

M/W14 Lagganlia Camp July 2025 report by Sam Crook

Towards the end of July, I caught the train up from Leeds all the way to Aviemore. Many of the participants met up on the journey. Coaches met us and drove us to Lagganlia outdoor camp, our accommodation for the next orienteering filled week. 23 upper year M/W14s had been selected to take part in this prestigious training camp based in the East Highlands. Lagganlia is a yearly event, each year taking up to 24 new juniors. We arrived on Saturday evening and were soon getting to know other people through icebreaker activities. Friends were already being made and we could tell this was going to be a very fun week.

Day 1

After an 8 o'clock breakfast we headed out to Heath Field for a day of map practice, rides and wasp nests. In the afternoon we headed a little way down the track for a star relay. One person would take a tag out to control 1 then come back. Person two takes it from 1-2, person 3 takes it from 2-3, and so on until we had completed all controls. Some people were keen to head home after a large Scottish wood wasp invaded our camp. Luckily they don't sting so it was a pleasurable rare sighting.

Day 2

We took the minibus to North Granish for the second day. A trip filled with songs such as Combine Harvester, which turned into a daily tradition, although some coaches weren't as keen on our loud singing. North Granish was an excellent area with loads of small rolling hills and birch trees, and it almost seemed like a magical landscape. We had a variety of exercises including long and short legs, corridor, handrails, hills, and depressions. The most interesting, though, was the sketch course. That morning, we were given a course and set amount of time to draw our own sketch maps that we had to use to do the exercise. For most of us, we were able to complete the course using our maps, and I think most people learned a lot about simplifying through this challenge. We finished off the day with an odd and even relay where two people were running at once, and we had two maps: one with even-numbered controls and the other with odd. You could get one control at a time, and first team back with all controls wins. We finished off day 2 with a wonderful evening meal from wonderful cooks.

Day 3

For day 3 we changed it up a bit and headed to pine forested sand dunes at Roseisle. A really unique type of terrain that many hadn't run on before. We got a large selection of courses which included some technical green section. The maps had most of the paths removed and some people decided to try navigating without a compass. I found this useful because I've improved on picking off detail features and orientating the map from them, which I did in the green.

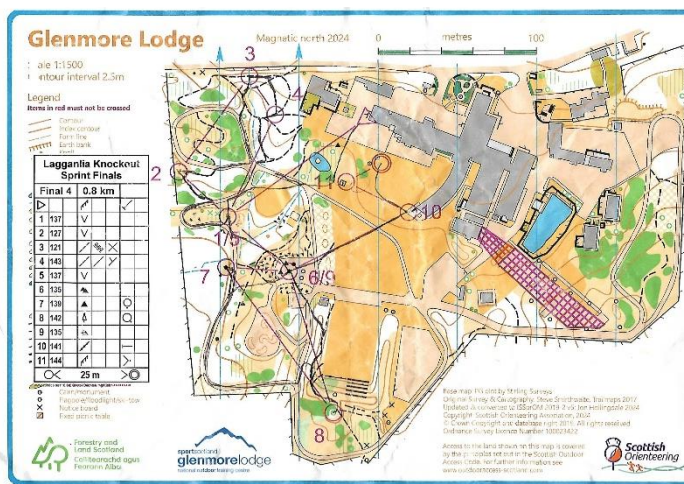
After lunch we took the long route round to the relay start which didn't seem necessary although the coaches said it was. After a morning of the forest pretty much to ourselves, the afternoon was filled with people. This relay was a distraction relay, we were all given a number and then

the coaches handed over to us so it was like we had the last leg in the relay by calling out our number. The race was filled with gaffles and coaches running around trying to distract us. They would shout things like “do you know what control you’re going to?” or “I’m lost can you help me” or “it’s that way”. Sometimes what the coaches were saying was correct but you could never know. One of the controls wasn’t turned on so we had to use the pin punch. And to add to all this, there was a disused railway running down the middle of the area. And not to mention one of the coaches' siblings turned up and ran around filming us. Luckily for me I knew exactly where I was going so I was overtaking people rather than looking lost.

