

Kapinnie Lakes “Badge Event” weekend

Notes from the mapper, Kevin Vigar



When is a lake impassable?

The most memorable mass start I have seen was at the Family Relays in Broken Hill during the 1997 Easter 3 days. The ‘graveyard’ was in a car park adjacent to “The Sculptures”. A very steep rock face several metres high stood at one end and a number of spectators had arranged themselves at various vantage points, using it as a grandstand. On the signal to start, most runners headed either side of this barrier on the footpaths that led towards their first control. One A leg runner, however, chose the straight line route which took him up and over this rock face, which the mapper had classified as a cliff - impassable.

Which begs the question - what is impassable? Obviously, what may be impassable to the very young or the very old can present no problems to the rest of us. While watching films recently of soldiers in New Guinea traversing the Kokoda Track, seeing them sink almost knee deep in mud every step of the way, I wondered how we might classify that track. Clearly it was not impassable, but would not be your chosen route for comfortable orienteering.

I have been faced with a similar dilemma in mapping the Kapinnie Lakes. These are salt lakes. In summer, most are dry and hard and can be crossed at a fast run. Others look dry but under their thin crust is soft mud that you will sink ankle-deep in. In August of 2009 all were underwater, the depth varying from 20 -50 centimetres. Those with the soft beds remained soft, those with the firm surfaces remained firm but trying to cross in my rubber soled hiking boots was like ice skating.

And yet, in August last year I watched a kangaroo go bounding across one of the larger lakes. There was no hesitation and almost no interruption of its smooth rhythm. Obviously, these lakes are not impassable when wet, but whether they are a wise route choice is debateable. If we have winter rains this year to match that of last year, the lakes will be underwater. I suspect football type boots with long studs may be the best footwear.

I cannot tell you what the lakes will be like this August. There are 97 separate lake surfaces on the map, so we can't check them in the weeks before the event. What I have done is to classify the lakes with firm, dry summer surfaces as lake - seasonal (normally crossable) and those with softer surfaces as lake - seasonal (normally un-crossable). The decision whether to cross or not to cross will be yours.

If you are looking for a quite different orienteering experience, please come. It will be interesting without the difficult navigational challenge of our limestone terrain. There are broad, open vistas; large lakes fringed with melaleuca and mallee, eroded earth banks up to 1.5 metres high and long meandering dykes separating the lakes. There is a gentle rise and fall to the land, but contours have been omitted as irrelevant; there is almost no rock detail; there are only small areas of thick bush. **We would love to see you there!**

Views from the area

