

Some idle browsing turned up a 3 day event in Macedonia. Most people would be hard pressed to locate Macedonia on a map!! A small land locked nation in the Balkans established in 1991 and surrounded by Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece, it's only real international acclaim being its long running dispute with Greece about its name!!.



The 'original' Macedonia from Alexander the Great's time also included parts of Greece and Bulgaria.

Pece Atanasoski was the JK of Macedonian orienteering founding OK Zlatovrv in Prilep and putting Macedonia on the world orienteering stage. His sudden death at the age of 60 in 2009 was a huge blow to the club and the growing Macedonian Squad.

Memorial Orienteering Competition "Pece Atanasoski" (MOCPA) 2017 was the sixth event in memory of the founding father of Macedonian orienteering.

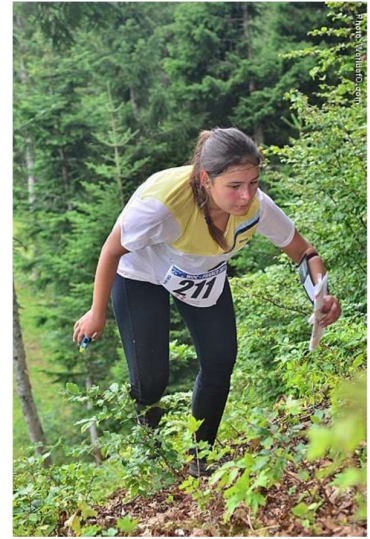
Four of us gathered at Luton Airport for the early morning Wizz Air flight to Skopje.

The usual messages about the draconian cost of data and calls greeted us on landing (Macedonia is only a candidate for EU membership) together with a welcome message encouraging us to visit the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle.

A couple of hours later we were over the pass into Southern Macedonia and in Prelip ready for the action.

Our first evening introduced us to the delights of Macedonian beer and food – we did our best to eat and drink in style but could only push the bill to just over £20 for the four of us!!

The next day we headed west across the plains towards the mountains that separate Macedonia from Albania. The sprint race was in Krusevo – the highest town in the Balkans at 1500m (higher than Ben Nevis!!). It was misty and a little chilly. Krusevo was the centre of the Macedonian uprising against the Ottomans.



*Event Director - Meri Chkripeska
at WOC 2011*



*Pitu Guli
Hero of the Battle of Mechkin Kamen*

We visited the battlefields of 1903 and enjoyed our first introduction to the Macedonian Struggle. The Republic of Krusevo lasted just 10 days before the uprising was crushed at the Battle of Mechkin Kamen

Krusevo also hosts an impressive museum commemorating the life of Tose Preoski – a local lad who made it big as a singer but died in a car crash in 2009 at the age of 26. He used much of his wealth to support local causes including the monastery.

The sprint race was from the local primary school recently refurbished with aid from Norway.

The courses were well planned with lots of route choice in the narrow streets and alleyways.

Tony and Helen won M70 and W40 so we were off to a good start.



Sprint Race - Veteran Men



Start - Elephant Rock on Markovi Kuli

Day 2 was a middle distance race on the rocky mountain just to the West of Prelip. The event centre was again the local primary school overshadowed by the vista of Markovi Kuli.

