



September 2021

Big Foot turns 40 – the definitive tale of a larrikin orienteering club

In the winter of 1981, a clique of undergraduates at UNSW hatched a scheme to secure parking spots available to sporting clubs in the university. This would enable those entitled to drive through the university gates and park on the grounds. A persistent myth is that the minimum membership to recognise such a club was seven. That six was the original number of Big Foot members is probably no more than a coincidence and the legend that it was actually seven is no more than that.

Some of the original cast members had graduated from St Ives High School the previous year and had developed as orienteers under the tutelage of Ron Junghans, then a maths teacher and scarcely much older than his charges. He and Barbara ferried some of the crew to the Victorian champs in their VW micro bus in 1980 when they were still students. In 1981 the founding members were Paul Darvodelsky, Greg Barbour, Anthony Scott, Alexander Stollznow, Edwina Mulhearn and Stephen Blanks. Of the original cast, Greg Barbour and Stephen Blanks are still club members, the others having moved away or in the case of Darvo, sadly deceased. Conflicting rumours abound as to who were the main instigators and who should get the credit. Greg and Darvo traditionally get the credit but according to another telling it was Alexander Stollznow who pulled out his compass when the swamp of bureaucratic process and red tape required careful navigation.

The truth is probably an amalgam of the above. Whatever the case, Big Foot was born from a casual desire to obtain parking space from an overly generous university. One cannot imagine them giving so freely of their car spaces in 2021.

KROOC was the name originally mooted for the club which was itself an indicator of the unserious nature of the venture. This is the title the club proclaimed in its first newsletter (further down). A group of undergraduate pranksters like *The Young Ones* of BBC fame is not an unfair comparison. You can just imagine Rick Mayall and Alexei Sayle screaming through the undergrowth all in pink, although the pink would not actually arrive until the mid-80s. The OANSW refusing to register the name KROOC, some other

titles were then considered almost all just as inappropriate. Big Foot (originally Big Feet), being one of the less offensive, stuck. An accident of history or just the luck of the draw you might say.

The first Big Foot map was St Ives created in 1983 and still in use today, mapped by Anthony Scott and Paul Darvodelsky courtesy of a grant from UNSW. The first Big Foot event was staged on a borrowed map in 1981 or early 1982; these details remain unclear.

After its initial formation the club grew rapidly seeming to feed off the pent-up demand for a less conservative approach among the younger generation. According to various reports the club sailed along for several years, never taking itself seriously until the arrival of one member who took it from adolescence to adulthood. This person, according to one telling, was Warwick Marsden who joined in the mid-80s. There were several prominent members who joined prior to and after him, some of whom remain with the club today (in no particular order): Andrew MacDonald, Andrew Lumsden, Mal Stewart, Mark Darvo, Anne Darvo, Graham Turner, Arnold Simson, Ljubov Simson, Stephen Blanks and Peter Garran among them. And later Mike Billingham, Andy Simpson, Cameron Osborne, Jock Davis, Nicola Nigh, Stephen Craig, Mick Finn, Andrew Wisniewski, Tony Maloney, Richard Mountstephens.

Much of the club history is chronicled in the '*Big Foot Prints*' - a journal of changing style and frequency dependent on who had the energy and inspiration at any given point in time. The very first missive was typed on Anthony Scott's typewriter and distributed by post. A copy is posted further down for you to peruse and recall a time of hard copy, postage stamps, envelopes, and no spell checkers. The journal has been absent for several years now and this may well be the last such missive in the lineage. Times and technology being what they are today, the vast internet has superseded Johannes Gutenberg's printing press. Instagram, Messenger, Facebook and TikTok speed images and commentary between orienteers with a spontaneity scarcely imagined in 1981. There was no ONSW website back then.

Although the club emerged from a high school on Sydney's north shore it has evolved to accept membership from across the globe and still has members who have immigrated, joined and then re-immigrated and remained members. Over the years Big Foot has benefited enormously both competition wise and socially from overseas orienteering talent.

Along the way Big Foot has matured and now it approaches middle age. The originators have grey hair as their children prepare to step into their shoes. The club still retains a semblance of the attitude that sets it apart in the

orienteering fraternity. It has the feeling of a tight-knit family sometimes absent from the larger clubs.

At the time of writing (September 2021) much of the world is in lockdown due to the COVID 19 pandemic which has been rampant around the globe since early 2020. Life generally has been disrupted with orienteering no exception. Many events have been cancelled and the orienteering calendar is in disarray. Notwithstanding we must recognise this anniversary of Big Foot Orienteers although celebrating it will be difficult with personal travel limited by stay-at-home orders.

Thanks are due to many people for retaining the artefacts, some of which you see here and also the oral history. Anthony Scott has maintained the history of the Big Foot Prints faithfully over the years and we owe him thanks also for the photos below. He along with Stephen Blanks, Greg Barbour and Alexander Stollznov provided the oral history which filled in some of the blanks (no pun intended), now recorded here for the reference of members, past, current and future. Scotty's entire trove of Big Foot Prints has been scanned to PDF and is available free to club members although you might have to provide a memory stick. The entire cache is around 200mB. Thanks also to all those current members who provided correction and input during the editorial process. As the current president who has compiled this brief narrative, I can claim but scant credit and only add my name for the record.

Michael Roylance.

Read on.

The very first Big Foot Prints, circa spring of 1981

KROOC!

