

Charnwood Chatter

by Lyn Gale

Here we are in August (as I write this) and adapting to the new normal is still something of a challenge – not least because the new normal changes every week!

We have (and when I say “we” I mean mainly Jim, Paul and Karen) been meeting each week, usually at 9.30 and not always from the listed start nor to the listed destination, but at least a run has been held.

Pete and I have been on two of the runs, both with starts at Measham and both going to The Forestry Centre at Rosliston, once with Nick and once with Jim for company. Whilst the leader didn't go on the car assisted to Bakewell, Paul and Karen did go and have a ride round the area, and last weekend there were five out on the ride, nearly at full quorum for the current standard.

During the lockdown period I needed something to challenge my brain and feed my love of maps, and, after some internet searching, happened upon a Lands End to John o'Groats (though this actually ended up being Dunnet Head) table top rally which was run over a 100 days. Each day followed on from the previous, with most legs being around 30 miles long, taking me between 5 minutes and 2 days to plot!

Never heard of this? Well it's based on electronic map plotting, on screen you get the permitted map area, a route sheet, and you have to plot your route to meet the details given. Along the route there are hidden controls to check that you have gone the correct way and a distance check to make sure you have not gone a longer, or an incorrect shorter, route. In addition the time from starting the leg to submitting your plotted route is measured, making a decision between submitting early and perhaps getting your name in the listing as the fastest for that leg, or ensuring you got the route right, something to weigh up.

The maximum penalty points you could get was 600, the aim being to get 0. Going through a control the wrong way or missing it got you 300 penalty points, every tenth of a mile you were different from the master route earned you 1, and missing the day's final control, or approaching from the wrong way, earned you 600. There were a couple of days I was glad it was capped at 600 otherwise I would have got plenty more!

The route cards included such things as listing grid lines, crossing railway lines, passing churches, under and over bridges, spot heights, and drawn routes without the map behind which you then replicated on the map, to name but a few. My favourite was when someone questioned the master route so much that the original leg was withdrawn, much to the dismay of those that had already completed and got 0 points (me included), and everyone had to do it again. The replacement route was a drawn route, but the black line of the route had been made white making the route sheet appear as a blank piece of paper. There was a clue in the instructions about the route not being blank – and by changing the background colour the route appeared – very devious, and I was glad when I eventually solved it.



The competition got quite addictive, wondering each day what type of route you were going to be given and whether you would solve it correctly. There were others completing the day's plotting around the same time and it was interesting to see how they did too. Then, on some of the days, the plotted routes were so intriguing, having a look using the "google car" at the actual roads used gave some stunning vistas.

It reminded me of map reading competitions and BCTC heats and finals of old, and I really enjoyed the challenge and entertainment of it.

If anyone would like to have a look just log on to:

<https://tabletop.itv.me.uk/default.php>

There are some practice rallies there if you wanted to have a play, and it certainly makes you look and study maps in a way that perhaps you would never do usually. Another competition is planned for the future, and I know I will be doing it.