

## Elibank – SOL 1 - 6/3/16 – Planners Report

It is quite a while since I planned a major event, and even longer since I planned an event which wasn't in my own back yard. It is also quite a while since I orienteered at Elibank, so it was quite a pleasure to get to know this, perhaps underestimated, gem of an area a bit better. We had decided to re-introduce the Elibank Craigs hill to the map to give more scope for a SOL, after having been assured by the FC that there was not going to be any felling activity. The plan was to base the event to the east of the area making use of the forest roads for parking. However on my first planning visit I was surprised to discover that the forest road around Elibank Craigs had been ungraded. It was a lovely smooth surface but too high and narrow to make it suitable for parking. With no other suitable parking available this meant shifting the event centre to Walkerburn which didn't really affect my planning but was a logistical nightmare for Lindsey as organiser. The new roads did however ring alarm bells – they don't upgrade roads for no good reason. Sure enough there was thinning scheduled to take place before our event!!! We were told that it was mainly going to be light thinning on the southern part of the hill so I went ahead and planned with this in mind. They were still thinning the area around control 123 on the day I put out the Si units. I hope the less than pristine nature of the forest floor and rides didn't spoil your enjoyment too much.

My aim as planner was to produce proper long distance courses – both in length, winning time and in style of planning. I feel that too many events nowadays are on the short side and with planning more suited to a middle distance event. I was trying to have some decent long route choice legs and wasn't concerned if this entailed running on roads and paths – there would still be plenty of running in terrain! What I didn't want was a control-pick. This was easier to achieve on the 4 longest courses particularly when it came to linking up the eastern and western parts of the area without forcing competitors into the green blocks of forest in between. As you may now be aware the four longest courses all had an identical leg from 158 to 123 with multiple route choice options. Judging from comments after the event and from studying Routegadget it appears that every route choice option I had envisaged (and a few I hadn't!) was used. I think the best option was the one to the right which although it involved crossing the felled area had a lot less climb than the other options. I have to thank Robin Sloan for “discovering” and “gardening” a section of the right hand route which wasn't on the original 2016 map but which Robin was aware of from previous editions. It was slightly more difficult to have such dramatic route choice legs on the shorter courses but I hope I gave you enough to think about and that you enjoyed visiting what I felt were the nicest and navigationally most challenging bits of Elibank.

I would also like to thank Ian Turner (SOLWAY) for his invaluable advice as controller and the band of RR members who helped put out Si units and bring in controls.

### Footnote

Regarding my comments about long distance planning – I feel there is perhaps an opportunity to revamp the SOL series to include both Long and Middle distance events. Making a clear distinction between them in both length and planning style. Scoring could say be best 5 results with at least two long and two middle plus one other from either category. It would encourage a bit of diversity, make some areas more viable and make double header weekends more meaningful. Discuss!

### The Long Leg

I have had a quick look at the splits for the long leg on Black, Brown, Sh. Brown and Blue. Fastest on Black (and fastest o/a) was Thomas Wilson of EUOC (M21) on 10.20 with Doug Tullie upholding family honour 3s behind. Fastest on Brown was Will Hensman FVO (M35) on 11.37 – this was Will's only fastest split, 2.39 faster than 2<sup>nd</sup> on Brown Tom Lines of ECKO whom he beat o/a by 2.01! Pat Bartlett INT (M45) was fastest on Short Brown in 13.27 but only 12<sup>th</sup> o/a in that course. On Blue fastest was Joseph Wright MAROC (M16) in 10.46 getting close to the times set by the M21's.