

Shamrock O'Ringin

There may not be many orienteers in Ireland, but there is an abundance of first class orienteering terrain. Fortunately the UK May Bank holiday rarely clashes with Whitsun and the Irish Bank holiday. Each year there is a feast of orienteering alternating between the Western Eagles Galway Club and the Cork Club. This year it was Cork's turn. We checked in at an unsociable 05.45 to fly from Southampton to Dublin, and then sampled Irish Railways all the way to Killarney in time for the Sprint event on Friday evening.

Four years since the previous event here have dulled the memory and I think we have all forgotten just how rocky it was underfoot. But on a balmy evening it was a good leg stretch.



Saturday saw us at Black Lakes – since our last visit about 100 wind turbines have appeared. We are allowed to drive 30 minutes into the terrain and park under the turbines. Despite preconceptions they are almost silent, but yes they are big and white!! but not sure they are ugly.



Instead of the hour's climb at the last event, we have a gentle stroll to the edge of the turbine farm and the start of the Middle Distance race of 2.9km.

Where's the paths – ah! this is Ireland, there are no paths!! Steady to 1 getting

into the rock and marshes. Completely misread the hillside as I leave 3, forget to use the compass and end up with an unnecessary run round a lake.



Finish in 41min in the top 6 – good start.

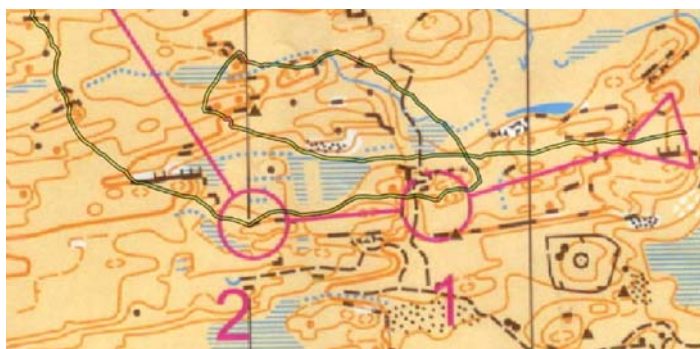


The aerial view of the finish gives a splendid view of one of the turbines.

Day 2 takes us to the other side of the valley on Crohane Mountain. Classic race of 3.9km. We soon find out why the

courses are short – tussock marsh everywhere!! It is time Cork OC invested in a flock of sheep! Steady run of 84 min with the odd small mistake moves me up to third overall.

Day 3 is a Chasing Start on Crohane Lake – next door to Day 2 – we are promised a special experience in Irish forest. With the next runner just 2 minutes behind me I lose my head on the way to 1, 12 minutes later I am on the way to 2.



Vow to get my head in gear and make no more mistakes. Despite some good

navigation my legs refuse to turn over fast enough. My 'chaser' wastes 9 minutes+ at 13, but I lose out by 6 minutes overall. Checking splits we discover he has beaten me by at least a few seconds on nearly every leg. Greg is from the Ugly Gulley club in Brisbane. We swop Australian O stories on the way back to Killarney.



The forest is indeed spookey – solid spruce down to the ground on the edge, but bare trunks inside, no brashings, lots of marsh and the occasional rocky stream.



Sue Hands finishes in fine style to take second in W65 by just 5 seconds over 3 days, and Vikki Crawford also takes second in W70.