



# WORLD MASTERS ORIENTEERING CHAMPIONSHIPS

RIGA, LATVIA, 5. - 12.07.2019.

The World Masters Orienteering Championships 2019 took place in Riga, Latvia from 5 to 12 July. Six SMOCies duly signed up to test their skills in Eastern Europe for the first time (John and Rosie Shaw, Ann Harris, Ian Byrne, Sandra Mather and I). Ann and I were fortunate,



sharing an apartment with John and Rosie as we were organised down to our bootstraps (actually Rosie did leave us to buy these ourselves, probably why mine didn't function as well as some other aspects of the week).

We arrived at Riga airport, only slightly dismayed to see the aeroplane scrapyard next to the runway, and straightaway headed out in the pouring rain for our first meal – an Italian meal washed down with a bottle of wine, which felt very decadent in the early afternoon. We had a lovely apartment, with plenty of space and amenities, in an excellent location for buses and walks to the town centre – Rosie gets it spot on again. Ian happened to be staying in a hotel just a few doors away.

The first day saw us exploring our surroundings before heading out to the event centre and then on to a local football stadium to have a go at indoor orienteering. Apparently, this is very popular in Latvia. Rosie loved it and swears by it as good training – her powers of concentration and sense of place certainly speak to its efficacy. However, I think that is probably my first and last event. I hate the feelings of frustration as I approach yet another locked door, or fail to find my way to the appropriate level of the building. I am sure we will see it used more and more in this country.

The main competition followed its usual recent format, so the sprint qualifications were first, held on a campus/housing estate. This provided a mix of residential and parkland, but was traffic free. The last part of the course made good use of some contours which formed the highest "hill" in Riga. Rosie and I had great fun standing by the final control watching competitors stream in. The numbers on our bibs indicated the age class we were running in, and we were so impressed with the fitness and speed of the many 85-, 90- and 95-year olds. Sadly, I don't think any of the 100-year-old entrants actually ran. (Secretly I was also studying how old some 55- and 60-year olds looked! All grist to the mill of self-confidence).



The results of this qualification race seeded us for the final in the old city of Riga the next day. Riga is a beautiful city with the largest number of art nouveau buildings in Europe. Scarily, many of the streets in the old city were paved in cobbles, but with the early morning rain soon drying out, this was not too much of a problem. The city is small and orienteers formed a significant proportion of the population out on the streets. You can see from the map, there were churches, parkland, a river, and lots of small alleyways, some with gated entrances. These were the downfall of not only a number of competitors, but the organisers also. A gate on one of the optimum route choices between control 4 & 5 on the map had not been unlocked, and the organisers felt they had no option but to void many of the courses, an unsatisfactory outcome for a world championship, and a blot on what was otherwise an excellent organising copy book.

Following a rest day, we headed into the forest for the middle races; qualification and finals were held on adjacent areas. I had my best run of the week in the qualification race (see the picture of me on the run in, trying not to knock over the elderly gentleman with a crutch in front of me). The area was on sand dunes (we've seen a few of those this summer) as you can see from the map. For some reason, I managed to get locked into the map and ran fast enough to get into the B final. Sadly I had reached the heights of my achievements, and for me the next day was a totally new experience. I found the first control quickly, and thereafter I never saw another of my controls again (I did check every one I walked past)! I don't think I have ever been quite in that situation before where I didn't have a clue where I was, and couldn't identify anything to relocate off. All I could do was walk back on an approximate bearing. How are the mighty fallen.



