

A Brief History of the Paddy Pallin Event

(Reproduced and adapted in part from Peter Tuft's history of the event written for The Australian Orienteer in 1986).

The Paddy Pallin Orienteering Contest was first held in 1964. Occasional orienteering-type events had been held in Australia before this date, but Paddy's event is almost certainly the longest established event that bore the name 'orienteering' in this country. The first event was held in the Euroka area, in the lower Blue Mountains. Paddy's aim for the event was to provide a means for improving the navigational skills of bushwalkers, many of whom were more interested in enjoying the bush than in accurate navigation. However, a lack of interest in navigation can lead to varying degrees of inconvenience, not least to the search parties who may be called out in extreme cases. Hence when Paddy read of the Scandinavian sport of Orienteering he decided that it was just what was needed in Australia.

Not having any detailed information on the way the sport was run overseas, Paddy invented the rules to suit the conditions. They evolved over the years as experience was gained and feedback was received from competitors. The first event was a cross-country event, similar in principle to the standard form of orienteering today. However difficulties with teams following each other led first to a type of event in which all controls had to be visited, but the order was not fixed, and then to a fixed duration score event.

The Paddy's Orienteering event was not associated with organised orienteering in NSW, but was run privately by Paddy and his family and friends. While this meant it did not achieve a prominent place in the orienteering calendar of the day, it did continue to attract bushwalkers and rogainers, many of whom did not perceive it as yet another elite event for fanatical runners (as orienteers can sometimes be seen in those circles).

For the first 15 years or so the format of the annual event did not change significantly. It was a 3-hour score event with about 20 or so controls. Competitors used to be assigned individual start times, but eventually a mass start was found to be just as satisfactory, and certainly simplified the administration. Originally there were only two entry classes: open (mostly men) and mixed. The map was always one of the standard topographic series. In the early days old army maps at a scale of one inch to the mile (1:63,360) were used. This had the potential to cause some difficulty for less experienced orienteers who may have had trouble adapting to the relative lack of detail. However, it was also a valuable experience in fine navigation in the real world, as opposed to the somewhat artificial level of detail on orienteering maps. While the format changed little over the years, the style of the course was eventually brought into line with modern orienteering and rogaining practice.

Right up into his mid-eighties, Paddy was active in setting out controls. The main organisation was done by Paddy's son Robert, with help from his wife Nancy, and various friends who volunteered from time to time.

Chronology of Paddy's Orienteering events:

1st	1964	Euroka
2nd	1965	Euroka
3rd	1966	Euroka
4th	1967	Euroka
5th	1968	Long Angle Gully
6th	1969	St Albans
7th	1970	Mellong
8th	1971	Wheeny Creek
9th	1972	New Yards
10th	1973	New Yards
11th	1974	Lawson Ridge
12th	1975	Lawson Ridge
13th	1976	Grose Road, Faulconbridge Ridge
14th	1977	Mt Hay Road, North Katoomba
15th	1978	Chapman Road, Faulconbridge
16th	1979	North Katoomba
17th	1980	Linden Ridge
18th	1981	Colo Heights, west of Putty Road
19th	1982	Colo Heights, east of Putty Road
20th	1983	Culoul Range/Tari Creek
21st	1984	Colo Heights, east of Putty Road
22nd	1985	Mellong Swamps
23rd	1986	Mellong, Putty Road
24th	1987	Howes Valley, Putty Road

The last 22 years of 'Paddy Pallin' events organised by NSW Rogaining :

25th	1988	Putty Road
26th	1989	Wingello
27th	1990	Tianjara
28th	1991	Euroka Clearing
29th	1992	Mangrove Mountain
30th	1993	Cataract
31st	1994	Hampton State Forest
32nd	1995	Bilpin
33rd	1996	Patonga
34th	1997	Bargo
35th	1998	Fortress Ridge
36th	1999	Coolendel
37th	2000	Capertee
38th	2001	Ben Bullen
39th	2002	Newnes
40th	2003	Propran NP
41st	2004	Colo
42nd	2005	Newnes Plateau
43rd	2006	Wingello State Forest
44th	2007	Rydal
45th	2008	Newnes Forest
46th	2009	Coolendel

(This list to 1985 was reconstructed from memory during discussion between Paddy and Robert Pallin, with Peter Tuft, so there is a little uncertainty about some of the locations).

The NSW Rogaining Association took over responsibility for the event for the 25th event in 1988. It was decided then that it be called the 'Paddy Pallin Rogaine', even though it was only a 6 hour event, due to its status as one of the longest running cross-country navigational events. The event as a rogaine has continued to flourish and grow into the success it is today, due in part to its accessibility to novice participants, something that remains true to Paddy's original intent.