiations were under way to map Pembury, Challock and Buckmore Park. Many of these areas are still in use today. The club ran its first North Downs Relay race starting at 3 pm on Saturday 1 July at Farnham, Surrey, finishing at 10.24:35 the next day at Dover.

The 1978/9 league finished with juniors taking prime positions. Martin Bagness (M19) was first and Kay Billingham (W15) second. Both Martin and Kay were later to run for the UK. Other notable results were Brian Lawrence (M35) coming in at 9th position, Doug Deeks (M35) at 13th, and Simon Greenwood (M21) coming 37th.

Membership of Saxons had now risen to over 150, not including group members, and there were a large number of juniors, some of National quality. The North Downs relay was opened to other clubs and was won by SLOW in 15:32:28. SN came second with Saxons 3rd. This relay has now become an annual event. Training continued to form a major part in the club's activities and this was rewarded by the club winning the S.E. League and the Piffle League.

In 1980, the club held its badge event at Hemsted Forest. The event attracted nearly 500 pre-entries and apart from the rain sodden car park turned out to be a great success. The club staged 14 events during the year and continued to expand. Membership had risen to just short of 200 and with the seven group memberships added, was significantly more.

In 1981 the club suffered some financial problems, primarily due to the cost of mapping. It should be remembered that in those days, maps were hand scribed at twice final map size with a separate sheet for each colour and shade of colour. An A4 map would require up to twelve sheets of A2 size film, each being used to produce the four printing plates, one for each colour used. Maps were purchased by the thousand and used over many years resulting in significant hand drawn map updates being required at many events. Three new maps were printed during the year. However, one of these was the famous multi map produced by David Wilson which contained 7 separate orienteering areas.

In 1982 Saxons concentrated our activities on our 10th anniversary 3 day event co-ordinated

by Peter Billingham. The venues were: day 1 – Brasted, day 2 – Ightham and day 3 – Mereworth. The whole three days were sponsored by Guardian Royal Exchange Assurance. 1060 competitors took part in the event, 247 of which ran on all three days. Day 2 at Ightham had the largest number of competitors (720). Ightham is still one of our most popular venues.

To reflect the geographical centre of the club's membership, in 1982 the monthly meeting venue was changed from Hawkurst to Maidstone, where a room at the Queens Head at the top of Square hill was used.

As the 1983 British Orienteering Championships were to be held in Ashdown Forest, all SE clubs were asked to assist. Ken and Dorothy Hale acted as club co-ordinators and they recorded thanks to the 70 + club members who volunteered to help. Also in 1983 Ken and Dorothy Hale won the SE Relays in a team with Mike Barrie and Garry Owen, the new newsletter editor, Tony Extance, changed the presentation from foolscap sheets to sheets of A5 size and the club held its badge event in 500 Acre wood.

The biggest success during the year was development of the Schools League, proposed by Graham Bridgland. Initially, 15 Schools took part in the 6 planned events, which were scheduled to take place in the early evening of selected Wednesdays. Club members were encouraged to participate by using the courses as training sessions. Graham managed to get the league sponsored by his employer, Hobbs Parker.

The S.E. Relays were run by the club in Knole Park, the winning club being CHIG. The SAS (Saxons Away Squad) was formed, run by Bill Griffiths, to represent the club at major events both at home and abroad.

In December 1985, edition 1 of Saxnews was produced under the editorship of Alan Tough.

