

# Loch EckOrienteers



In the last ten years EckO have gone from being a club with a very few people attending the local events (often about 15 people) to one where twenty-five club members attended the Scottish Championships in 2010 and the local Spring series was attended by forty five people on average.

Why has this happened? It is probably down to a combination of factors but the leading one is **PEOPLE**:

- ❑ **People #1**: links were re-established with a former EckO junior who had moved back to Argyll. As a family they took the sport up again. This family had contacts with a network of others in the same area and they encouraged these others to come along and so there became a core of juniors and adults.
- ❑ **People #2**: people involved in 'Adventure racing' realised that they needed to sharpen up their navigational skills and orienteering seemed to be an ideal way to do it. The Oban area had a very active group who were involved in adventure racing and they began to come along to the events.
- ❑ **People #3**: the sport was rapidly moving into the electronic age and we have a club member who embraced this technology. Since 2002 all maps have been overprinted (and so the first hurdle of trying to copy correctly was overcome); these maps are now always on waterproof paper; since 2002 electronic timing has been used with everyone given their split times at the finish. Add to this a website with loads of information, RouteGadget for every event . . . .
- ❑ **People #4**: although a small club there have always been some high performing orienteers, with selection for JWOC, Home Internationals, Regional Squads etc. This gives role models for the rest of the club to aspire to!
- ❑ **People #5**: the club has four Grade 3 controllers and one Grade 2. When the day allocations for the 6-Day Event are announced there are usually between one and three volunteers from the club. Two club members were involved in the planning for the Scottish Relays 2010.
- ❑ **People #6**: there are **sixty** British Orienteering register members. Only **three** of these are non-active. We also have some people who are attend every local event but do not travel further afield.



There are some other factors to consider, with one being **MONEY**:

- ❑ **Big Lottery**: around 2002, the club successfully applied for Lottery funding for maps. These were all in the Cowal area of Argyll but gave a good base for quality events. One of the areas was also large enough for a variety of training & coaching activities.
- ❑ **Other funding**: Argyll & Bute Council set up an organisation 'Stramash' to deliver a variety of activities to young people. The outdoor part was led by an orienteer who very quickly made contact with the club and the 'Argyll & Bute Orienteering Partnership' was formed. Through 'match funding', areas around Oban were mapped and SI electronic equipment was purchased. The schools were all mapped – and they did not receive their map until at least one teacher from that school had attended a free 'Teaching Orienteering Part 1' course.

Then there are **EVENTS**:



- ❑ **2003**: First coaching day with an interest shown by a wide range of people (about 25 attended) in December at Ardkinglas; people enquired about more orienteering opportunities after this.
- ❑ **2004**: Middle distance race at Aird's Park (about 6 EckO members ran this event).
- ❑ **2006**: SOL & FCC Long Distance Final at Creag Mhic. The first big event for people to come to in the EckO area and the first taste for many of the atmosphere of a large event and many courses (and loads of mud as well!).
- ❑ **2008**: the Purple Thistle was held on EckO maps (Kerrera, Oban Town and Creag Mhic). Another introduction to a larger orienteering event for some club members.
- ❑ **2009**: SOL at Ardnaskie; many more club members helping than there were three years before at Creag Mhic.

- ❑ 2009: about fifteen club members go to Tay 2009. Some families only entered the first three days and then returned for Day 6 as they had enjoyed it so much. Juniors wanted their fourth qualifying day – and one achieved a podium place!
- ❑ 2009: EckO win the 8-person relay at Faskally Woods.
- ❑ 2010: EckO hold their first residential coaching weekend away – and over fifty of all ages sign up for it! A grant obtained from 2014 Communities fund paid for another couple of coaches.
- ❑ 2010: twenty five EckO members go to the Scottish Orienteering Championships.
- ❑ 2011: the Scottish 6-Day event is Oban 2011. Many EckO members are filling positions on the Central Organising Team which is being led by Ross Lilley.
- ❑ Other events: every year, even in the 'lean times' there was a Spring Series of four to six evening events. Most years have also seen an Autumn Series and a few events during the winter – usually on a Sunday. Three courses were offered (yellow / orange / green) but this year we are now offering five courses (yellow / orange / light green / green / blue). Most of the entries are on green and blue.
- ❑ Social events: this forms an important part of the club development. Social events range from the 'bring-a-dish' after the annual club champs to the New Year Deflab Fun Run (which is followed by soup/sandwiches/cakes). The most hotly contested club trophy is the 'Wooden Compass' for the mistake you wish you had not made (or at least hoped no one else would find out about!).

**COACHING** is an integral part of club activities.

- ❑ Days: the club endeavours to put on two to three coaching days every year. These are mainly aimed at TD3 and above, going on the belief that coaching the senior well will mean that the junior is then coached by the adult/parent.
- ❑ Weekend: as already mentioned the residential weekend was a huge success. It finished with a team event for all and requests that the weekend is repeated every couple of years.
- ❑ Juniors: all the juniors have their 'Incentive folders' and their 'Star Award' skills grids. Each junior regularly chats with a coach who gives the individuals some skills targets to aim for. One of the club members works with juniors in her local school on a regular basis.
- ❑ Seniors: many of the seniors who have recently come into the sport are encouraged to chat over their courses if possible. If someone has a disaster then a coach tries to make contact with them and have a one-to-one chat about what they did and then have some technique input.
- ❑ Coaches: at the moment EckO have three coaches (but they are all qualified to a high level – one Level 3, one aspirant Level 4 and another Level 4). Hopefully there will be between three and five Level 1 coaches by the end of 2010.



**BRANDING**: People want to buy into the 'brand' – wear a club top, have a club flag, be at the club tent, cheer club members along the run-in and at the prize giving.

## DEVELOPMENT

EckO would like to continue to develop in a variety of ways.

- ❑ The need for more qualified coaches has already been mentioned.
- ❑ There is a 'mentoring' system for those interested in planning/organising local events.
- ❑ Club members have just filled in a brief electronic survey so they could have their say about the way forward for the next six months. There were thirty two responses.
- ❑ People continue to be encouraged to attend events outwith the local area.

Some things have **NOT WORKED**.

- ❑ We have recently cancelled a coaching day due to conflict of activities on that weekend.
- ❑ We would like to encourage more to help plan/organise a local event.
- ❑ Despite positive encouragement club members have not embraced urban orienteering.
- ❑ For each of the past three years the club has run two area school championships where there are between one hundred and two hundred children competing. From this no one has attended the local events.
- ❑ Midges & bracken in high summer – a poor combination that we have no control over!

Lynne Walker, EckO Secretary.