

## Portugal Orienteering Meeting, 2017, Phil & Adele Newall

### Background

Some of you might remember that I penned an article on the POM 2016 event which was attended by ourselves, Moncasters and Eastleys. Well, we had such a good time that we entered again this year, as did the Eastley's. It's a 4-day format, two Middle, two Long and a Night Urban, running Saturday through to Tuesday.

This year it was situated in the Portalegre/Crato area about 2 hours' northeast of Lisbon and is one of the first big international orienteering meetings of the year and includes a World Ranking event. Thus, it attracts a very high quality field (over 1,000 Scandinavians), 36 countries represented in total (including over 70 Brits) amongst the 2,500 competitors. The men's elite was won by Thierry Gueorgiou and the women's by Simone Niggli

So as previously, we turned up early at Bristol Airport on the Thursday morning for the relatively short flight to Lisbon. There were quite a few BOK members on the flight and Lisbon airport was full of orienteers.



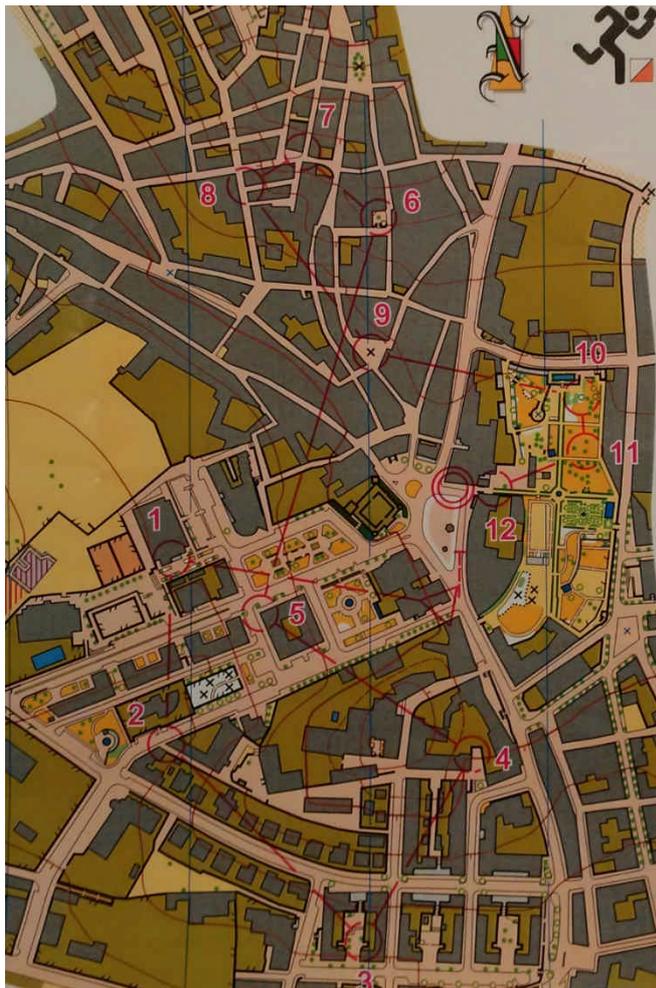
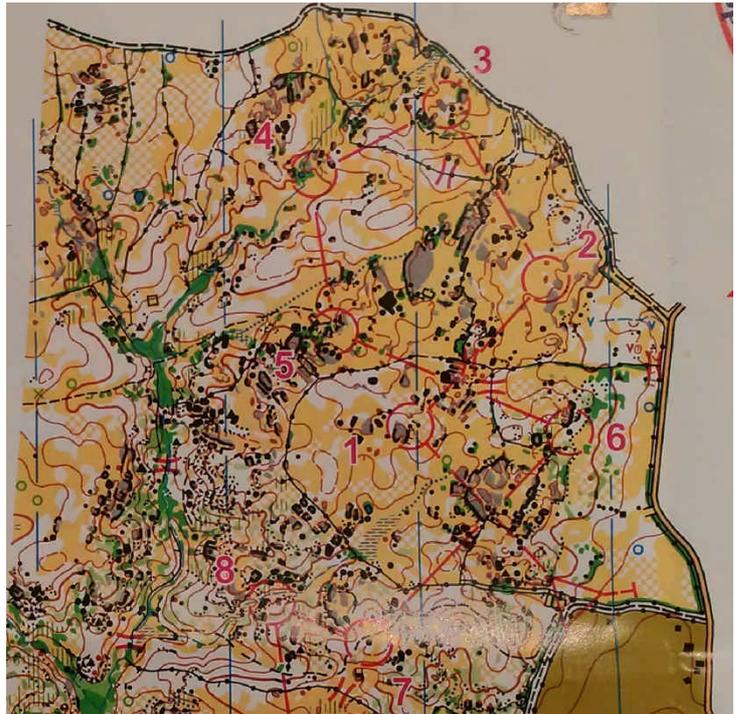
We had decided to spoil ourselves on the first night and stay in the Pousada in Evora, a fantastic Roman/Medieval town about half-way to the event centre. On the Thursday afternoon, we had a great wander around the old town and commented what a fantastic Urban venue it would make, not realising that it was in the schedule for POM 2018 as one of the Middle distance day events – it will be amazing!

