

## Our Scottish 6 Days Orienteering Experiences

*Milly Askham and Sue Rae*

When Milly and I were first asked to write a report about the Scottish Six Days, my first thoughts were that it was a great week. We all enjoyed the orienteering and the weather was fairly sunny; better yet, it didn't rain! My second thought, however, was to question how much detail I would actually be able to remember! Each successive day was, in many ways, a replay of the day before and retroactive interference, where new memories disrupt old memories, is inevitable. When I was teaching psychology students, my question to them might have been to ask, "When retrieval failure occurs, what can we do to overcome the problem?" Their answer would be to try to use some appropriate cues. So, to refresh my memory, I looked at the event website for Day 1, the spectacularly named Auchingarrich. There was a 3km walk from the car park to assembly – BINGO! I remember passing the dead sheep lying in the field and negotiating an extremely slippery, steep slope on the pilgrimage to assembly. I then got out my orienteering map and immediately recalled what went wrong that day and the "coulda, woulda, shoulda" feelings began to kick in. Day 1 was technically challenging and used open forests interspersed with areas of marsh and ditches. The finish was fast and furious because all the courses converged into a descent through open runnable farmland. What do you recall about Day 1, Milly?

I remember that at the start of my course, I was a bit put off by the scale, which was 1:7,500. The terrain was very hilly and quite marshy in places, which I struggled to avoid. When I finished, I felt that I had done reasonably well by using (and, consequently, improving my use of) bearings. This meant that I was glad that I had



entered W14A, which was Light Green standard. I found that it was a good challenge for me and that I completed the course very well. Day 2 at Edinchip was quite a different day, however, because this time I started with all the adults in open moorland. I like open moorland because, unless it is very foggy, the visibility is good and this makes it much easier to spot the controls. At one point on my course, I had to cross a big river, which was quite tricky. Once again, I made good use of bearings and the vegetation detail on the map, especially when the terrain changed from open moorland to woodland. What did you think of Day 3, Grandma? I think that it was very adventurous for you and you did very well.

*Milly on Day 1 - Photo by Wendy Carlyle*

One glance at controls 1 and 2 on this map reminds me that my Day 3 at Dundurn began near an extremely steep gorge with high sandstone cliffs on each side. So yes, Milly, I agree that landscape had the feel of an adventure! The only way to go



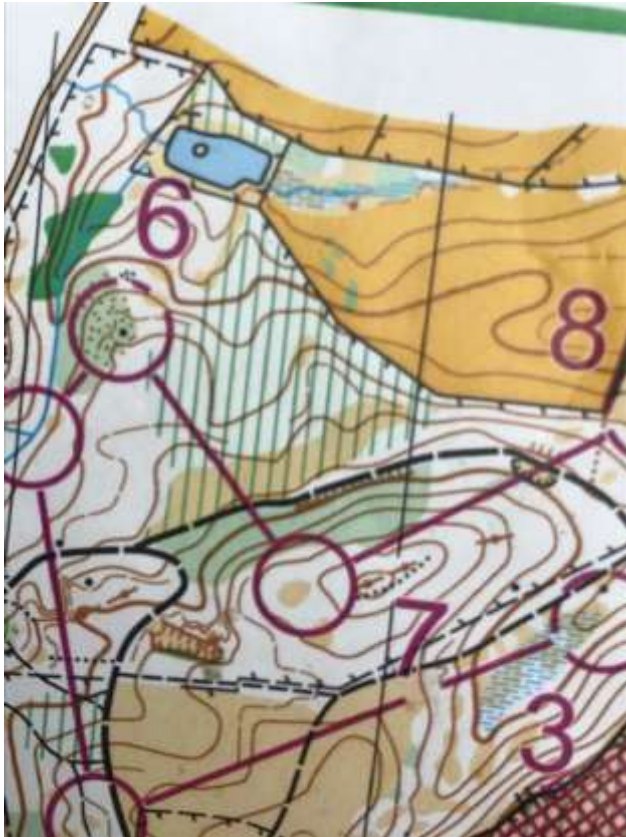
from control one to control two seemed to be to cross a very boggy area just below control one. The previous day, I had found myself extracting first my leg and then my shoe from a very scary bog! Faced with crossing another bog on Day 3, I was verbalising my distress at the prospect of once again sinking to my knees in more mud when a six-foot Scottish giant orienteer offered to piggyback me across. I accepted his gallant offer and we almost made it until, about a metre from the edge he sank down to his knees and neither of us avoided a muddy exit! The terrain was extremely mixed and, at one point, I couldn't see any other route between 4 and 5 other than to fight my way through the dark green to a distinctively shaped opening.

I agree, Grandma; Day 3 was extremely boggy and it was often difficult to make route choices that avoided the bogs. Overall, Day 3 was my longest distance and had my 2nd highest amount of climb. Despite all this, I really enjoyed the day because the navigation was very straightforward and it was one of my best runs. The controls were relatively close together and there were a lot of contours and cliffs in the terrain, but most of the course was open, with only one tiny forest at the end. On Day 4 at Culteuchar and Dron, there was a very long climb to the start for most of us. You were lucky, Grandma; your start was further down the hill.

Well done on your Day 3 run, Milly! Day 4 wasn't a good day for me, despite the easier walk to the start. I spent a long time climbing up a ridiculously steep bank on my hands and feet to get from control 6 to 7. In hindsight, I should have gone around the back of the hill and up a far gentler slope! I remember meeting you on the course on Day 5. There was a complicated forest area in the middle of the course and we were both searching for well-hidden controls. Searching for these slowed us both down. Nevertheless, this was my best day. Did you enjoy the last day?

I did, Grandma. Grandtully, the last day of the Scottish 6 Days, was the day that I really made good use of my compass bearings, because on many of my controls there weren't that many features to use. There were many marshes, trees and variations of undergrowth. I made sure that I paid attention to my bearings and

successfully hit my controls until the terrain changed into an open descent to the finish. This was exciting because there were many visible controls in different positions but fairly close to each other. It was so important to make the right choice and not to miss the last control before the finish.



Yes, Milly, I was pretty good at identifying the right controls on the run-in as well, but I also remember that the club tent was on the side of the hill facing the descent. There was a lot of enthusiastic cheering for club members emanating from the space in front of the tent as, one by one, we all ran in!

The whole family enjoyed the Ceilidh which was held in a large barn near Comrie. The quiz was fun as well and I remember that both you and Richard were valuable members of our family team. Richard, for his knowledge of Wimpy Kid books and video games and you for your knowledge of popular music. Unfortunately, we were only mid-table because we ignored a few of your answers, including the most prevalent tree in the British Isles and the artist who has sold the most

albums. Adults always think they know better, don't they?