

## **HISTORY OF ORIENTEERING IN TASMANIA 1972 - 1992**

FORMER Tasmanian, Tom Andrews, witnessed the Swedish National Championships in 1968, while on a business trip and, on his return, was largely responsible for the sport's introduction to Australia.

Shortly after it began in Australia, a meeting was held in Hobart to discuss the introduction of the sport in this State. Current National Coach, Clive Roper, was present at that meeting. Following this meeting, the first orienteering event was held in Tasmania, at the Lea, near Hobart on Sunday, 9th September, 1972. The organiser was Karen Alexander, who organised the first five events held in Tasmania. Less than a dozen competitors took part.

On March 6th, 1973, a public meeting took place at the University of Tasmania and the Orienteering Association of Tasmania was formed, with Ross Kelly as founding President. Two weeks later the Association held its first event at Summerleas in steady rain, with R. Tabor winning the senior course (4.6 miles) in 2 hours 15 minutes. Prominent amongst the results in that first year were Peter Shaw and Ross Kelly, who still orienteer today. However, pride of place goes to Karen Alexander, first Secretary of the Association, who, as Tasmania's sole representative, won the 1973 senior women's Australian Championship, from Toy Martin (N.S.W.) and Sue Harris (Vic).

The first Tasmanian titles were held at New Norfolk, near Hobart, on September 1st, 1974, and were won by Hilary Cane and Peter Shaw, who will both be competing in the 1992 VWC (in classes W40 and M45 respectively). The best of five visiting Victorians could only manage sixth place!

The first O event held in Northern Tasmania was held at Relbia on October 1st, 1974, with 57 competitors, only 12 travelling north from Hobart. In May, 1975, the first event on the Northwest Coast was held at Hampshire near Burnie.

Two overseas orienteers to visit Tasmania in the early years were Swedes, Roland Offrell, later to coach the Australian WOC Team, and Per-Olof Bengtsson. They conducted seminars for teachers and orienteers and competed in an event at South Arm in 1975. Peo Bengtsson returns to Tasmania this year accompanied by a large contingent of orienteers entered in the VWC. In the same year, Tony Mount emerged as a leading Tasmanian orienteer with a win in the Victorian Championships, and he and his wife, Sue (the current Secretary of Orienteering Tasmania) have been in the forefront of Tasmanian orienteering ever since. Many Tasmanians regard Tony as the best local hope for a medal in the 1992 VWC. The first five colour map was produced in Tasmania during this year.

During 1976, John Oliver and Keith Wade became the first visiting mappers to visit Tasmania, carrying out field work at Ridgeway and Risdon Brook Dam. They were assisted in meeting their expenses by a grant from the Education Department's Division of Recreation, the forerunner of the Department of Sport and Recreation. The Department has been a strong supporter of orienteering ever since and has provided major support for the VWC.

In 1978, the 100th event was held at Ridgeway Reserve where a close tussle between current National Coach, Clive Roper, and Darryl Smith was foiled by a stolen control! Christine Watson (now Marshall), competing in WI 5, began to show the potential which has seen her rise to the top of women's orienteering in Australia and to eventual appointment to the Australian Captaincy. Despite the demands of a heavy training schedule, Christine has never failed to accept an opportunity to put time into the development of the sport and, for the VWC, has taken on the time-consuming and exacting task of Technical Director.

In 1979, at a meeting at Rosny College, Hobart, the present structure of the Orienteering Association of Tasmania was established, with the creation of four Tasmanian clubs.

In 1980, Tasmania hosted the Australian Championships at Bothwell, with Clive Roper as event organiser. In 1984, the Easter 3 Day was held at Bronte Park on the Central Plateau, and in 1988 the Asia Pacific Championships were held in the granite terrain at St. Helens. In 1990 a new club was formed at Devonport on the Northwest Coast, while UFO and Havoc, two of the original clubs, combined to form the current Wellington Ranges Orienteering Club.

The sport continues to grow and prosper in Tasmania, with many Tasmanians gaining national representative honours in recent years. The granting of the 1992 Veteran World Cup to Tasmania reflects the success of the top competitors, the technical experience of Tasmania's orienteers, gained through the staging of major events over the years, and the growth in stature of the sport in Tasmania.

*The above article was written by Warwick Moore for the official Veteran World Cup program held at Suncoast, Tasmania, Australia from January 3rd to January 13th 1992.*