# MIDDLE DISTANCE

scale **1:7 500**  
contour **2,5m**



W60B				
29	2,9 km			
----- 60 m ----->Δ				
▷		/ / X		
1	114 →	○		○
2	116 ↘	∩		
3	48 ↑	○	⋯	○
4	132 )			
5	96 →	∩		
6	110 T			
7	147 ←	∩		T
8	127 ↙	∩		
9	76 ↘	∩		
10	136 ◊			○
11	100 /		<	
○----- 140 m -----○				



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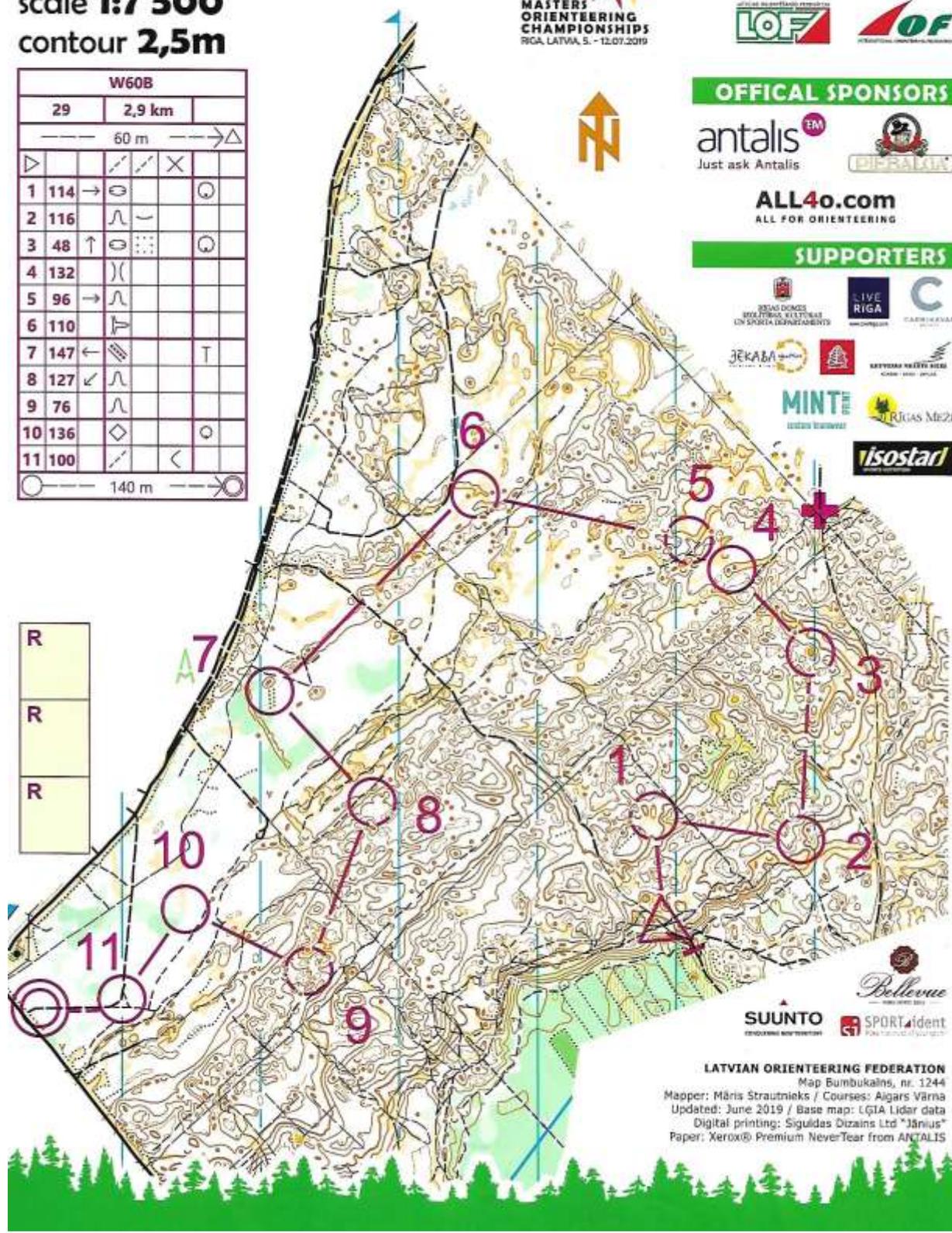