Friday morning, we headed off to the event centre to pick up our bibs and Model Event map which was vital to do to get a feel for how the maps and terrain related. We weren't to be disappointed! Many boulders of all shapes and sizes with generally good runnability between, a theme to be repeated during the week.

## Day 1

POM 2017 kicked off with a Middle Distance event. I had 3.4km and 95m of climb and for once I had a blinder, finishing just outside the top 20 (97 in my M55 class). I seemed to see the map well and ran pretty strongly, finishing in 29 minutes, just 4 minutes behind the leader. Adele had a steady run finishing 22<sup>nd</sup> out of 61, some 13 minutes off the pace.

We had a bit of time to kill between races, so went off to look at the ruined Roman town of Ammaia which in its peak had some 3,000 inhabitants. They have only excavated a bit of it, but the scale of the place is immense.



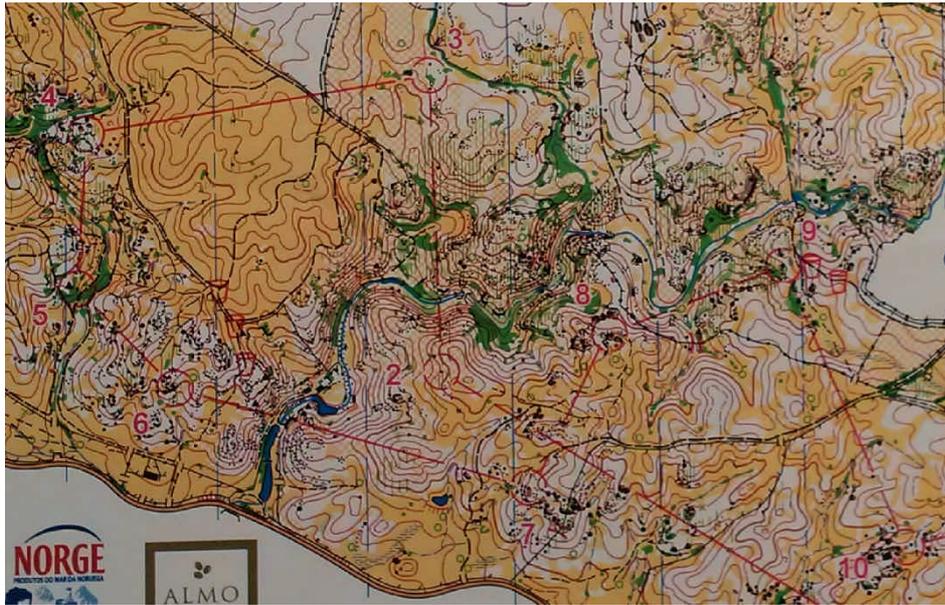
Quick shower back at the house then off to the Night event in the small village of Alter Do Chão. I had 2.6km and 60m climb and in reality it was all fairly straightforward with a slight sting in a dark park just before the finish.

I had a good run clocking 15.41, just 2 minutes off the pace and finishing 14<sup>th</sup> out of 56. Adele also had a good run, just 4 minutes down on the leader, which would have been better if she hadn't been chased by a dog! Overall, good fun, but not very taxing.

Anyway, an excellent Day 1 and we were both looking forward to the Long Distance in the morning.

## Day 2

Woke up with a start, not feeling quite right, rushed to the loo in excruciating pain. Sat there for ages feeling really bad with extreme abdominal pain, really wondering if I could move, let alone run.



Eventually got myself up and we made our way to the event, but I was in a lot of pain and had no energy. Let's just say it wasn't a very comfortable run, but no major mistakes, just slow! I had some quite long legs, with decent climb and they really hurt, particularly 2-3 across the river which was very rough.

I seemed to have been out there for hours, but it only took me around 68 minutes for the 6.1km and 190m climb. Surprised that I managed a 37<sup>th</sup> out of 95, but 18 minutes down on the winner. Adele had a really good run, finishing in 12<sup>th</sup>, just 7 minutes down.

