

Hawkshead 2014



Holme Fell

This year was my second year at Hawkshead, and I travelled up the night before with three other East Anglian juniors, coach Clive Wilkinson and a parent. Beforehand I really tried to think about what I wanted to work on, and was really looking forward to spending some time on lake district terrain without having to worry about racing.

The first area we were in was Holme Fell. There was only a short walk to the start, and then we had a quick warm up before I started out on my first course. The area was a mixture of marshy forested, heavily contoured hill side and open moor. I began with a control pick, and went round the ten controls, trying to get into the map. Though complex at first, it didn't take long for me to get into the shapes, and I found it good to be able to slow down a bit and concentrate on imagining what I was going to see, and picking a good route.

Pretty happy with how it went, I then went out on a doughnut course with Tim Harrison. Basically, the area around the control circle was whited out, so all the detail was obscured. The idea is that it forces you to pick a good attack point, and rely on that. To make things harder, one every other leg, I had to plan my route, memorising everything, and then hand my map over to my teammate and run without it!

It was a real challenge, and the first control I ended up missing my attack point and had to get some help, but after that I was cleaner, making sure I picked out really obvious attack points, and knowing what the control kite was actually going to be on. It was hard to keep everything important in your head, and once you strayed off course, it was almost impossible to relocate without getting your map back. It seemed to practise everything, and I found it one of the most useful exercises of the weekend.

After that I went out on a corridor route, which is just a thin strip of map, with nothing else marked, and no controls to aim for. The idea was to pick find the seven controls which were somewhere out on the course. I started off a bit fast, and very quickly got horribly lost, eventually heading back to base. Corridor's are real challenge, and staying in contact with the map is vital. I found it very easy to make things fit when they shouldn't have, so learnt something at least!

Finally at Holme Fell I did a few controls on a simplification course, cutting across the loop to create longer legs, and trying to focus on nailing the control. Since the legs were long, a good attackpoint and checking features were vital, and I made sure I visualised what I was looking for.

With two other areas, an ultra sprint and a talk by Nick Lightfoot on orienteering, it was a really great weekend, and I got a lot more out of it than I did the previous year. It was encouraging to see how much my navigation had improved, and it was really good fun, though very exhausting. Many thanks to Clive for driving me up and coaching us throughout the weekend!

Ella Gilbert

Saturday Afternoon – Bishops Wood

After eating lunch on Saturday we headed to our afternoon session in Bishops Wood where we were focused on contour work and low visibility. The area we were in was purely woodland with the north of the map being open woodland and the south a dense conifer forest. After warm up we used 2 different contour only maps, with two of the squad on each map at each time, one going backwards and the other following the normal route. The contour only maps required us to use contours to see the shape of the land to use as large orienteering features and to imagine what a control may look like before you get there and to use the contour lines as handrails. Using contour only maps allowed us to focus on such techniques which can be key to any event with contours. After the two courses we did the low visibility exercise where we had to rely on accurate bearings and attack point to reach the controls in good time. This required us to focus and not be drawn away from our bearings because of the density of the trees and the low visibility and being able to slow down to stop ourselves from making simple errors. The training here lasted a couple of hours and afterwards we went back in time to get ready for the relay.

The lecture took place a little after dinner; the focus of the lecture being on the psychology behind orienteering and the thought process used when on a run. Nick Lightfoot started the presentation with focusing on how we work through a leg on a course and what a map might mean to us compared to other people. He broke down our thought processes on a leg to how we may find the obvious features and the features for ticking off, hand railing or catching features. This then developed into how we individually work out legs. The workshop afterwards focused on how we were using our subconscious for some parts of orienteering i.e quick simple route choice and understanding the shape of the land and what we use the conscious part of our brain for i.e the hard running and using the ticking of features we've selected possibly using our subconscious. We then followed this into a discussion how being able to move things from your conscious brain to your subconscious to allow you to focus on the running and the smallest amount of main map reading. The workshop has allowed me to develop my understanding of how we use our brain to orienteer and the developments in the sports science for orienteering.