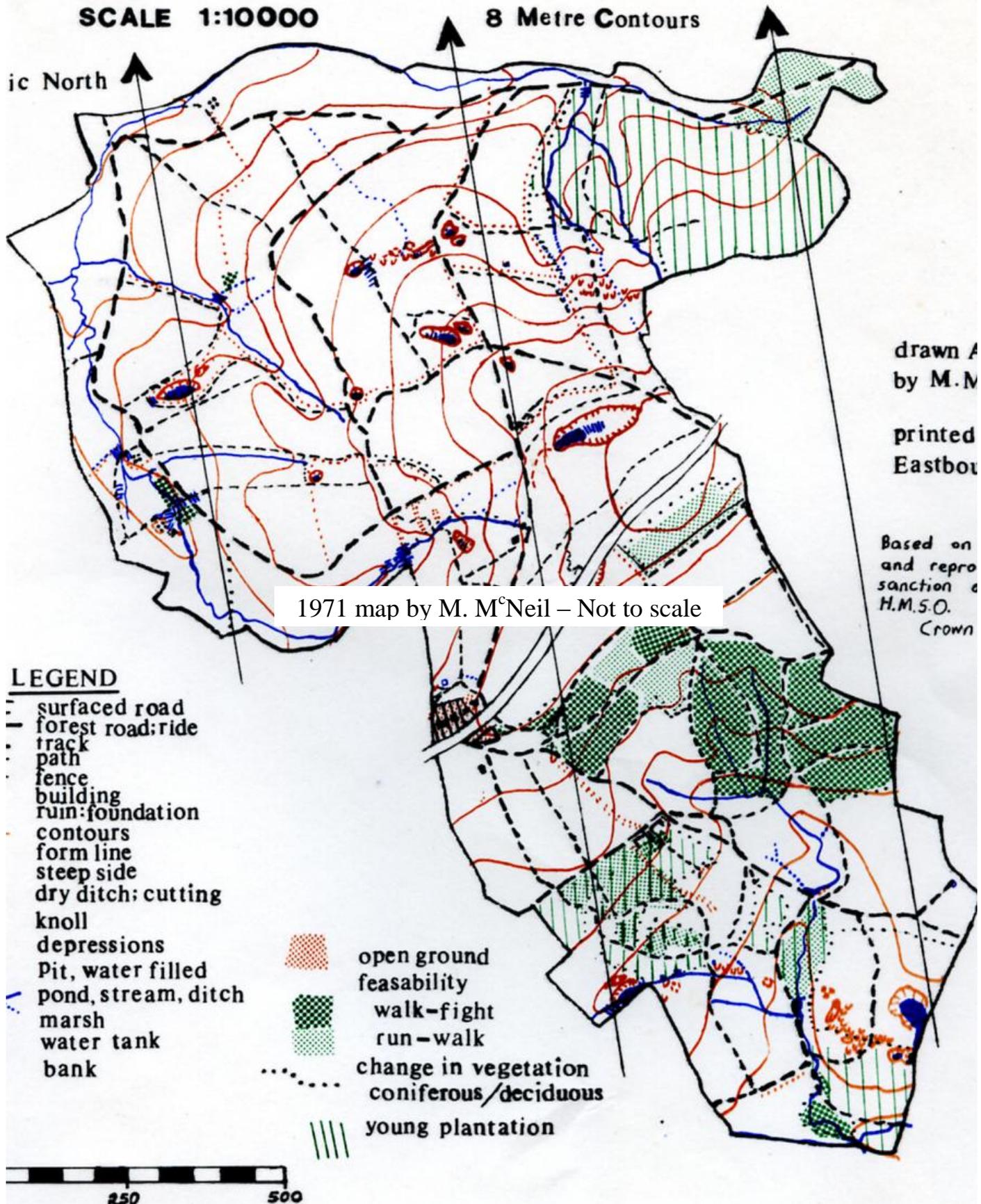
The major success for the club in 1986 was in the Harvester Relays. Three teams were entered, the team for the handicap 'B' class, Sax Ghoulies coming in 3rd after a running time of 7:33:09. The team, in running order, was Garri Owen, Julie Fletcher, Mike Billingham, David Faller, John Faller, Margaret Kent and Martyn Bell. David and then John had to borrow lights since neither had run in the dark before and it was only when John handed over to Margaret

