

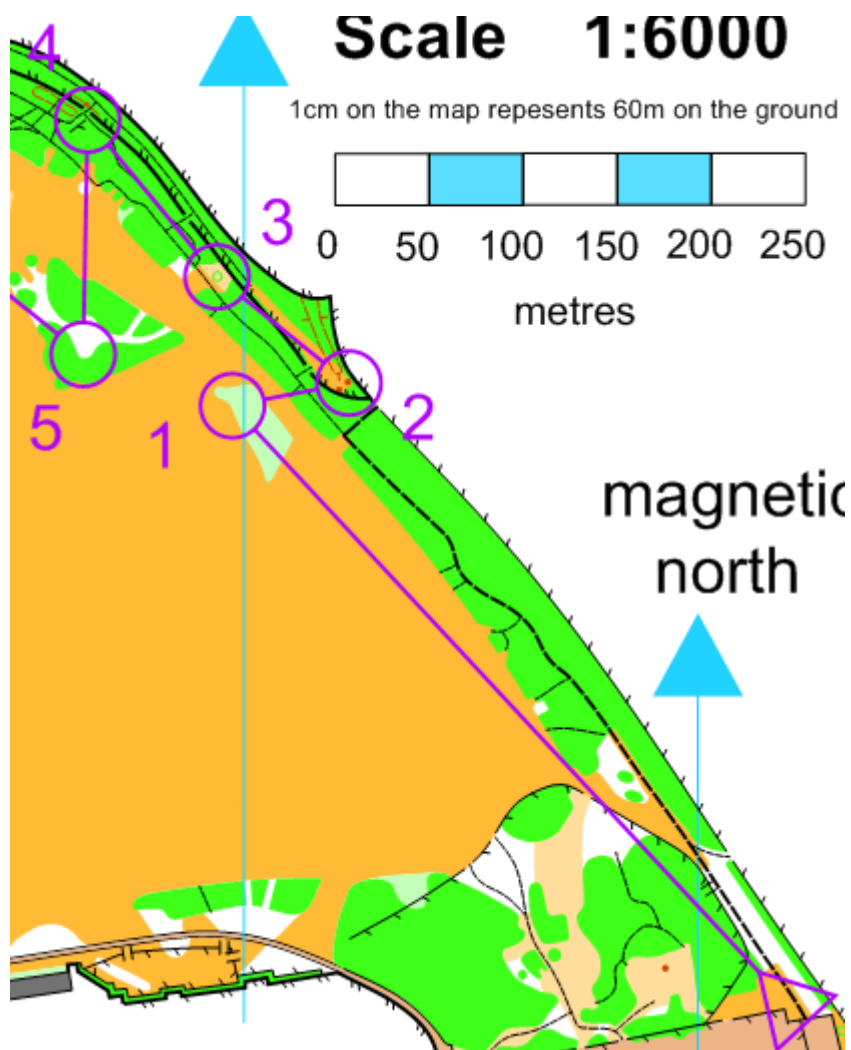
Wormwood Scrubs Park-O Planners Notes
Or “Why I did what I done”

Bryn Monnery (Planner)

This is a quick informal walkthrough of why the course was planned the way it was. The illustrative map sections alter their “zoom” frequently and I make no apologies for it.

The location of start and finish were dictated by the pub. I wanted it visible from there and that location also offered an interesting finish.

Controls 1-5: “Cruising”



The purpose of control 1 was twofold; firstly to avoid a long boring 400m slog along a paved path and secondly to boost confidence. I am of the opinion that good orienteering courses don't launch straight into the worst but ease the runner in whilst they're still getting their “map reading head” on.