Josh Partridge

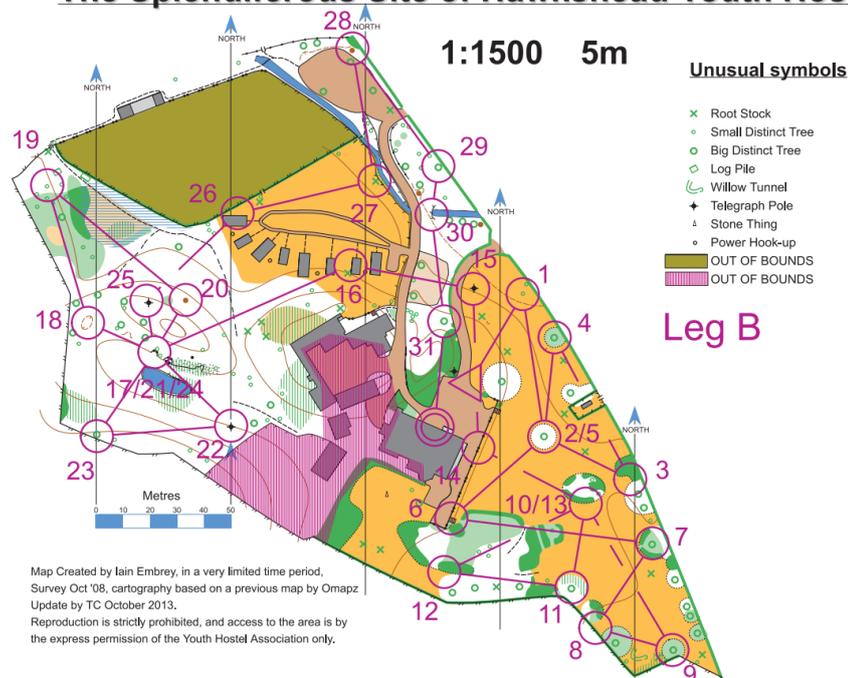
Night Relay at Hawkshead

After returning from Bishop's Wood we had a couple of hours to prepare for the Night Sprint Relay, the only formal competition of the weekend and hence extremely important to people's pride if nothing else. For the relay James, Ella and I would be running in a team with me 1st, Ella 2nd and James 3rd leg, Josh ran in a joint team with the South East squad.

By 4.50pm everybody was gathered outside for the pre-race brief and by 5 o'clock the first runners were standing in a circle getting ready to sprint to the first control 20 metres away. With such a short first leg and 30 or 40 first leg runners it was nearly impossible to punch the first control but we soon realised the second would be no better as it was on the edge of a holly bush and the previous control had been gaffled. Control 2 was the start of an extremely complex set of butterfly loops with my course visiting one control 3 times while others having two butterfly loops over lapping. This part of the course took place on the lawn outside the youth hostel and was visible to spectators but it was impossible to tell how each person was doing. However by control 15 all courses were clear of this area and sprinting over or round a small hill to a control by the camping pods before heading into the woods.

By this point I was rapidly chasing down the leaders and as another triple butterfly loop started I was in a good position to seize the lead, but alas it was not to be as I ended up visiting control 17 (22 on map) before 16 (23 on map) and ended up running the leg twice. After this fatal error I was determined that nothing else would go wrong and pushed myself even harder to catch up, unfortunately despite having no further errors I was unable to hunt down the leaders and returned in 5th. Ella and James then followed this up with brilliant performances of their own, meaning we finished in seventh but fourth in the M/W16 category.

The Splendiferous Site of Hawkshead Youth Hostel



Tim Harrison

Sunday Morning – Dale Park

After a well earned sleep from the relay the previous night and a good big breakfast we headed off to Dale Park.

This was an area which was a mixture of hilly forest and marsh so the hills gave us a fresh challenge to East Anglia but we were well used to wet feet! The location was up a long muddy forest track but we were soon into training exercises.

We did a mixture of exercises including a low visibility exercise where the forest was very dark with low branches – this proved quite challenging as it was very difficult to keep on your bearing. One of the controllers had placed a sheep's skull at one of the controls just to add to the atmosphere of the forest.



One of the most enjoyable of the exercises was where the 4 of us would all do the same course but we would wait at every other control so we were a group again. This was great fun as it had a competitive edge (you wanted to beat or not be behind the other three) but you had to balance speed and navigation. On the final sprint I took the slightly muddier track in an effort to beat the other two only to go waist deep in a pool of mud 20 metres from the end!

After a change of clothing it was then the long trek back to East Anglia. Many thanks to our two drivers, Clive and Will, for

driving us all the way there and back. It proved to be a really enjoyable weekend and helped all of us pick up some useful tips and more experience of Orienteering in the Lakes. Along with JIRC, training weekends like this really help build team spirit for the region and make us all that bit better.

James Nisbet