

The 51st White Rose – An Organiser’s Review

And so it began, high above Scarborough on Oliver’s Mount, beneath the golden embers of a fading sunset.

People came. They gathered. There was a buzz in the air and that familiar sense of anticipation: **the White Rose was about to begin.**

Steve raised the loudspeaker to his mouth and delivered — perhaps even chanted poetically — those final instructions. A moment’s pause... and then they were off, a tidal wave of orienteers disappearing over Oliver’s Mount and into the night.

Before long, the lights began returning. One by one, everyone came home. All were accounted for, smiles were plentiful, and the 51st White Rose was underway.

For me, the Night-O was probably my favourite event of the whole weekend. There was just something about that start on Oliver’s Mount, watching everyone gather and then disappear into the darkness, that captured what White Rose is all about.

Saturday – Woods, Hills and the Junior Girls Crab

Saturday morning arrived and, once again, the weather was kind to us.

Off everyone went into the woods for the first full day of orienteering, returning from Raincliffe to assembly and the campsite, where everybody agreed it was a great event put on by **CLOK**.

Thank you, CLOK! 🍌🎉👏

Then, in the afternoon, came something traditional: the **White Rose Hill Race**, with more than 75 hardy souls taking part.

But perhaps Saturday’s greatest sporting spectacle came later, during the **kids versus dads football game**.

We’ve all heard of the great football strategies.

You’ve heard of the *low block*.

You’ve heard of the *high press*.

You’ve heard of *parking the bus*.

But until White Rose 2026, football had never witnessed **the Junior Girls Crab**.

A determined scrum of junior girls surrounded the ball and moved as one — forwards, backwards and, most effectively, sideways — gradually wearing down an increasingly bewildered collection of dads.

The result?

A famous 2–1 victory to the kids over the dads on Golden Goal.

Football may never be the same again.

And with that, Saturday slowly drifted away. Pizzas were shared with CLOK and helpers, early nights were had, and everyone settled down ready for the Sunday ahead.

Sunday – Ravines, Results and the Great Barbecue Escape

Soon it was Sunday.

Off they went, down Woodland Ravine, through the cemetery and into **Peasholm Park**, with Stuart doing an amazing job of planning another memorable day of White Rose orienteering.

There were a few issues over the weekend — there always are — but we dealt with them, people came back smiling, and attention turned to the results and prize-giving.

Holding the presentation indoors created a fantastic atmosphere. There was a real buzz in the room and some very popular winners.

It was particularly good to see such a strong teenage junior crowd — boys and girls together, cheering loudly for their friends, their clubmates and their favourites.

It felt like there was another generation beginning to make the **White Rose their own**.

(Perhaps the White Rose Youth Camp will be re-born in '27 or '28. Who knows? Beware.)

Then came the barbecue.

Between us, the elder statesmen of Ebor probably possess somewhere approaching **7,000 hours of combined barbecue experience**.

Naturally, we couldn't get it lit.

Twigs were gathered. Coals were rearranged. Advice was offered from every direction. Numerous cardboard and pizza boxes were sacrificed to the cause and enthusiastically wafted towards some distinctly reluctant embers.

Eventually, there was smoke.

Then flame.

And finally, the vegetarian assortment and burgers began to sizzle.

At precisely that moment, the distant rumble of thunder could be heard.

Then came the lightning.

Burgers were hastily turned. Families were encouraged to decamp indoors. Cooking suddenly became considerably more urgent.

And somehow, almost to the second, the final burgers came off the barbecue before the heavens opened.

But White Rose was not going to be defeated by a little rain.

Out came the new White Rose youth — perhaps reminiscent of generations before them — hardy souls beneath cagoules and brollies, determined to toast marshmallows and make s'mores despite everything Scarborough's weather could throw at them.

Eventually, everyone retreated to tents, campervans and the sanctuary of the **assembly area**, while the rain fell outside.

One day remained.

Monday – The Italian Gardens

And with Monday came the return of the sun.

The final challenge was the sprint through Scarborough's Italian Gardens.

More than **330 competitors** poured through the start, one every 30 seconds, and the operation ran like clockwork.

A huge amount of credit goes to the start team — **Dave Brown, Pam, Brendan, Mark and Graham Todd** — who did an amazing job getting everybody away smoothly.

Then it was down into the gardens.

Sliding here, darting there, up steps, down paths, backwards, forwards and around again — a final burst of fast and furious White Rose orienteering.

And eventually, the finish, with one last magnificent view across Scarborough and the bay.

Monday also provided one of the moments of the weekend that really stayed with me.

Our local border club, **AIRE**, gathered for a team photograph. There were around **ten families** there together.

From what I have witnessed, this was, in recent times, the second or third White Rose where AIRE had come en masse with their families, and each year their presence has grown and grown.

For someone involved in organising the weekend, that was incredibly rewarding to see.

Here was a club that has been reborn, attracting families and young people into orienteering, and they had chosen to come together and support the White Rose in such numbers.

It was thought-provoking, but more than anything it was inspiring.

Because perhaps that is one of the blessings of White Rose. It isn't only about who wins a course or takes home a mug. It is about families coming away together, young people becoming part of our sport, clubs growing and friendships developing.

