

BNOC Planners comments

Someone said “Better bring your skis” when the venue was announced for the February BNOC. And they were dead right. Having been brought up on Deeside, I can remember being in fear of my life on one occasion wading through 5ft snow drifts on a walk along Burn O’ Vat and being terrified that either myself or the family dog would not make it back alive. As it happens, we had the warmest February day in Scotland of all time, just 2 days before the event. And this was recorded in Aboyne, beating the record of 1897.

So the bad weather contingency courses were not required and I was able to make use of some of the best parts of the area.

In my humble opinion, Muir of Dinnet offers some of the finest orienteering terrain in the country and it was a real pleasure to plan on. The map by Jon Musgrave actually extends to Redburn in the North and Cambus O’ May in the West so even the 11km elite course used only a relatively small part of it.

I tried to take all courses to some of the best bits although the shorter courses missed out on some of the more interesting and runnable forest in the North. But they didn’t have to cross ‘the gorge’ which is a dramatic feature and quite a challenge depending on route choice for the longer courses. Very much recommend a walk right up the gorge if you ever visit the area in the future. Also appreciate the efforts of controller Richard Oxlade who kept things sensible and also taped hundreds of metres of hazardous crags on the north side of the Vat when I didn’t really think it was practical to do so. Richard wisely suggested I reduce the length of my first draft courses and kept the longest ones to somewhat lower elevations which reduced the risk of snow/exposure.

So the longer courses got some classic route choice legs around the Cnoc Dubh hill. With the top being deemed out of bounds due to capercaillie (don’t get me started about the forest thinning in that area!). The shorter courses mostly got some interesting rock detail and intricate contours just on the West side of the road and all courses experienced the glacial moraine contours of “The Muir”. I think it is the variation that makes it difficult. The contours can be vague and it’s hard to relocate if you do lose contact. Many people struggled and I will find the Routegadget plots very interesting.

I asked Jon to change the dry open ground close to control #127 to a ‘marsh’ symbol as it had become flooded despite the balmy weather. On the night, this may have appeared more like a pond so I apologise if this confused some competitors. It was only 3 or 4 inches deep but seasonal and would change from week to week.

Also apologise for the forest thinning. There was really nothing we could do about it but they ploughed a significant track through part of the terrain only 48 hours before the event. This was particularly obvious between controls 2 and 3 on Course 8 but several other courses may have encountered it so apologies if this disrupted your run. From the comments I have heard, this was pretty insignificant compared to the other challenges on the courses.

In summary, I tried to give you all the best bits and most challenging courses I could within the constraints of the area and the start/finish location. Some found it a fantastic orienteering challenge and some struggled 'from the feedback I have heard', hopefully simply down to the unfamiliarity and the challenges of this type of terrain.

I have to say I was very happy indeed to see GG and Hector Haines come home in 70 and 75 minutes respectively on Course 1.

Many thanks to my Controller and Organiser (Richard Oxlade & Jon Musgrave) and all the usual helpers (mostly already mentioned in Jon/Richard's reports) who allowed this event to take place. I hope everyone enjoyed this rather special area on Deeside.