GENERAL STUFF FROM THE EDITOR

This is the first newsletter of the newly formed club (and if you can say our club name while drinking tomato sauce in under 3 seconds, you shall win a FREE "Big Mac"! :) The club is not only official at the university but also through the Orienteering Association of NSW. However, the Orienteering Association didnt accept KROOC as the title of the group, (simply because they thought no one would sponser us with a name like that). So a second name had to be thought of for our club to be called through the Association!

After a memorable night of memorable name-calling, a second name was thought of. Some of the more interesting names that were rejected were:

The Fornic 8's
Gess Tuft Orienteers
The Bushwankers
Red Belly Blacks
Bogabilla Orienteers
Knobbly Knees Orienteering Club
Wewak Orienteers

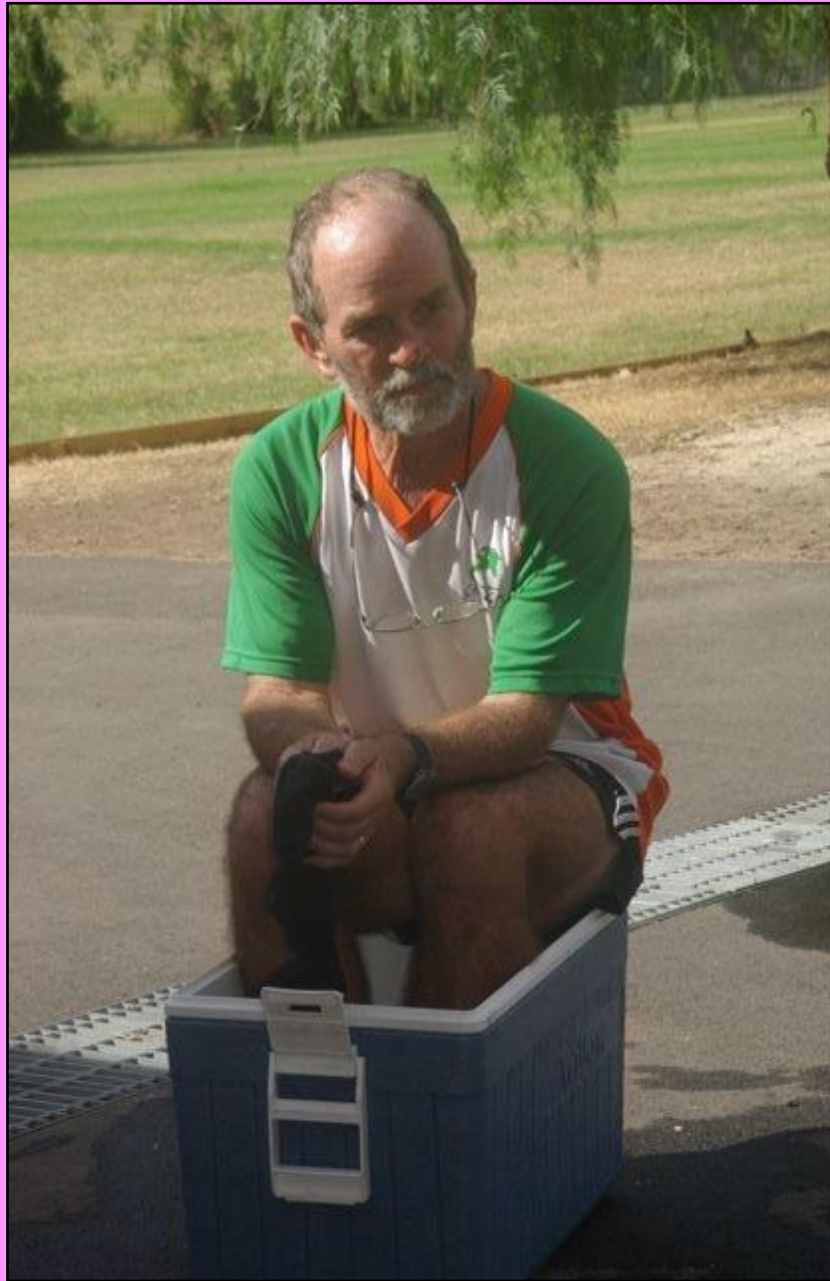
However, the name decided upon was "Big Feet Orienteers" (What a stupid name!) This shall be the name that the club will be recognised by through the OANSW.

So KROOC (or Big Feet Orienteers as far as the OANSW is concerned) is finally underway. Our president is the honourable (? typist) Greg Barbour (elected for his ability of acting the part), treasurer is the one and only Alexander Stollznow (just call him "a"), and the secretary is Paul Darvodelsky (just call him anything you like).

And now how about some events and outings.

First suggestion is the if you want to actually get interested in Orienteering as a sport, then join the Orienteering Ass(oc) through our club by giving the \$4 membership fee to Paul. This will entitle you to the bi-monthly magazine "Australian Orienteers".

Even if you dont hion the OANSW, still feel free to come to association events. For those of you who are more casual "orienteeers", (or dont even know what it is), we shall organise some social events.



Uncle Ron Junghans, the Godfather of Big Foot cooling his heels at the Western and Hills Metrogaine 'The Rest is History' organised by Graeme Hill circa 2010. Ron scores double points here for environmental conservation, firstly for reusing the ice water and secondly for repurposing the esky.

No snapshots from the very first days were available. Those below are from the mid-80s and after.



Circa 1983



Circa 1990
Circa 1990circa 1990