Overall I think I improved a lot from that day. My attention to detail, planning and route choice where what stood out to me as improvements. I am particularly proud of one leg on the relay where I took much superior route choice and saved about 20–30 seconds. Then back to the Lagganlia it was for cake, warm food, lots of games of hide and seek, a presentation by the coaches and our beds which were quickly becoming the primary thing we were looking forward to after each day.

Day 4

Wednesday was the day of the sprint orienteering. Firstly a short drive brought us to Aviemore. This was the sprint qualifiers and the sprint championships. it was a gaffled, timed start, urban event with a little bit of forest. The course was made challenging through the use of artificial barriers. Some people got caught out by these and it cost them time or even their place in the results. near the end there was a complex butterfly section near the golf course. Unfortunately, this was my worst result of the trip but i learnt from my mistakes as you'll read in the next section.



After the morning qualifiers, we headed to another out doors centre called Glenmore Lodge. Everyone participated in the knockouts where we started off with 2 gaffled butterfly loops and then explored the rest of the site. this was my favourite location of the whole week which is partially because I won the knockouts. Our course was only 1.4km long for this but it still had some fairly steep hills especially the road along side the ski slope.

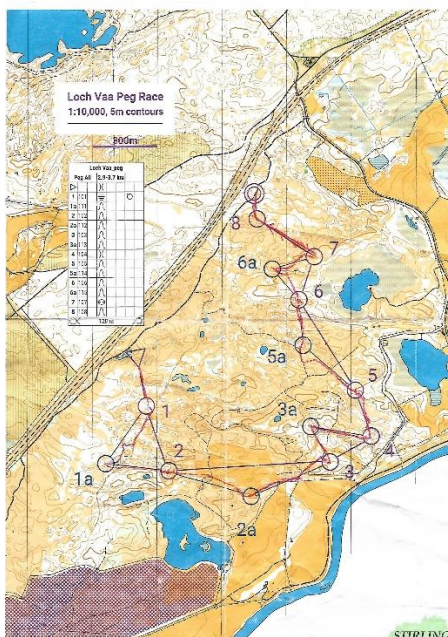
After this the top 3 boys and top two girls from the two heats moved into quarantine for the final. There were slightly more boys than girls so that's why there was a difference. For those who don't know, quarantine is an area where competitors wait; they can't see the start, you are forbidden to leave, strictly no electronics and there is a toilet there so you dont have to leave. We were told that in some events people have had to wait up to 8 hours in quarantine so people often sleep.

Luckily we only had to wait for about 15 minutes. For me and another athlete, this was going to be a very interesting race. For the final we had only 800m, 11 controls on a 1:1500 map! It was a very fast paced race and for me and the other athlete our first gaffe was the same. For the second one he completed it slightly faster than me, meaning for controls 9 onwards he had a head start. Between 9 and 10 it was very intense and I managed to overtake him. Everyone was cheering us on not knowing what was about to happen as I ran into the finish in first place. I had beaten my competitor by seconds or so I thought until I downloaded. Mispunch! On the last control. I thought it was an error until I checked the map and saw that we had both missed control 11 (see map). Only the planner knew what had happened. Both me and the other athlete were so focused on the sprint finish that we had not noticed the final control. This meant that we were both disqualified but I still enjoyed it and it was such a fun event to do. And to finish the morning we had a game of volleyball. Then we headed back to Lagganlia to rest before the night.

At around 21:00 we headed to Spey Valley golf course for a selection of night courses, 2 light greens and an orange. Most people took this fairly easy. It was a good idea to include this event because it gave a range of different types of events. The golf course had fairly distinct features so it was very safe. Because of this we did have quite a late bedtime but everyone enjoyed it and it was a good chance to practice night-o.

