

Planner's Comments

I grew up in Henley. Within 1km of the edge of the extended Nettlebed map are four village cricket pitches, one of them being my 'home' ground; I estimate that I've spent about 600 hours on one or the other. And since then, I've run on many of the footpaths in the area. So it was a pleasure to be given licence to roam the woods to plan this event, enjoying especially the unexpected technical detail round the north start and the beautiful beechwoods in the north east, which abut the renowned Warburg Nature Reserve.

Then the problems started: there was a large new area to map, and limited access dates because of shooting were further curtailed by the snow that hit this part of the Chilterns severely, twice. In fact, apart from my preliminary recce in May, I saw snow lying — and often falling too — on every forest visit including on race day. And then the controller fell ill, so the target of having it 'all sorted by the end of the Christmas break' actually turned out to mean: "I'll try to finish the controlling on 31 January, and a final copy of the map would be nice!" Heartfelt thanks on your behalf to the principal mapper Martin Ricketts, for mapping the extension and for coping with the late requests for map changes from the controller and me.

The lack of time in the forest showed in a few places, notably some inconsistent runnability in the north but also around control 159, where Mike and I had only been through in a N-S direction but the mapping of the vegetation east and west of the control (originally surveyed in June 2008) was at best 'confusing' in winter conditions. Apologies if you lost time here.

The parking and the shape of the area meant that only the longest courses could use the bulk of the new terrain. This is a pity: look out for some future short-course races to give others the opportunity to enjoy the new area! My optimism that we would be allowed to cross areas of pasture proved unfounded, so many extra controls were added to funnel competitors via footpaths and stiles. The road crossing also had to be moved just a week before the event, following comments from the police. Although many of you will have suffered the curse of the mixed area — the nicest bits are so fast that you're through them in a flash, while the greener areas detain you for longer and skew your overall impression — you were generous in your praise of the area and the courses. Thank you.

Roger Thetford