VINEHALL FOREST

SCALE 1:10000

8 Metre Contours

True North



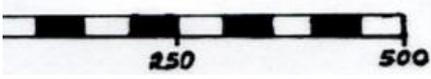
1971 map by M. McNeil – Not to scale

drawn by M. McNeil
printed by Eastbourne

Based on
and reproduction
sanctioned by
H.M.S.O.
Crown

LEGEND

- surfaced road
- - - forest road; ride
- · · track
- · · path
- · - · - fence
- ▭ building
- ▭ ruin: foundation
- contours
- form line
- steep side
- - - dry ditch; cutting
- knoll
- depressions
- Pit, water filled
- pond, stream, ditch
- marsh
- water tank
- bank
- open ground
- feasibility
- walk-fight
- run-walk
- · · change in vegetation
- · · coniferous/deciduous
- ▨ young plantation



that dawn was breaking and lights were not required. Margaret set off in 5th place had a steady run whilst last leg runner Martyn set off at a blistering pace to cover the 9.1 km leg in 60 minutes. The second success in the year was the increase in membership with 105 new members being recorded.

1987 was dominated by the October hurricane which caused the cancellation of many events across the whole of the South East. In the words of Chairman Garri Owen, the effect for the club was devastating.

In 1988 the JK was held at Goodwood and again all SE clubs were asked to help out. Fortunately, the great storm had made little impact on this area. The club's co-ordinator was John Faller who was helped by 29 volunteers to control the traffic and to man the radio controls and PA system.

1989 saw a change in the club night which was moved to Thursday evening following a change in management at the British Queen. Saxsales was introduced selling not only the club kit to members at events but also a range of drinks and confectionary.

In 1990 the club's membership exceeded 300. The schools league, still under the sponsorship of Hobbs Parker, attracted 19 schools. The season's winner was Kent College, Canterbury. The schools league had undoubtedly been a success, attracting about 150 competitors. Sadly Graham advised that he was unable to fulfil the organisational role in the coming season and in spite of all efforts a replacement for him could not be found and the league was discontinued.

The South East Relays were held at Vinehall in 1990, an event planned by Mike Billingham.

1991 saw the staging of the clubs badge event at Hemstead forest, the first such event for 4 years due to the 1987 storm. Sarah Kingdon became the W10 Southern Champion in 1991 and in 1992 Joanna Hickling became the British Champion in the W21S class.

To celebrate the club's 21st anniversary in 1993, a three day event, 'Spring in the South', was planned with the help of Southdowns. Under the co-ordination of Bill Griffiths, the events were staged at Brede High Wood, Bedgebury and Tilgate forest. All maps were produced using (OCAD) computer software.

Notable achievements during 1995 were the presentation of the Kent County Council Sporting Excellence Awards to Sarah Kingdon (W11) and Mark Wilkins (M13) and Bill Griffiths created the Saxons Saturday Series, the first event being staged in Mote Park.

On the last day of the year, the club staged National Event 1 on Ashdown Forest, the last time we organised a National (or level A) event. Two new areas were mapped in 1996; Bickley and Beckley was surveyed by Bill Griffiths and Eridge Old Park was mainly surveyed by Ken Hale. Eridge was used as the club's Badge area for the 1995/6 season and 'An Enchanted Place' for the 1996/7 season, bringing the total of major events organised within 12 months to 3.

In November, the Saxons Information (phone) Line was introduced giving 24 hour recorded information regarding club events. This phone line was managed by Don Palmer.

Ightham was the venue for the 1997 Badge event and new area Hindleap Warren was used in the following year.

A major advance in communications took place in 1999 with the setting up of the club's web site with David Moore becoming the club's webmaster.

Under the co-ordinator Simon Greenwood, a small band of club members already planning to run in the Scottish 6 day event, also helped out at the World Championships held around Aviemore.

The new millennium saw the club involved in another 3 day event, this time originally proposed by Southdown Orienteers. Saxons staged a Colour coded event at Knole Park on the first day, Southdowns held a Badge event at Oldhouse Warren and Mole Valley completed the three days with a Badge event on the Balcombe estate.

