

# Know your sport: The Jan Kjellström International Festival

For those who have been regular orienteers for several years, the Easter weekend is known for the staging of the 'JK' festival. For newer members this usually needs an explanation. So here we take a look at its origins, its structure and the regional locations used for the event.

## Why 'Jan Kjellström'?

Born in 1940, **Jan Kjellström** was an orienteer from Sweden and the son of Alvar Kjellström, the Silva compass founder.

Jan was around at the start of orienteering in UK. His foreign work however commenced in the forests of Belgium in 1964. The following year gave him the opportunity to compete in the forests of France when he again gave his time, expertise and encouragement to a country struggling to acquire the skill of the sport he was born to. During the next 2 years the relationship developed further when he competed in Britain and he travelled the country teaching those in the UK better techniques and improved methods of organising competitions. June 1966 saw him once again assisting at a 'Euro' meeting as a true ambassador for the sport. At that time, through his expertise, sincerity and humour, he established himself as an outstanding ambassador of the sport.



Adapted from information on the JK website.

He created such an impression in a very short time before his untimely death in a car accident in 1967. In memory of his significant contribution to the development of orienteering in the UK, the British Orienteering Federation decided to hold a memorial event in his name. It was held for the first time in 1967 and moved to the Easter weekend in 1969.

## Structure

Over the years, the format of the Easter weekend JK has changed. One complication is that Easter Monday is not a Public Holiday in Scotland and it is commonly a school day. With the need for some to travel long distances to reach the events, deciding on the most suitable format has been a regular issue. From 1973 - 1979 there were two main events: and individual on the Saturday and a relay (for the JK Trophy) on the Sunday. For those able to make it into a 4 day weekend, there were usually less formal 'warm-up' and 'run-down' events on the Friday and Monday.

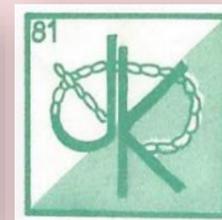
In 1980 the relay was moved to Easter Monday and the individual competition was based on two separate races over Saturday and Sunday - still with a 'warm-up' or 'training' event on the Friday. With the increasing interest in sprint orienteering (and its inclusion as a discipline in the World Championships) it was decided in 2006 to make the Friday event into a stand-alone sprint event with starts into the afternoon allowing more time to travel. Most recently, with the growth of interest in 'middle' distance events, a variation was included which provided a 'middle' type event for the Elite men/women open classes on the Saturday with a 'long' event on the Sunday - other classes having a 'long' on both days. As from 2017, this format is being adopted for all classes.

As an individual competition, a competitor's time over the two days of events is used to determine the class winner. In the relays, in addition to the main Open class for the JK Trophy, different classes exist usually based on a team's total age classes (e.g. M120+ or W165+) making for very varied teams.

See the JK website for more information: <http://www.thejk.org.uk/>



**Caution:** Two factors add to the difficulty for organisers of the JK. Firstly the date of Easter is variable with its earliest being about 22nd March and its latest being about 25th April. This means that the amount of daylight available changes quite significantly. Also at that time of year, there is a very great range of potential weather from blizzard conditions (*Easter Monday, 2008*) to warm spring sunshine (*Friday Sprints, 2014*) and even within a weekend the conditions can change radically. Conditions can be very different for the JK in the south-west to one in Scotland.



A selection of JK logos. The current standardised logo was adopted in 2012.

## The JK in the South Central OA Region

Excluding the 'holiday' weeks in the summer (*the Scottish 6 Days, the Lakes and Croeso*), the JK is the largest event in UK orienteering calendar. As an event staged by volunteers, it has always been the responsibility of one of the UK regional associations to act as hosts, rather than specific clubs. With 12 regional associations, the allocation to a region is roughly every 10 years but not all associations are able to stage the event due to limited suitable areas or limited active orienteers.

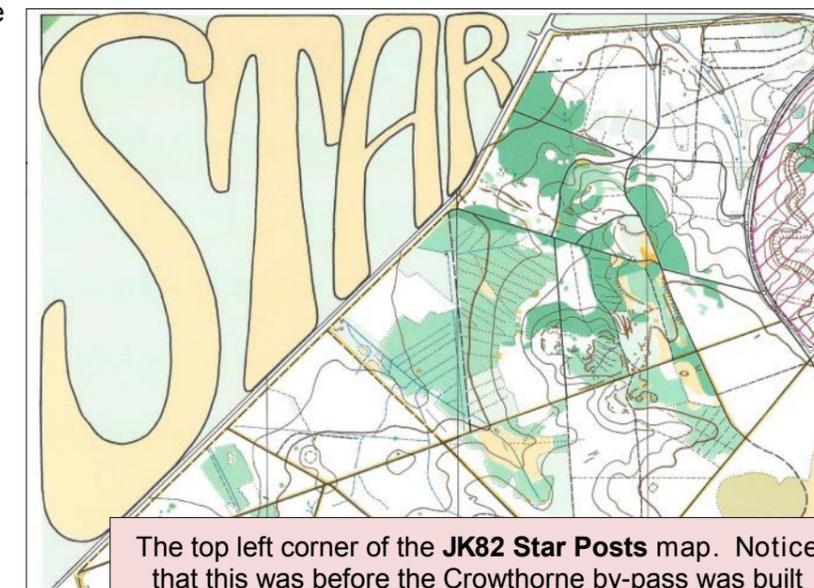
This table shows when the South Central region (SCOA) has taken on the task of running the event and the areas used:

	Warm-up event	Individual	Relay	Run-down Event
1975	?	Star Posts	Hawley and Hornley	Star Posts
	Training event	Individual (day 1)	Individual (day 2)	Relay
1982	?	Star Posts	Star Posts	Yateley Heath
1993	Burghfield Common	Woolmer & Longmoor	Long Valley	Highclere
2003	Ashley Hill	Hambleden	Star Posts	Hambleden
	Sprint race	Individual (day 1)	Individual (day 2)	Relay
2013	University of Reading	Hambleden	Cold Ash	Hambleden
	Sprint race	Individual (Middle)	Individual (Long)	Relay
2019	Rutherford Appleton	Windmill Hill	Cold Ash	Bradenham

Notice that the region has only a very limited number of areas which are suitable for staging these events. The New Forest, which might be considered suitable, is not accessible due to environmental issues. Berkshire Orienteers has two main areas which are suitable - Star Posts and Cold Ash. Hambleden is a TVOC area which has also been regularly used. As well as needing a large area with suitable terrain, another major consideration (or limitation) is the need to park a huge number of vehicles close to the area - an issue which complicates the use of Star Posts. In 1982, parking was at the Road Research Laboratory, just over the road from Crowthorne Woods.

The changes in structure have made finding the increased number of areas even more complicated. However the shift to a 'Middle' for the Saturday from this year has opened up additional possibilities. Notice that for 2019 it is provisionally agreed that the 'Middle' will be staged at Windmill Hill. This is quite a small area next to an army base just to the east of Frimley.

Some other regions have several high quality areas and the JK usually provides some of the toughest challenges for competitors - hence the attraction for international competitors.



The top left corner of the JK82 Star Posts map. Notice that this was before the Crowthorne by-pass was built