

## Interland Report

### Interland- Lommel, Belgium (2023)

Interland is a competition where England competes annually in a five-cornered match against two Belgian teams (Flemish and French speaking), the Netherlands, and the French Ligue des Hauts de France de Course d'Orientation (LHFCO). This year, Interland was hosted in Belgium in Lommel (North East Belgium) on 5<sup>th</sup> of March.

It was a very early start on Friday morning to drive down to London to get on the coach, once on the coach it was time to drive to the ferry at Dover. The ferry was quick journey (no body got sea sick which was a bonus) and then it was back on the bus to drive from Calais to a coastal town just over the border in Belgium. We arrived around 7pm, had a team meeting and then it was free time. A few of my friends and I decided to have a late night shake out run after the long travel so with only one head torch between 5 of us we set off to explore the beach. We ended up running to the beach and then running to the next town to the North of the place we were staying at. It was a lovely 5km jog.

The next morning it was a fairly early start and back on the bus to drive to Lommel from the coast. It was around a 3 hour drive where we stopped off on the way to pick a few people up at a train station. Then it was time for model event just outside the hostel we were staying at for the night. The model event was eye-opening as I had never run on terrain anything like it before. Everything was so flat and any contours, or knoll on the map were tiny on the ground, so I was very glad to have had the opportunity to practice and get used to the terrain before the actual race the following day. Then it was an early night with lots of carb loading to fuel properly for the next day.

Finally on the Sunday it was race day!! An early start for a 40min bus ride to the area. I wasn't feeling too nervous yet, it was only as I got to the start line that the nerves kicked in. The area was very very fast as it was so flat and there were so many paths, this caught me out on the first few controls as I overshot them, however after the fifth control I started to get into a nice rhythm and was flowing quite nicely. I managed to catch up a few of the girls who started before and created a nice competitive train for a few controls which really spurred on my pace. At around the 7km mark I started to get slightly tired and this was where the technical bit of the race was. I ended up making a few silly errors on the last 2 controls (but nothing too time costly). Overall it was a good race with minimal errors. I managed to come back in 4<sup>th</sup> -only 2 minutes down on 3<sup>rd</sup>!! So I was pretty happy with the result. As a team, the England juniors managed to win overall which was brilliant!!

After the race and some tired legs it was back on the bus to go back home, 5 hours back to Calais, 2 hours on the ferry and another 5 hours all the way back home. Overall it was a very tiring but successful weekend in Belgium.

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