In 2000 Joanne Hickling once again became Southern Champion in the W35S class and Dorothy Hale became British Champion in the W70 class.

During 2000 electronic punching arrived in the south east. Together with other SE clubs, Saxons placed money into a central fund for the purchase of equipment, the total sum being matched by a lottery grant. The committee agreed to use electronic punching on all colour coded and Badge events but to retain card

punching on Saturday series and low-key events.

The advent of Foot and Mouth dominated the sport in 2001 with a huge number of events being cancelled. The club did, however, receive the good news that Becky Kingdon had been selected to run for GB in the European Youth Championships in the Czech Republic. Also the club's first Mountain Bike Orienteering event was held in Bedgebury Forest.

Our Badge event in 2002 only attracted 120 pre-entries. The final total of runners was just less than 200 with single runners occupying 19 classes. A summer Park 'O' was instigated by Jean Fitzgerald, comprising 4 events held during the height of summer in parkland settings.

In 2003 Dorothy Hale once again became the British Champion in the W70 class and the club's annual statistics revealed 92 active members but with only 9 active juniors.

The early part of 2004 saw two successes for Saxons teams. First W50's Jean Fitzgerald, Anita Kingdon and Anne Jago became British Champions at the BOC Relays. Then the Saxons team 'Stars in their eyes' (Dave Kingdon, Simon Greenwood, Anita Kingdon, Sarah Howes and Mark Glaisher) achieved 3rd place in the Harvester 'B' Handicap class.

Also in 2004 Saxnews reached edition 100 in the capable hands of John Faller. This special edition, a bumper 40 pages, contained the history of Saxons from beginning to 2004 compiled by John, and also memories of early orienteering events by stalwarts such as Doug Deeks, Tony Extance and Brian Lawrence.

In 2004 Saxons organised 17 events; 4 park event; 6 Saturday Series; 5 Sunday colour coded events plus a bike O event. Statistics showed that we had 90 active members-that is members who ran or officiated at 1 or more events. Ightham was used for our regional event in December 2004.

In January 2005 the first SaxAlert was produced, with the Saxonettes (Clare and Katy Howes) as editors.

In 2005 Dorothy Hale continued in form and became British Champion in W75 and was second at the JK. She also won her age class at the Scottish 6 days, coming first on 5 of the 6 days. Dorothy was also 2nd in W75 at the JK in 2006 and 2nd at the British Championships.

Katy Howes was 1st in W16B at the JK and Clare Howes was selected for the M/W16 tour to Halden in Norway.

In the 2006/7 season SI recording was used in the SSS for the first time. Electronic timing is now used at all of our events.

In 2007 the club was awarded Club Mark status (an accreditation for clubs with junior sections) under the leadership of Jerry Purkis. Saxons were the 19th orienteering club nationally and 2nd in the SE to obtain Club Mark status.

Saxons organised the SE score event at Hindleap in April, and at the JK Mark Wilkins was 1st overall in M21L and Dorothy Hale was 2nd in W75L.

David Kingdon was awarded a Certificate of Merit from British Orienteering for the quality of his Blean map.

The Kent Night Cup was initiated by Nick Barrable and is still proving popular today.

2007 saw the demise of the Saxons info phone line and the beginning of interest in urban events (the 1st City of London event was held in 2007).

In the 2007/08 season the Saxons Saturday Series was rebranded as the Kent Orienteering League in conjunction with DFOK. At this time a schools league was initiated and we saw the beginning of Tunbury School involvement in the schools league with Heather Brown and Tony Connellan setting up an orienteering club at the school. Tunbury School won the KOL school cup in 2008.

At the JK in 2008 Jeremy Oldershaw was 1st in the sprint event at Guildford University in M70L. In the individual days Ken Hale was 1st in M75S and Dorothy Hale was 2nd in W75L. The JK relays were held at Eridge and we had lots of positive feedback about the quality of our area. Sarah Howes was 1st in the SE sprints.