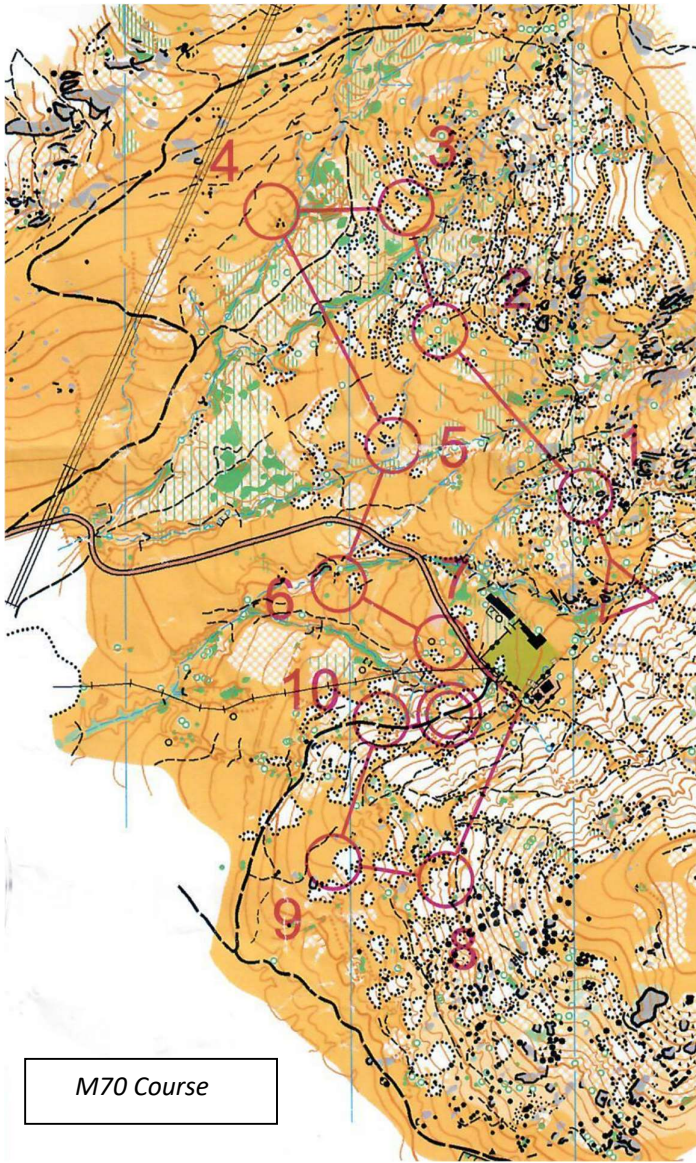
With no undergrowth only the steep slopes and your ability to read all the rock accurately should have slowed you down.

Helen won W40 again but Philip and Tony could only manage 3rd and 4th on M70.

Everybody was growing tobacco and most were picking it while smoking last year's crop!!

We rounded off the day with some monastery visiting and more beer and food!! Treskavec Monastery is at the summit of Mount Zlatovrv (1422m) after which the local O club is named.

For Day 3 and a chasing start the Event Centre was to the east of Prelip at the monastery of St. Demetrius of Salonica. The terrain was steep, rocky and partly covered in pine, but there was still no excuse not to run!!



M70 Course



Before the prize giving everybody was provided with a Macedonian lunch cooked in the monastery.

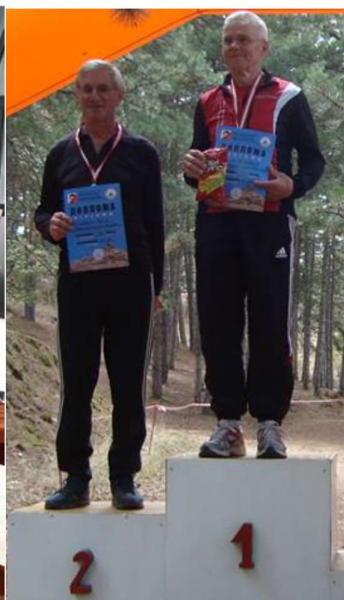


We headed back to Skopje for some sightseeing including a visit to the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle (for independent statehood). History graduates from the local university enthusiastically related the tales of the political struggle and the battles we had seen commemorated in Prelip.

The 7th MOCPA is scheduled for the Orthodox Easter weekend (one week after the JK). A four (or perhaps five) day event is planned. Mark it in your diary for some O in unique terrain and the chance to support the Struggle to establish orienteering in Macedonia.



Post-mortem over Macedonian beer
Helen & Tony



Prizes – Tony



Prizes – Helen