

# Lagganlia 2018

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Back in the summer, I had an amazing and arguably life-changing opportunity to attend Lagganlia, an orienteering training camp up in North Scotland. It was possibly one of the best weeks of my life. Throughout the week I received personalized and effective training in small groups or one to one, orienteered in some brilliant areas and made loads of new friends. In this report I will highlight some of the best parts. A key detail about Lagganlia is that it was done on a schedule, where we ate breakfast and made packed lunches during the morning before heading out to train all day then coming back to eat dinner, relax and have a briefing on tomorrow's activities and talk about techniques, areas etc.

Let's get into it...

## Day 1 – Arrival

At the end of an almost endless car journey up from the lakes, we arrived at Lagganlia after a night in Glasgow. I quickly made friends with the few already arrived and unpacked into our bedrooms – I got a top bunk in a room of three bunks! A couple of hours later, a minibus arrived with the majority of the others attending the camp, we all became immediate mates and started joking about and exploring the woods. After dinner, the coaches properly introduced themselves and we played extensive but incredibly useful name learning and ice-breaking activities.

## Day 2 – Uath Lochans and Moor of Alvie

Today the training really began. We had a brief briefing last night on the areas and the activities we would be doing and now began learning some useful techniques. We were loaded off the minibuses and began a long warm up, being taught about different ways of warming up and things that were important. Once we were ready to begin, we started pacing 100m straight, uphill, downhill and through terrain. Once our personal paces were recorded, we were lead into the middle of the Uath Lochans forest and given some maps.

Throughout the week, our training took place in groups of four, with a lead coach and two young coaches. The maps before us – tiny pieces of paper with a 1:7500 scale – showed us some of Uath Lochans' beautiful forest. It was all fairly runnable with gentle yet distinctive contours, some paths and a scattering of boulders. There were two courses – one focussing on aiming off and another looking at aiming off. After these two were done, we did a clock relay (where one runner takes an item out to a control then the next runner moves the item to the next control and so on until the item has been at all the controls, it is brought back).

After this, we headed back to Lagganlia to watch some of the WOC relays live, which was very interesting, before heading off to Moor of Alvie. Moor of Alvie was a similar area to Uath Lochans and there we put the techniques we learnt that morning into practice with a corridors exercise – where on some parts of the map only strips of map were shown along the purple lines, then a section with a wiggly purple line between two controls, going from feature to feature, where we needed to count the number of controls along the line. This was followed by another corridors exercise, however instead of strips of the map shown along the purple line, there were strips of plain white. This forced us to focus on our bearings.

## Day 3 – North Granish and Glenmore Lodge

Ready and eager for today's training, we started off with an activity back at Lagganlia, where we were given the map of North Granish, with 17 controls on it (the master plan) and told to plan a course on it. And draw the map. This was particularly focusing on simplification, as we were only given ten minutes to plan the course and draw the map so our map needed to only have the essential features needed for navigation. My map consisted of about 12 scribbled brown lines for contour shape, a fence and the words 'BIG DEPRESSION'. It worked perfectly fine, I navigated the course with only one slight error, from which I learnt how important control descriptions were (I had forgotten to write them down on my map!). We then had a map walk of the error, looking at the contours, which were very wiggly and interesting.

Afterwards, we headed to Glenmore Lodge for the Lagganlia Sprint Qualifiers! The course was crazy: 1:1,500 map, 1.9km with 31 controls – nuts! I even had a few sub 20 second legs. It was a ton of fun, packed with butterfly loops and the rest with a nice little area, mix of parkland with features of an urban and some wacky contour shapes from the adventure equipment. I almost qualified for the A finals but was a couple of seconds off – irritatingly seconds I had spent repunching some controls that I thought hadn't registered my dibber (but they had.). All in all, it was a fun race!

## Day 4 – Culbin Forest

It was a long journey in the minibus to Culbin but it was worth it – it was a brilliant area with some of Scotland's finest contours. In the morning, we teamed up with local juniors from Moravian to share our training and knowledge – I ended up shadowing some people for possibly the first time. Even though I wasn't running my own course during the shadowing, I probably learnt more than doing it by myself! There were several courses from the same point in the morning, each focusing on different techniques and parts of Culbin. It was a very useful morning session.