Day 5

For day 5 a load of tired and grumpy athletes had to go to Loch Vaa. Here we had lots of smaller exercises so back to normal again. Unfortunately the map was a bit out of date and the whole place was covered in uneven heather which would normally be ok but just after a night-o you can guess it's not pleasant. We had a few simplification exercises which were good as there were lots of controls. There were also lots of unique forest marsh and contour features and the group learnt lots about planning and execution here. In the afternoon was of course the



competition event, a peg race. Eight main controls which all had an unknown number of pegs attached. There was a mass start and if you go to a control and there is a peg, you must take it and then complete the extra control. So you do 1 to 1a to 2 rather than 1 to 2. The finish also had pegs on it. The person with the most pegs wins. If 2 people both have the same number of pegs it's based on time. No control has enough pegs for everyone. This type of race is designed to make the better people get the pegs at the first control so the not so good people can get ahead. With no pegs it was 2.9km, compared to 3.7km which I did, and got back 2nd by about 0.25 seconds. This meant I won though because I was the only person who got all 6 pegs which is quite rare. I got the last peg on control 3 and there were people right behind me so it at first seemed my win was very close but then Don reminded me I wouldn't have had to do the extra control at 3.

This was probably my second favourite event of the week, and I am particularly proud of some of the legs. 1 to 1a there was a large group following an earth wall but we came off too early. I was first to relocate as I had been able to spot a tower. A skill I learnt earlier in the week. 3a to 4 lots of people were at the wrong end of a depression but using a spur at the correct end I was able to find the control effectively. 5 to 5a I saw people were going a lot slower through the heather and so I cut almost 90 degrees away from the control to reach a path and overtook around 3 people while also having a feature that led me straight in. Finally, 7 to 8 I went pretty much straight on this leg because there were lots of visible features and I am fast at running up hills and it paid off meaning I caught up to the person who was in first place. Little did they know, I had one more peg.

Day 6

By now we were all shattered but this day was the most important of all. It was the tour championships. Located in Culbin Forest, a much harder version of Roseisle, 5.5km and 20 controls. The true test of skill was what the coaches planned by control 4. There was a big chain led by me and 2 other incredibly good orienteers. We used our skills from the past week to successfully find most controls, on some our bearings were slightly off. It was a really physically challenging area so it was important that we used the skills we learnt effectively. To finish off the race there was a section through dark green full of complex contours. What a pleasant surprise! On this race we had start intervals of 3 minutes, meaning although we all finished together, we were just in reverse order of our starts. The girls had 4.5km with a few less hills to climb with the same technical level. We also had quarantine about 600m from the start which made it feel like a real event. I secured a strong second place but first would have been a touch nicer. We then took the minibus back and almost half the people fell asleep, luckily not the driver.

That afternoon we did our final bit of orienteering. A relay on site. Two out of 3 runners out at once, there were 18 controls. You could get one each time. Some of the controls had a bag with an acrylic puzzle piece. They were coloured corresponding to our teams and the first team to complete the puzzle was the winner. Not everyone competed due to minor injuries that the coaches didn't want to get worse right before the Scottish 6 days. They didn't do nothing though, as one decided to organise our team from the start flag. With his help and our running combined we were able to win both competitions. However the finish box wasn't on the flag because one of the coaches had it and we had to chase him down to get it! To finish off, in the evening we had a big party meal, 3 excellent courses by the cooks. This was followed by the ceilidh, a traditional Scottish country dance. It was a lot of fun and a great way to spend the last evening.



But wait... it wasn't over yet because at 22:30 we all had to sneak out and hide without the coaches finding us. They were supposed to come out at 22:30 but they were enjoying themselves relaxing in their hot tubs. I think we should get them next year. Anyway this meant that everyone got to their hiding spots fine. Maybe it was our practice playing lots of games of hide and seek throughout the week, the coaches weren't able to find us. However one person handed themselves in because of the cold and another thought they had been found when they misheard the coach so got up and were spotted. Everyone else was out there until exactly 23:50 when we headed straight to the coaches cabin for a chocolate. What a great way to finish, a nice late night before some of us had a complex train journey home.

I had a fantastic week and very much thank the coaching team, organisers, selectors, cooks, and other helpers for making this possible. I massively improved my orienteering skills and made new friends, and am looking forward to my next year of orienteering. Finally, I thank JROS, British Orienteering, Airienteers, and the Jack Bloor fund, for their very generous financial contributions.