

Mapping Comments

I've always been a fan of Judy Woods (as the locals call it) right back to lunchtime runs through it from work over 30 years ago. Since then both the woods and the mapping have evolved. The old beeches now have their offspring creating the dappled light green patches and offering orienteers that challenging mix of runnable but low visibility terrain, although lovely areas of fast running among the giant beeches remain.

The map evolution here at Judy Woods (aka Royds Hall) reflects that of many of our well used areas. I first orienteered here in 1990 on a 1987 map by "EPOC members" that credited a 1976 original by M Hemsworth (of AIRE (?) - before EPOC was formed). By 1992 there was a new survey by Gari Williams and Tim Gough, with cartography at 1:10,000 by Rod Ryall, and still almost no green, just a few holly bushes in the north west. The contour detail on that 1992 map is good and could still be used today for orienteering. By 2014 the map had been transformed to a 1:7,500 by Alistair Tinto and more green was appearing. The same map was used in 2019. However by 2023, and post Storm Arwen a couple of winters ago, things were looking very dated and I got quite confused and dejected on my first planning visit in early September. There was so much to change.

A discussion with our resident family mapper (Alasdair) cheered me up however. LiDAR was now available, including vegetation layers. By the next day, thanks to some late night work by Alasdair and a crash course from him on using OpenOrienteering Mapper on my phone, I had a geo-referenced map with contour features adjusted to their correct positions and some of the new clearings and vegetation updated. Several mapping visits later and I had the map that we used for today's event. Whilst not a complete remap (and I am very aware of a few small areas which were missed) it is fair to call it a "substantial update". It is also interesting to see how the new map has some areas thatbare slightly stretched compared to the older surveys, as well as rotated as magnetic north changes.

The biggest challenge in mapping this wood is that it is a remarkably natural wood for one so close to large urban areas. The trees are regenerating and boundaries between what is white, light green and green are generally indistinct as you will have found. The paths are indistinct too and also constantly evolving as trees fall and mountain bikers choose new routes. In general my approach was to remove paths on the map where they were almost identical to the 'white' forest, and to make most of them "indistinct" which I hope was not too confusing for competitors.

From finishing the map on 13th October, the woods are already changing and evolving further as Storm Babet came through. One enormous tree fell across the path close to control 83 and there were other areas of windblow, particularly near control 96. This just emphasises that our maps are very much a snap-shot in time, historical records of an ever-changing landscape. In ten years time the map will look different again... and I hope I'll still be able to enjoy a full lap of orienteering round this fascinating woodland.

Mike Pedley (Planner and co-map-updater)