In the afternoon, we headed to a slightly different part of Culbin Forest and did a run through the green. This green was the kind of darker-than-light-green-but-you-can-still-move-through-it green. Running and navigation required techniques that I hadn't really explored before; it was dark in there and the visibility was poor, not to mention there weren't really any features to navigate by other than contours, so it required lots of precise contour and compass work, while running with your head low and whole body almost in a crouch, so you weren't constantly smashing through twiggy branches. It was an interesting and rewarding challenge and I completed it with a fairly decent time, ready for the final activity in Culbin.

The final activity was an odds and evens relay, something we have sometimes done with EAJS. The principle is that you have a team (ours was of three) and two maps. On each map there are a set of controls, odd numbered ones on one map and even numbered ones on the other. The first leg runner (which was me) runs out with one map to one control on it, punches the control, then runs back to the start. That control is marked off with a pen and I hand the map over then my two other teammates set off, one with the map I have just run with and the other with the other map. They each go to one control, then come back and the first one back swaps their maps with me and I head out again, and the second one back gives their map to the runner who has just come in and they go out again. This is repeated until every control on both maps have been punched and marked off. It is a fun and fast relay, which requires more thinking and tactics than other events, while only running one leg at once, the whole event feels intense yet enjoyable and our team did pretty well!

## Day 5 – Rest Day (Inshriach and other sprint areas)

So all week we were being told that we would get a rest day, to compensate for the insane amount of exercise we had been doing but – not really. We started off with pushing ourselves to our physical limits for 1 kilometre time trials on track then through terrain, which gave us interesting results but was crazy hard work. We did the time trials in the northern part of Inshriach, which also has the brilliantly horrible area, which's name strikes fear into the heart of many an orienteer – the Checkerboard. The Checkerboard is the remains of an experiment carried out by the Forestry Commission back in the '70s, where 25 metre squares of different types of trees were planted. What is there now is a crazy area. We did a concentration exercise, which was... interesting to say the least. We then headed off for the sprint finals.

The sprint finals were similar to the qualifiers, a ton of fun with a ridiculous number of controls over a ridiculously short distance with a ridiculous scale. Fun though. This was finished with what could have been the week's highlight – the hoops. The hoops were large, metal rings hanging from a wire, which was across a river. The challenge was to cross the river, swinging from hoops to hoop. It started off with one of our junior coaches crossing, making it look like a piece of cake. Then we attempted it. There were more splashes than swings, but I completed jumping from one to another with two hands, a pretty cool achievement.

We then got the 'rest' of our rest day – an hour of free time in Aviemore, which highlighted with the £8 purchase of a 24 pack of Irn Bru – super fun.

## Day 6 – Roseisle

Roseisle is a brilliant area, yet another long minibus journey away. It offers some of Scotland's best contours and terrain and we had some brilliant exercises in it. First we had a loop done in pairs, with specific exercises, which made me see orienteering from a whole new perspective. This was followed by a really cool exercise, a peg relay. It is quite a complex idea to explain but it was really fun.

This was followed by another exercise in the kind of darker-than-light-green-but-you-can-still-move-through-it green, a bit longer than the previous one but requiring the same skills.

## Day 7 – Inshriach and Lagganlia

The final of the weeks – the Lagganlia champs! After a week training with new techniques and ideas, we were thrown into a brutal area – the southern part of Inshriach. It was a messy tangle of contours, which produced the hardest five kilometres I have ever ran. The challenge was hard but will definitely leave a lasting impression on me.

Afterwards, we had a fun relay back at Lagganlia Lodges. The map was hilarious but the relay was good fun and my team won! It was a typical relay except for the fact we had to run holding a balloon, a new twist on orienteering. It was a great way to end the week, which was absolutely brilliant. I made some many good friends, learnt so much and had such a fun week!