

EVENT REPORTS

Peter Palmer Junior Team Relay 2016

By Bronwen Mansel

This was my 4th and final Peter Palmer relay since next year I will be too old, so I wanted to enjoy the experience as much as possible. There is always a great atmosphere; when else would an entire hall of people be willing to get up at 4am in the morning?

The basic premise is a relay consisting of 6 different legs; a night red course; a dawn red course; a light green course; an orange course; a yellow course and finally a green course. There must be at least two legs run by girls on the team (a condition which SUFFOC find it difficult to meet due to a lack of girls in our junior squad) but three different people can run the yellow course, of course only the fastest is counted as part of the final time but it is always good to get some relay experience. The SUFFOC team this year was: Matthew Clarke, Bronwen Mansel, Ben Hammond, Chloë Cracknell, Jack Hammond, Barney Steventon-Barnes, Ben Clarke and Tim Harrison (in order of their respective courses).

The event was held at a school in Leicester and I had a busy day travelling as well as doing the London City Race on the way to the event. After the whole team had arrived, we walked and got some takeaway food, which was especially nice after my long day and then played some cards, a necessity for team bonding. We were sleeping in the school gym and each club had its own area clearly marked out with masking tape, even with designated walkways, and along with the fact that each participant got a wristband on entry, I was very impressed with the organisation from LEI. The hall was not the comfiest but it was better than sleeping outside in a tent, which were the sleeping arrangements at a previous Peter Palmer.

As I was running the second leg, I wanted to get up and see the first leg runners off. Normally, I'm a morning person and don't mind waking up early, but my brain was not in gear and I failed to realise my mum had packed her inov8 shoes instead of mine until we got outside the hall, so it wasn't off to a great start (but at least we have the same size shoes). The starting and handover area was a compact space and there was only a thin strip for spectators but I watched Matthew set off on his first leg, although all I saw was a sea of headtorch lights heading off into the distance along a trail of glow sticks. When I went into the waiting pen, I was not at all prepared for Matthew to be in the first few teams as I hadn't seen him come through the spectator but he had a good run and then I was off on my dawn leg. I had not had much practice of night orienteering and everything looks very different in the dark but I managed to get round my course with a few errors and I only lost sight of the paths completely a few times. The area was not very technical, being a scrap of woodland next to the motorway, so most of the red course was just along the paths

and then off into the undergrowth. I didn't need my torch towards the end of the course as the sun had begun to rise so I handed over to Ben on the light green leg in foggy daylight.



Matthew Clarke in the mass start

We were just above halfway down the results for all the Peter Palmer teams after my leg, but all we were really interested in were the small clubs above us, since there is a separate competition for small clubs like us – the Norwich Anniversary Trophy. There was only one small club, EPOC, above us so we thought we might be in with a chance. However, their green leg runner set off before our yellow leg had even started so we knew we had an almost impossible deficit of over 20 minutes to catch up. The team had some good runs and we managed to get all the members out before the mini mass start, which is always nice. We were all watching the small gap in the hedge where everyone came out before the spectator control with anticipation to see whether our green leg runner, Tim, or the EPOC runner would come through first. Then to our surprise, Tim came through first, he had raced round his course and managed to overtake the other girl, who hadn't had such a good run. This meant that we were the best placed small club in the Peter Palmer results and so won the Norwich Trophy and more importantly, a box of chocolates to share before we headed off home.



The winning SUFFOC team