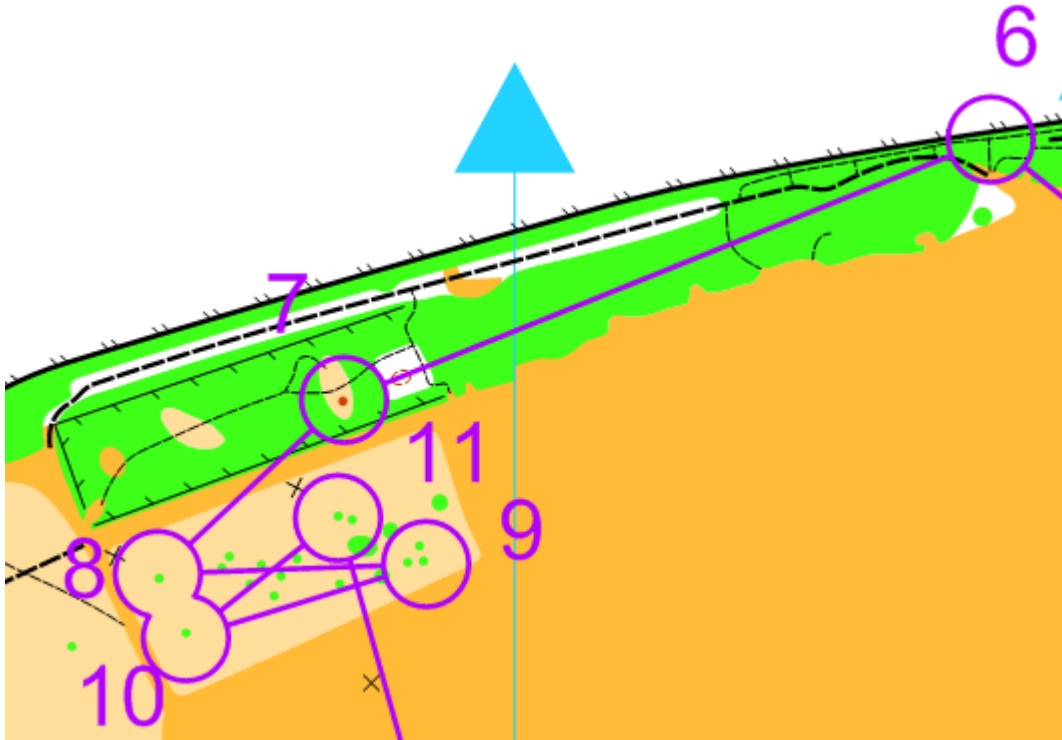
Control 2 was not originally in that location but about 100m NW on the vegetation boundary. However, this would tend to push the runner into committing to the path between the two double hatched fences which was extremely (and arm shreadingly) overgrown even on the initial recce the month before the race. The next control would have been on the next fence break (the site of a short course control in the event, but not approached from that direction). The knolls were an obvious location. This led to an unfortunate yo-yo, but not one visible until quite close.

Control 3 had two purposes. Firstly it was inserted to stop 6 and 9 both being in the criss-cross area (aka the “dynamic” after the Grid) that became controls 8-11 which could lead to map confusion. Secondly it was to encourage the runner not to take the bramble strewn path between the fences.

Control 4 offered the first serious route choice. The shortest route was to plunge into the bramble strewn path but the map clearly shows this is crossing the same fence twice, and thus psychologically the runner should think it is in fact longer than it is and discount it. The more obvious route was about 50m longer due to the need to effectively double back round a corner. It also has harder navigationally due to the multiple close up paths. As long as the runner was prepared for the brambles the short path was probably about 30 seconds to a minute quicker on average.

Control 5 was entirely to get the runner out of the green. There were two options; this control and another 100m NW (in the end a short course control). This was chosen simply because it was inside a nice runnable patch of woods. It did however offer two entrances and I found myself drawn to the further but more visible eastern entrance on my recce. This thus offered a small route choice costing maybe 15 seconds if you chose incorrectly.

Controls 6-11: “The Dynamic”