We were both pretty tired, but decided to go and have a look around Marvão, an incredible fortified Medieval village perched on top of a mountain. The highlight was seeing the underground cistern carved out of the rock that could provide the town with water for 6 months.



I think the majority of the visitors were orienteers judging by the proliferation of track suits!

### Day 3

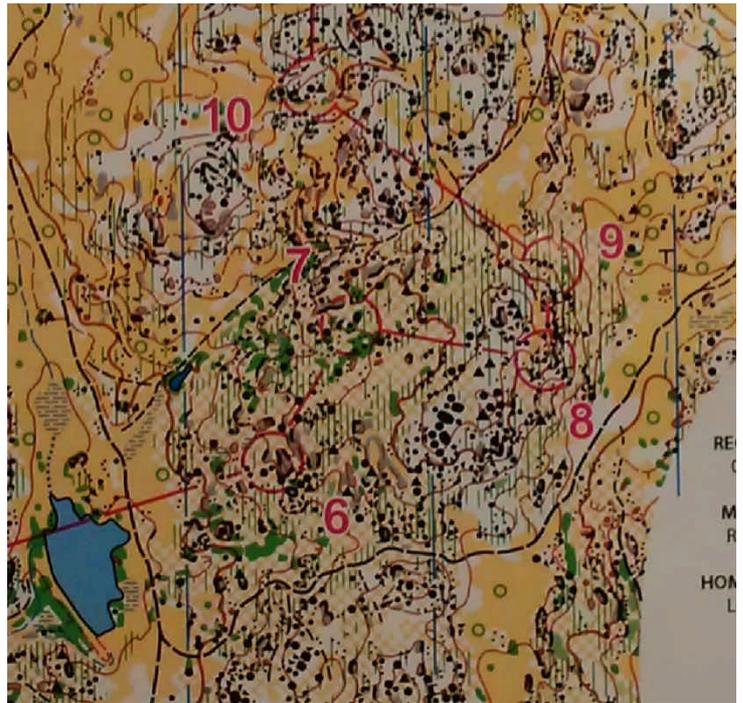
I was still feeling pretty rough and in a lot of abdominal pain, so it took me a long time to get organised. Luckily, today's event was only some 20 minutes from our lovely self-catering house.

It was another Middle distance event on a small part of the Portalegre map with a lot of rock detail!

I only had some 3.7km with 160m climb, but I made a total hash of 6-7-8, taking over 27 minutes to go about 300m in total!! Needless to say, this was not one of my better scoring days and I managed only 68<sup>th</sup> out of 92, over 30 minutes down on the winner.

Adele had another good run, finishing 15<sup>th</sup> out of 58, only 9 minutes down on the winner.

As this was our last free afternoon, we decided to go and visit all the Neolithic tombs in the area, and there are a lot! One of the most spectacular was one which over time had been converted into a small chapel – not something you see every day!



Clearly, this part of Portugal was very important in pre-history and we've never seen so many cromlechs, menhirs and circles in one place.

#### Day 4

Unfortunately for me, my gut problem was still with me and today I had 7.9km and 355m climb. To say I wasn't relishing the thought was an understatement, particularly as it was going to be similar terrain to yesterday.

Our start times were quite a bit apart, so Adele went off first and she ran in a totally different area to the previous day. She had a fairly good run, spoiled by one control, but still managed to finish 23<sup>rd</sup> out of 58, but 19 minutes down on the winner.



I started very slowly and continued this way throughout. I didn't really make any mistakes, just very slow and poor route choice.

By now, the run in which we had used the day before was a quagmire and as Adele had finished well before me, she managed to catch the moment when it nearly all went very wrong!

Needless to say, I stayed upright and finished in 85 minutes, 28 minutes down on the winner (I ended up running 10.6km).

Surprisingly, I was still just in the top half, but feeling drained. My final memory of the race is trying to eat as many Rich-Tea biscuits as possible at the finish as I was absolutely starving.

So, after a bite to eat, we took a leisurely drive back to Lisbon to catch the evening flight home.

Overall, Adele took the honours finishing in 17<sup>th</sup> out of 61, whilst I finished 40<sup>th</sup> out of 97 which I'm pleased about considering I was unwell.

As a footnote, whilst there, details were available for POM 2018 which is to be held 10-13<sup>th</sup> February around the Evora area (further south than 2017). We've already found some accommodation, so what's stopping you, come and have a run in the sun and test yourself against some of the best in the world.