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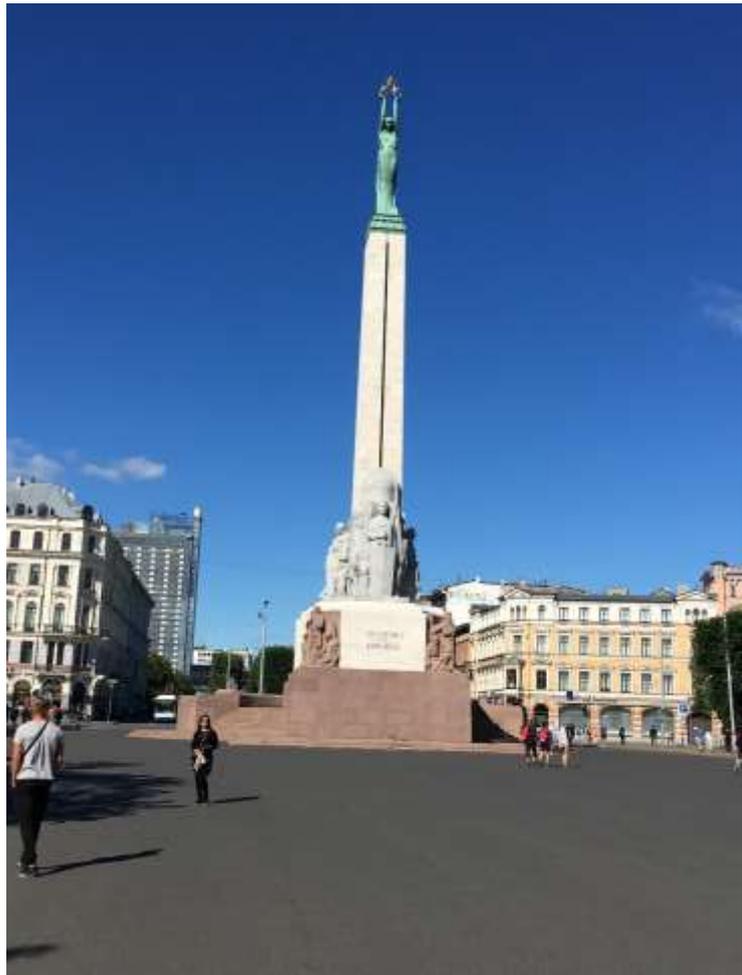


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**LATVIAN ORIENTEERING FEDERATION**  
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Mapper: Māris Strautnieks / Courses: Aigars Vārns  
Updated: June 2019 / Base map: LĢIA Lidar data  
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I used my next rest day to explore some of the beautiful art nouveau buildings, including an exquisite apartment which had been opened to the public. On our first rest day we had all gone to the Museum of Occupations – Latvia, like so many of its neighbouring countries, had been occupied by Russia for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The tall column you see (which also appears in the north east of the sprint map) celebrated freedom in 1918. However, the country was taken over again in 1940 by Germany, and then by Russia again as a result of the WWII armistice. The country did not regain its independence until 1991. This followed years of struggle including peaceful protest and finally, not so peaceful barricades in the streets. The history was documented in a number of the very interesting museums, including a costume museum which we visited before our journey home on the last day. There was a group of little girls on a birthday party answering quiz questions about what they considered historic 70s and 80s dresses; Ann and I were looking at them saying “oh, I wore that; did you have one of those?” Well, we had travelled for a veterans’ event!



Friday brought us the last competition day and a journey out of the city to the seaside. I had one of the first starts, with a beautiful walk along the seashore, unique in my orienteering experience. Once again we were on sand dunes; these were very slow going at first – most people had only just reached the start control when the next starter buzzer sounded! Steady progress around the course, gave me a better run than the previous one. I had managed to get to the end and my World Masters had ended for another year.

*Rachel Thomas*