In 2008 colour images were introduced to the cover of SaxAlert, brightening up the magazine considerably.

2009 was another successful year for Saxons. In February at the British Nights event at Mychett, Sarah Howes was 2nd in W50L, Nick Barrable was 2nd in M21L and Mike Solomon was 3rd in M65L. Nick Barrable was 1st at the British Championships in M35L, Jeremy Oldershaw was 2nd in M70L and Joanne Hickling was 2nd

in W40S. At the JK Rowan Purkis was 1st in W55S on day 1 and 2nd on day 2. Mike Perry was 2nd in the sprint in M65L.

A review of the 2nd season of the KNC showed that there had been 26 events, with a total of 989 entries. The average turn-out for an event was 40. The 2008/9 champions were Nick Barrable (followed by Jonathon Crickmore and Neil Speers) and Rachel Collins (followed by Sarah Howes and Becky Kingdon).

Saxons ran the SE sprint (UKC) and SE middle (Blean) in September. In the sprint Peter Martin was 1st in the Supervet class and Sarah Howes was 1st in the Womens vet class. In the middle distance event Mark Purkis was 1st in M14, Peter Martin was 1st in M60, Sarah Howes was 1st in W50 and Heather Brown was 1st in W55.

Simon Maytum took over as co-ordinator of the KOL series in 2009; Nick Hope was managing the Sunday series and Simon Holford the KNC.

SaxAlert was given an award by CompassSport for the quality and content of the newsletter. In 2009 Saxons membership was 193.

In 2010 Saxons hosted the Harvester relays at Eridge, planned by Simon Greenwood, followed by our regional event at which Nick Barrable was 1st on the black course and Ken Fox was 1st on light green. In the JK sprint at Bicton College, Jeremy was 2nd in M70L

Saxons introduced Trail challenges to our annual events, and we obtained a grant of £300 from the Playing Fields Association to map Tunbury School, which was received by Tony Connellan on behalf of the club.

The club made a presentation to Ken and Dorothy Hale for their valued contribution to the club over the years. Tunbury School took part in the British Schools Orienteering Championships at Broxbourne where James Ford was 6th overall in the results.

In 2011 Saxons organised the SE sprints and relays. We also entered a team in the Peter Palmer relays for the first time. The Saxons team (comprising Richard and Mark Purkis, David and Andrew Thomas, Annabelle and Katie Taylor) was 2nd in the SE and 8th out of 25 overall. Jeremy Oldershaw was 3rd in the UK masters Cup.

In our 40th Anniversary year, Saxons Club Mark status was renewed in the capable hands of

Jerry Purkis. At the Jubilee Weekend event which finished with a mass score event and then a picnic, the Saxons team came 5th out of 11 teams. Saxons organised the 2nd successful junior only champs at Combebank School.

In the Saxons sprint event held at UKC, Clare Howes was 1st in W21 and Sarah Howes was 2nd in WVet. Saxons first Urban Event, held in Canterbury on 24 June, had over 200 entrants. Nick Barrable was 1st in the Mens Open and Sarah Howes was 2nd in the Womens Vets. Sax All Stars were 3rd in the handicap class at the Harvester Relays; the team consisted of Mark Purkis, Simon Greenwood, Heather Brown, Mark Glaisher, and David Thomas.

In the 2011/12 season we ran 31 events. Fixtures for 2012/13 have been drafted and Saxons are currently planning to organise 5 KOL events, 13 KNCs, 9 Sunday Series events, a night relay and a series of coaching events for beginners and more established orienteers. We currently have 160 members.

Saxons Hall of Fame:

Some of the people who have made important contribution to Saxons over the years are mentioned below.

