

Lagganlia 2010

Lagganlia is an orienteering camp for 14 year olds selected as being gifted in orienteering. I was one of the twenty-four lucky enough to be chosen from around the UK, selected to go on the tour.

I set off early on Saturday for the eight hour train journey to Lagganlia. I arrived at 16:00 to find that five others had already arrived. I was shown to my room which was to be shared with three others for the week.

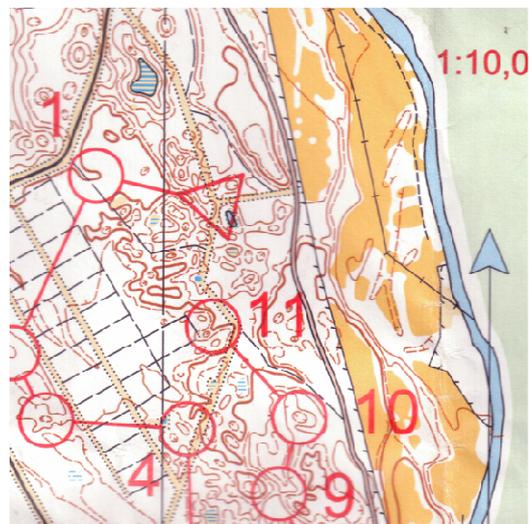
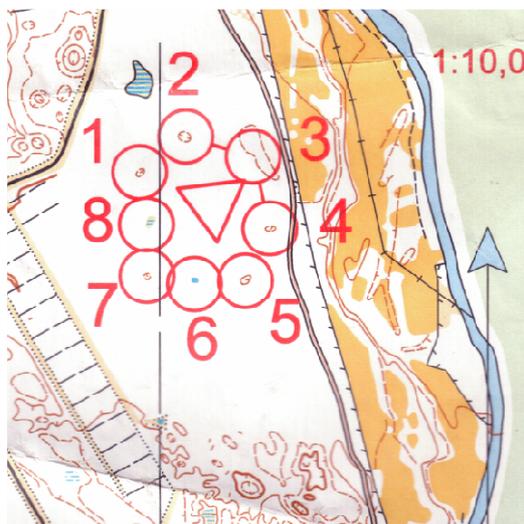
By 19:00 everybody except one had arrived and we had the first of our many briefings. This briefing was to explain what we could expect and what skills we should gain from the week. It also explained about the coming days orienteering exercises. In other years, after this briefing we would have been given our O-tops, but because one of the participants was still at the O-Ringen, we weren't. So we had to wait for another day for our O-tops.

Every day we woke up at 7:30 to get breakfast and to get dressed. We would then assemble for our morning briefing about the day's activities. There would usually be an orienteering session in the morning, followed by another session after lunch. The sessions included many different orienteering skills such as compass work, pacing, aiming off, simplification, attack points, catching features, contours skills and map memory.

After dinner each night we would analyse our routes on each of the activities and explain where we went. This was very beneficial as it showed where we could improve for next time.

On Monday morning we didn't do training exercises, but instead we did two 1km timed runs. One was along a large forest track, the other through the woods with hills to tackle along the way. This was to see who was the fastest and to observe how close people's pace was on track compared to in woodland. I won the woodland run and came second on the track run. This made me the fastest runner there.

Tuesday we were doing compass and pacing exercises. One of the exercises was a team relay with a twist. It was a star relay. This is where we had a mascot which must visit all of the controls on the relay. It must do it by one person taking the mascot to the first control and then that person must come back to the start finish after leaving the mascot at the control. The second person must then go to the control where the mascot is and take the mascot to the next control. This carries on till the mascot has reached all of the controls. To make it more difficult the map detail had been removed except the feature at which the control is placed on. This meant we would have to pace and take compass bearings very accurately. The edited map we were given for the exercise is shown below left. It looks very nice and simple but it is when you see the "unedited" map (below right) when you can see that the exercise was more tricky. (The course on the right-hand map was from a different day.)

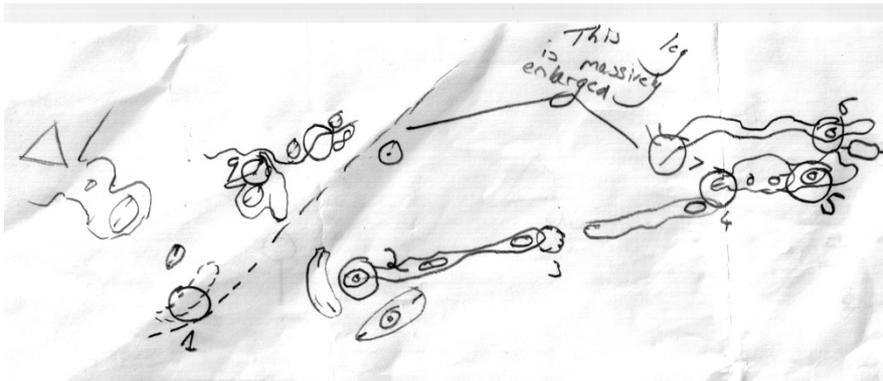


Wednesday was very different to the rest of the days at Lagganlia as we had two sprint races in the morning. One of the sprint races was in woodland and the other one was around the buildings at which we were staying. The first one the two sprints was a qualifier. If you were in the top six then you would be in the 'A final' for the second sprint. If you were in the bottom six then you would be in the 'B final'.

On the qualifying sprint Hector Haines (currently eighteenth in the British ranking) ran the same course as us. All of the juniors were very evenly matched for times (we were all around 21 minutes). Hector later completed the course in 13 minutes. We compared times but could not understand where he saved so much time.

Then we had the rest of the day having fun. We went to Badaguish, the equivalent of Lagganlia but for 16 year olds, and we had a go at a wet and muddy activity. It consisted of six metal rings which you had to swing between to get to the other side of the vile ditch. Almost everyone fell in. If they didn't then they were made to jump in afterwards. It was great fun. We then went to Loch Morlich for a swim which was freezing. After drip-drying, the coaches then decided we were allowed to go to look around the Aviemore shops. Everyone flooded into Tesco and bought plenty of value chocolate which then made the majority of people feel sick for the rest of the week.

One of the most difficult activities was on Thursday where we had to sketch out a course from a map in less than five minutes. The next day, we would have to complete the course which we drew without again seeing the original map. Our only map would be the one which we drew the night before. We made the map as



simple as possible so that our map wasn't cluttered.

Surprisingly no one got lost on this exercise which perhaps shows how good our drawing was (an extract of my sketch is shown here). Also on that day we had to do a paired talk-o exercise. We would have one person from each pair direct the

other around the course. The one which was directing had to stay at the start finish the whole time while the other person was directed around the course via walkie talkie. This was dreadfully difficult and every pair got lost at some point.

On Friday we had a classic race. It was in the most diverse woodland I have ever seen. It covered gridded woodland to sand dunned woodland with flat almost featureless woodland in between. It was probably the most technically difficult course I have ever tackled. Afterwards we spent around forty minutes comparing routes to understand where we had lost time. We later compared our routes to Hector Haines'. He did the course in thirty-eight minutes while the leader from the boys did it in sixty-three minutes. Our routes were roughly similar other than the fact that he almost always shortened our routes slightly. He would always be looking for the shortest route even if it was featureless.

Friday finished with a simple awards ceremony and was then followed by our last group activity before we left Lagganlia - a general knowledge quiz.

Lagganlia was wonderful experience where I gained many new orienteering skills and friends. I would highly recommend to everyone to try and get selected for it. I would also like to thank the coaches at EAOA for helping me to be selected.