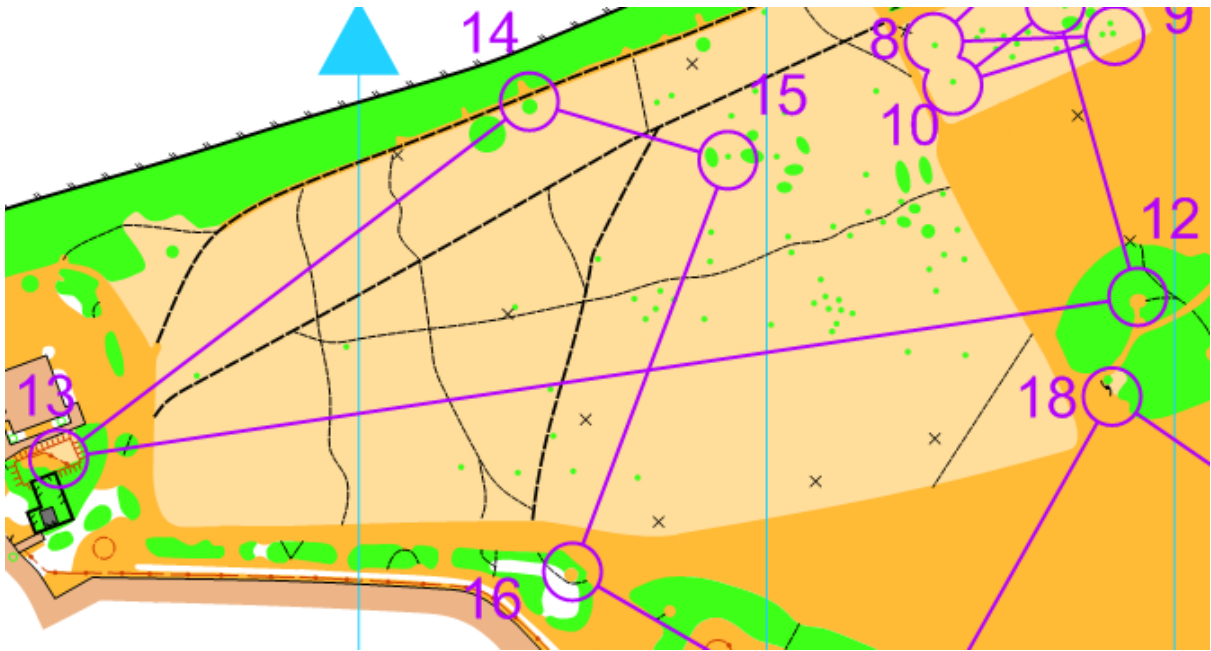


The placement of control 6 was entirely to offer route choice to 7. The major route choice was between following a path that looks nice on the map and the open ground. The shortest route was to run along the fenceline as long as possible then run along the track. If you broke onto the track earlier the undulations in the track path coupled with low hanging branches made this slightly longer and slower. The open was an extra 20m but much faster running. It was thought that the open was a slightly better route because the better speed over the ground would compensate for the increased distance.

The location of 7 changed several times. There were two other potential locations, a beetle habitat (i.e. pile of logs) on the junction to the west and the clearing to the east. The former would have allowed the map symbol "cairn" to be used, but it was too much of a stretch. The location was settled on to push the runner down the path which was quite pleasant and avoided potential unnecessary mispunches.

Controls 8-11 were "The Dynamic" in honour of the Grid. It was simply set up a foursquare to make runners see those in front of them and up their pace to try and catch them and knacker themselves out before "The Scrubs"

Controls 12-16: "The Scrubs"



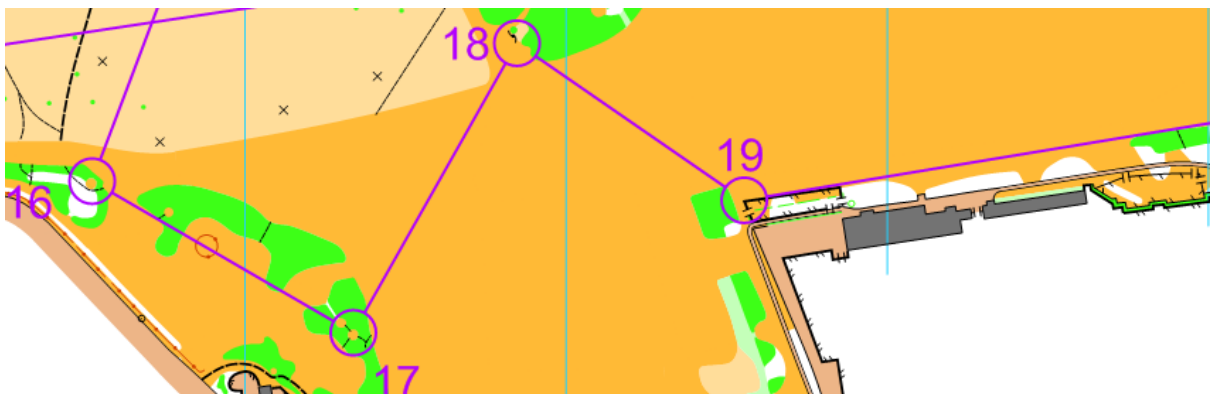
Exiting “The Dynamic” the long legs of “The Scrubs” proper begin. The defining feature of this part is route choice between paths, the rough open and the periphery.

Control 12 was sited to allow equal access to these three options, but sited deliberately to obfuscate the most optimal route (heading back out north and catching the E-W path access the rough open). Failing this simply going round on the open would be superior to thrashing through.

Control 13 was sited to be a little out of the way of prying eyes. However, it made for an interesting feature. Unfortunately there was no way to stop it being a yo-yo without adding another control.

Controls 14-16 were sited to allow the use of paths of desired, but make the runner experience the full beauty of “The Scrubs”.