Newsletter Editors

1972-1976	David Legget; Paul Turner; Val Westcott; Malcolm McNeil
1976	Brian Glenister & Maggie Dye
1978	Peter Billinghamurst
1978	John Bagness
1980	Brian Lawrence
1984	Tony Extance
1985	Alan Tough
1994	Ian Wilson
2002	John Faller
2005	Clare, Katy and Sarah Howes
2008	Richard Purkis
2010	Mark Purkis
2012	Rowan Purkis

Club Presidents

1978	Al Reid
1980	Peter Billinghamurst
1985	Doug Deeks
1988	Brian Lawrence
2004	Tony Extance
2009	Simon Greenwood

Club Chairmen

1973	Al Reid
1978	Peter Billinghamurst
1980	Tony Extance
1982	Heather Barrie
1983	Brian Lawrence
1984	Garri Owen
1988	Bill Griffiths
1994	Don Palmer
1995	Mike Solomon
1999	Jean Fitzgerald
2007	Rob Kingman
2009	Nick Hope
2014	Jean Fitzgerald

Web master

Dave Moore developed our web site and continued to keep it up to date until 2015.

Committee members

Many members (too numerous to mention individually) have served on the committee over the past 40 years of the club's existence and without them the club would not have developed into the successful club it is today.

So what has changed over the years?

Originally we had black and white photocopies of OS maps. Then there were hand-drawn colour maps of larger scale (see Johns description) but printed in large numbers professionally so after the area had been used a few times it was often necessary for competitors to copy map corrections onto their maps before the start (difficult in wet weather). With the introduction of computer software for map making (OCAD), map production became simpler, but large numbers were still printed off. Now maps are often updated before an event and they are printed off as required for each event, for all except Regional (level B) events, by club members.

Until relatively recently competitors had to copy their course onto their blank map at the start from 'Master Maps'. Many of you will remember the arguments about whether courses should be copied from the master maps before the start or in competition time. With the introduction of planning software such as Condes and Purple Pen, maps are now produced with overprinted courses on them so no more master maps!

In the olden days you had to prove that you had visited a control site by using a pin punch attached to the control to punch a cardboard 'control card' which needed protection from the elements otherwise you couldn't see the punch

markings in the disintegrating card. Now we have electron punching (SI or EMIT) which not only tells if you've visited the control but also records your time. This relieves the organiser of the need to check each control card and calculate the time taken by each competitor.

We used to just have colour coded events on Sundays with a few 'badge' events or 'national' events thrown in organised by various orienteering clubs. The choice of event to go to has now increased so that we have many different types of events being organised, such as Saxons KOL and KNC events and Urban, Sprint, Relay, Trail Challenge, Trail O and other low key and fun events, and they are not just held on Sundays.

We used to get information about what events were on by phoning the SEOA and Saxons information lines. Now we have a plethora of web sites and electronic mailing lists to immediately tell us what's on and where.

At its height, Saxons membership reached 300, and we often had over 700 entries in a Regional or Badge event. Current membership is 160, which is in line with the general reduction in membership of orienteering clubs seen in the UK. Alongside that we have an associated reduction in attendance at events.

We used to have a School's League organised by Graham Bridgland. After a gap of many years we are now developing a second School's league under the leadership of Tony Connellan and Heather Brown. We are now accredited by Club Mark.

Saxons used to hold Club nights where members socialised but did not necessarily orienteer; we had events such as badminton and skittles evenings. Now we have no club night. Should we resurrect one? British Orienteering has a different idea of what a club night should be. They want clubs to run a series of 'events' and coaching from one venue to increase the numbers of newcomers to the sport. Do we want to get involved in this scheme? Would you support/organise/take part in such a scheme?

Saxons used to rely on a willing band of enthusiastic volunteers to plan, organise and run the events that we put on. We still do! If you haven't been involved in the running of any of our events and would like to find out more contact any of our committee members.

It would be very useful to know what you, the members, would like us to organise in the future (different types of orienteering events/social events/coaching/training nights etc) so get in touch with any of the committee with your suggestions.

Here's looking forward to another successful year and to the next 40 years of Saxons Orienteering Club!