Long may that continue.

The final sprint presentation followed. There were cheers and applause.

And then, suddenly, that was it.

The controls were collected.

The courses were finished.

The weekend was over.

A Few Personal Thank Yous

As Weekend Organiser, I want to say a huge thank you to **every single person who volunteered**.

In particular, thank you to those who did more than one shift, those who stepped in at the last minute and those who simply saw something that needed doing and got on with it.

There are too many of you to name individually here, but you know who you are, and I have tried to reach out personally to thank those who gave that extra support.

It mattered. And I certainly noticed it.

There are, however, a few people I need to mention.

Josh Cooper said from the beginning that work and life commitments meant he would have to take more of a back seat initially, but that from June and July onwards he would step forward.

And he certainly did.

Without Josh, I genuinely don't think we would have got there in the end. He organised so much and, crucially, he was there throughout a very difficult Friday.

We had **350-plus people arriving that evening**. Best-laid plans had to change for various reasons around the campsite and elsewhere. People understandably had to drop out because of illness, late commitments and the things that life sometimes throws at you.

Josh was simply supreme. He was there, he got stuck in and he helped make it happen.

I couldn't have done it without him.

Then there is **Steve Corrigan**.

Steve quietly leaned into the weekend and did an enormous amount behind the scenes. He organised the venues, made numerous visits to Scarborough alongside me, built relationships and took responsibility for so many of those additional things that make White Rose what it is.

The Hill Race, the Quiz, the Night-O and countless other pieces of the jigsaw had Steve's fingerprints on them.

A special thank you also has to go to **Stuart and Julie**.

Stuart did a fantastic job organising and planning, while Julie provided invaluable support with First Aid and, in truth, across the event generally.

Both of them really leaned into White Rose in the months and weeks leading up to the weekend. They were incredibly easy to work with, brought some great ideas to the table and were always willing to help find a solution when one was needed.

And, of course, thank you to **CLOK** for their contribution and for helping make the weekend something much bigger than simply four individual days of orienteering.

A huge thank you also to **all our planners, controllers and SI support across the weekend**. Your skill, dedication and the quality of what you delivered helped make the weekend what it was. Thank you!

And then there is one final thank you.

Maria

Now, I've said before that I'm not a natural orienteer.

On reflection, perhaps I need to reconsider that statement.

Because there is one small fact about my seven-year orienteering career that I feel deserves to be recorded for posterity.

I have never mispunched.

Not once.

I've completed every course I've ever started — and there have been quite a few of them by now.

So perhaps I *am* a natural orienteer.

I'm certainly not a natural runner.

Admittedly, when you're travelling around a course at roughly my speed, it is probably almost impossible to miss a control. There is plenty of time to check the map, check it again, admire the scenery, reconsider your route choice and eventually locate the flag.

But the record stands.

Seven years. Every course completed. Never mispunched. No planner has beaten me yet.

The challenge is out there if anyone fancies giving it a go.

But joking aside, I originally joined Ebor largely to support Maria.

Orienteering has been part of Maria's life for as long as she can remember. She is hugely talented at it and **quietly, fiercely competitive — although you probably wouldn't know that unless you really knew her.**

But perhaps more importantly, she has an incredible willingness to turn up and give something back.

She inspires me every day, and I'm very lucky to live with her and share my life with her.

One of the main reasons I wanted to take on the White Rose was to support Maria, because I see how much she gives to Ebor and to orienteering.

I didn't really get the chance to say this during the weekend, so I'm going to say it now.

And I'm going to be cheeky — as always — although there is a compliment in here somewhere.

Maria and the White Rose have quite a lot in common.

For a start, they're both over 50 and still going strong.

She won't thank me for reminding everybody of that.

Both have faced their share of difficulties and challenges over the years.

But whatever happens, **they turn up.**

They endure. They come back. And somehow, they keep going.

And I think both are loved and cherished by the wider orienteering community.

Maria for her ability, her attitude, that quietly fierce determination and her willingness to compete — but above all for her willingness to give back.

And perhaps that is the greatest similarity.

Both Maria and the White Rose give back to the orienteering community far more than they probably realise.

So I would like to dedicate my contribution to the **51st White Rose** to Maria.

Until Next Time...

Over four days, old friends were greeted and new friends were made.

There were night races and woodland courses. Ravines and sprints. Hill races and football. Burgers and thunderstorms. Marshmallows and s'mores. Sunshine, rain, laughter and plenty of orienteering.

Families came together. Juniors cheered each other on. Volunteers stepped forward. Clubs worked together.

And finally, as the last people disappeared and we put the chain back across the door of the old Raincliffe School, there was that strange quiet that follows a White Rose weekend.

The 51st White Rose was complete.

Thank you to everyone who competed.

Thank you to everyone who volunteered.

Thank you to Josh, Steve, Stuart, Julie, CLOK and all those who stepped forward when we needed them.

And thank you to Maria.

It was a privilege to be given the opportunity to organise it.

And you never know...

Committee deciding, we might just do it all again next year.

Johny Booker

Weekend Organiser – White Rose 2026

Eborienteers