



**NEWS—** Well it really has felt like Spring is in the air these last few days and with the promise of longer days and warmer weather, comes the good news that lockdown restrictions are (hopefully) going to be relaxed in line with the Government roadmap and with a return to (near) normality by 21 June 2021. The current guidance confirms that, ‘people will be able to take part in formally organised outdoor sports’ from 29 March, which may allow a resumption of orienteering events, although what form they take remains to be seen. Updated guidance is currently awaited from British Orienteering but watch this space!

Catching Features- (Mike Billinghamurst)



As promised last week, Mike Billinghamurst has been keeping himself busy during lockdown.

**ORIENTEERING WHEN YOU CAN'T**

Its safe to say that last year didn't turn out as expected for my first year of retirement. No orienteering for extended periods, and too much time on my hands. British weather and an increasingly decrepit body see to it that there's only so much time you can spend running, cycling, mapping etc. To help pass the time I acquired Catching Features, a virtual orienteering game.

You can find out about it at [www.catchingfeatures.com/game.php](http://www.catchingfeatures.com/game.php) . In a nutshell, OCAD map files are converted into a 3d model of the terrain using converter software that comes with the game. Courses can then be set and the event uploaded to the CF competitions app for anyone who wants to “run”. The quality of the “conversion” varies from very basic to quite superb, depending on the experience of the person doing it and how much time they're willing to spend. In the best CF events you can almost – not quite – imagine you are doing the real thing, minus the physical effort and bad weather. It takes a while and many disasters to get the hang of playing CF. One of the biggest challenges is that time, and your speed, the game runs 3x faster than real time so if you're going at maximum speed everything flies past. You can't see the terrain and map simultaneously but have to keep switching between them. To begin with I couldn't get within double the winner's time, often taking 3x as long. I've now improved to the point that I'm between 20% and 50% down on the winner, depending on my performance and how hard the terrain is. WCOC's best CF performer by far is Joe Sunley, who has won several of the Lockdown orienteering grand finals on Catching Features.

There are usually a few new events to play each week. They vary from basic, one-off events on simple maps to high quality series. Last year there was a Catching Features World Cup series on various terrains from round the world, and the 2021 CF World Championships (in the virtual Czech Republic) has just finished.

More recently I've started creating my own CF competitions. Maps used so far are Setmurthy, Manesty, Dalegarth, Whinlatter, High Rigg and Askham Fell. Jaws of Borrowdale is in progress. Once you get the hang of it it's quite a creative pastime. During the process you can choose the type of vegetation in each type of terrain (run, slow, open, undergrowth etc), how fast and dense each is, and what the various features look like. For example the good competitors found my first Dalegarth event too easy (open terrain = high visibility), so I did a 2<sup>nd</sup> event there after growing trees on the area (delete the yellow in the OCAD file and tell the converter app what sort of trees you want). You can even set the weather (sun, rain, snow) and make it a night event.

How long this hobby survives once things open up again remains to be seen. However I'm enjoying it at the moment and suspect that it will fill in the blank spaces in the diary for some time to come.

Get in touch if you're interested and have any questions.

(Note from the Ed, the game also has added jeopardy, with a very grumpy gorilla seemingly set to appear when you're doing badly. He knocks you flying if you get too close! For some reason, I come across him quite regularly—Mike not so much!)



**Committee Meeting—**

The next meeting is this Wednesday—3rd March 7pm by Zoom. Any members wishing to attend please contact Steve Breeze who will send you the relevant link to the meeting.