

As I cruised through the air on my way to Inverness I was bubbling over with excitement, this was my first JROS tour of what I hope to be many and I couldn't be more excited to be there. These tours aren't just amazing in terms of all the training tips and technical skills you pick up over the week, they are also a great social event and opportunity to meet and interact with many of my peers for the first time. Lagganlia did not disappoint!

Me and Robin Irwin arrived very early (about 1:00) so we had some time to acquaint ourselves with the site and a few of the coaches before everyone arrived. We had time to fit in a nice gentle run through some beautiful scottish woodland and some very funny team building exercises before dinner and bed.

I was up and raring to go on day 1 (something not seen quite so much towards the end of the week) after some breakfast and a music-filled bus ride we arrived at heathfield, our venue for the day. Katherine Bett SN (my wonderful coach for the week) shadowed me out onto a nerve-wracking first course, which went brilliantly. Heathfield was a relatively easy area but it was nice for the coaches to get to know our skills as athletes. It was also really good for practising my bearings and my pacing. We then finished with a star relay. After a great evening with the group it was time for a very welcome sleep.

Day 2 was on Darnaway (the 2015 WOC middle area) which was rich in amazing contour detail and was one of the best areas for navigational practice (contours and handrails). After a 4th place in the relay on day 1 I was placed with Matthew Inman and Beth Sykes and we managed to pull off a devastating victory in the odds and evens relay to round off a great day of orienteering.

Day 3 was on the dreamily runnable dunes of North Granish where I steamed my way through all of the exercises before lunch. I just loved the area so much! We finished the day with a distractions race. It was chaos with non-gaffled courses (we were told they were gaffled), commentary, cameramen following you, intentionally switched off controls, camera controls and a run through with a map flip. I managed to pull off a tiny victory of 1 second over Robin Irwin to finish the day on a high.

Day 4 was a "rest" day (code for Lagganlia sprint championships apparently). This was a valuable and rare opportunity to experience the format of knockout sprint. I took it easy in the qualifier at glenmore lodge as everyone qualified for the runners choice semi-finals. The semi finals however were a lot more interesting, I was in the leading pack until control 4 where my shoe came off in the bog, this meant that I was 25ish seconds behind everyone else and only the top 3 qualify. Despite another fall at the river I managed to claw my way back into 2nd by the skin of my teeth and qualify for the final. I then proceeded to take victory in a close fought battle with Douglas McDonald through the lodges of badaguish. What a day!

Day 5 was the last day of training before the tour champs and it was a great area. Creag Beag was an exposed hillside and therefore when the weather came in it got quite miserable. I still loved weaving my way through the heather and crags looking for controls though. A very enjoyable peg race after in the forest below to end the day.

Day 6 was the tour championships, the big event. And I absolutely smashed it, a perfectly clean run to win by almost 4 minutes! I even beat Julie Emmerson, (although I suspect she wasn't trying). What a way to end the tour! I was absolutely dead on my feet for the final relay: Mikey's monster, but it was great fun. We snuck out in the evening for a thrilling game of night-time hide and seek with the coaches, before we bundled back into our rooms at midnight for a much-needed rest.

It was a brilliant week and the highlight of my year. Thank you so much to SWOA and BOK for the grants which have allowed me to access these opportunities. SWOA treasurer Steve Robertson and BOK treasurer Mike Forrest were very effective in handling my grants and I would like to thank them personally for this. I would certainly recommend applying for their grant if you ever had the opportunity to do something like this. Finally, big thank you to Don Mckerrow and Lecky Thompson for making this tour happen, it was truly a wonderful experience.