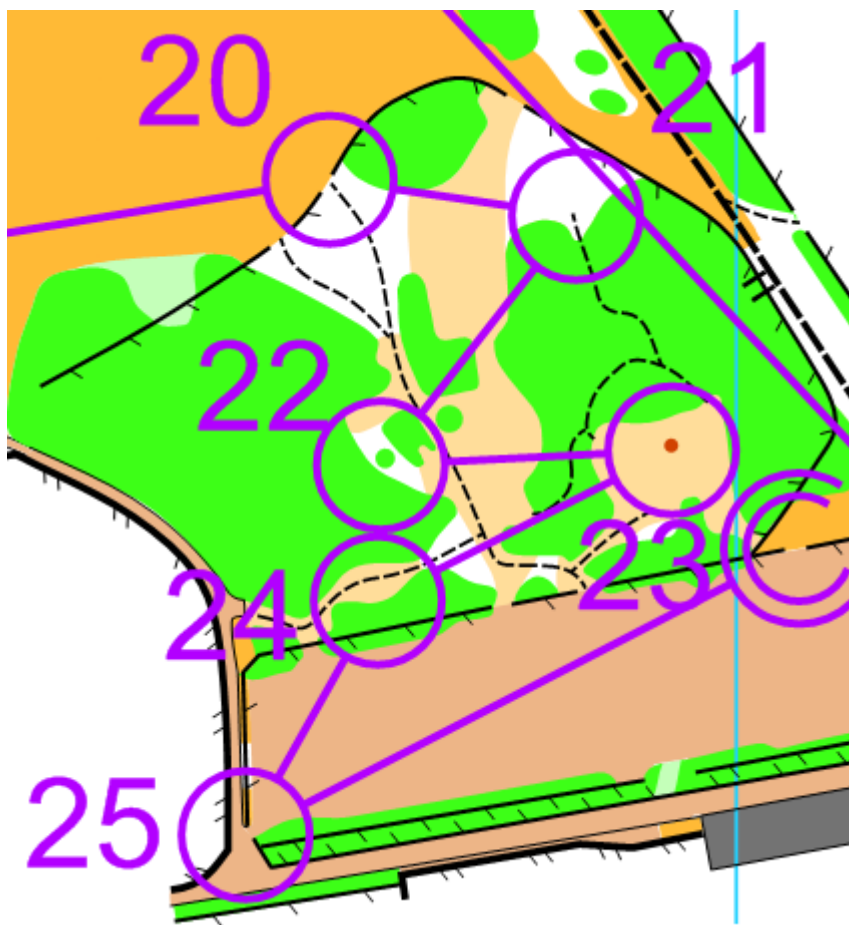
Controls 16-19: “The Long Road Home”



Getting back to the final technical area simply meant eating up the distance. The variations on 16-19 were simply to avoid it being a rather boring linear run, but this could not be entirely avoided evidenced by the long slog from 19-20 (which I broke up on the short, but left on the long). These fairly long open legs with easy navigation were there to bring the runner up to full pace for the final technical area.

Between 16 and 17 we considered putting a control on top of the rope climb in the adventure playground as an optional control, but it was impractical. Control 19 was originally placed inside the fence on the map recce, but moved outside after the area was revealed to be a “dog exercise area”. Never say I don’t think of you.

Controls 20-Finish: “Almost like real orienteering”



Approaching the end a final technical area was used to bamboozle the runners hopefully frazzled brains. Control 20 is simply a gate to transit the runner into this section of the course. Control 21 was to pull the runner off the main path in the area onto what is intuitively the wrong one. In fact when designing the course I designed the best route to be heading down the path 21 is on, taking the fork and attacking 22 NWW. It is slightly longer but has ease of navigation. If you took another route you probably had to stop and check, which would have cost you more time than the extra distance.

22-23 offered a choice of two routes. Either back in through the path I hoped you'd take and into the clearing or round the main path and turn left. I wish I could say I put a lot of thought into it but I didn't. The knoll was too good a control to use.

Control 24 was simply necessary to force the route to control 25 and the sprint finish across the open ground which was chosen to allow spectators to see (and hopefully cheer) finishers. I'm glad to say there was cheering.

Short Course

A short word on the short course.

Control 1 was simply there to be really obvious and build confidence in the map, and also to separate you from any simultaneous starting long course runners. Controls 2 and 4 were obvious small woodblocks and so used.

Control 3 was placed early and it may have been better to move it to the distinctive tree used on the long course. 5-7 were as the long for the same reasons, but you got a shorter version of "The Dynamic". Controls 10 and 11 were basically cutting out "The Scrubs", but an extra control (12) was inserted on the route to the gate into the final technical area to break up the leg. The final technical area was essentially the same but with one control deleted. Even with these cuts the course was slightly longer than the target length of 2.5 km. Sorry, but the need to avoid the football pitches forced a tour of the periphery.

Conclusion

It was hopefully a bit more technical than the typical park-O. I tried to use the area to the fullest and could certainly have squeezed in a slightly longer course (say a 6 km) without any real reuse of the same areas.

My thanks to Ed Stott who vastly improved the race by pointing out my stupider ideas and being on the recces, helping put the course out and collapse it and running down. Thanks to Don McKerrow for mapping the area. Also thanks to those who helped on the night; Ollie O'Brien, Ben Smith and Mike Garvin.

Finally thanks to you all for coming and I hope you enjoyed it.