



Moor House School News and Events

Duke of Edinburgh's Award - Bronze and Silver Expeditions

May and June 2011



All students who attempt the D of E Expedition Section need to train, plan, and take part in two camping journeys - a practice one, and then an assessed one.

This year marked the first time that Moor House School ran expeditions for both Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Level (2 days, 1 night) and Silver Level (3 days, 2 nights).

Due to this, the expedition weekends actually began on Fridays for the students doing Silver, with the students on Bronze joining the activity on the Saturday mornings.



Practice Expeditions

On Friday 20th May the four students doing Silver - henceforth referred to as SAS Team - started the first leg of their journey, travelling on foot from Tilburstow Hill back to Moor House School. Shaid and Kane had some prior expedition experience, whereas for Luke and Katrina this was their first experience, but all four worked well together and navigated their way back to school with only minimum support required.

Once back at school they pitched their tents and got the stoves going to cook their evening meal, which was followed by an intense game of manhunt and then bedtime. On the Saturday morning the students doing Bronze Level joined the process, doing final checks to ensure that they had all the items they would need, before being taken to the drop off point at South Holmwood near Dorking.



From this location the three groups - SAS Team, Golf Team and Fox Team - set off 30 minutes apart, following the routes that they had chosen and plotted using OS Explorer 1:25000 maps and the interactive Memory Map application. SAS and Fox Team (Seb, Will, Henry and Matt B.) chose the direct but hilly route towards Leith Hill, whereas Golf Team (Chantelle, Steven, Angus, Tom and Ryan) opted for a route that skirted round the hills, leaving the climb to Leith Hill to the end.

During this stage the students were shadowed by a member of staff who provided basic support to ensure that the students were able to navigate successfully. It is much harder to mapread when actually out in the countryside than it seems in the classroom!



Despite initial nerves the students did well and managed to get to the top of Leith Hill. After a lunchtime snack break, and a good view of London (including Wembley Stadium!) through a pair of high powered binoculars borrowed from a kindly walker, the teams set off once again following their chosen routes towards their final destination for the day - Etherley Farm, near Ockley.

In the afternoon part of the journey the teams relied very much on themselves with only occasional input from staff, who tracked the students progress from a distance.

On arrival at the campsite the teams immediately set about putting up their tents and ensuring they had shelter, and then cooked a welcome hot dinner using Trangia stoves. Judging by the speed with which they were eaten, the meals must have tasted good! Washing up the dishes was done in the rapidly fading light, before the evening activities got going - a game of manhunt in the woods, some ultimate frisbee, and a bizarre ritual worship of a chicken's foot. (You had to be there to understand this part).



As it grew dark everyone gathered around a warm campfire for some tasty snacks, a discussion about the expedition so far, and some particularly haunting ghost stories. Finally it came time for bed - or sleeping bag - for a few hours of slumber.

The morning began at 4am when the Etherley Farm chicken chorus began their murderous morning squawking. Thankfully most students decided to stay in bed until a bit later, but by 7am most students were up and cooking themselves a hearty hot breakfast of bacon and sausages using the Trangia stoves, and after packing up tents it was time for departure.

On this second day of practice the students walked in their groups with only remote supervision from staff. The blisters, heavy backpacks and general tiredness meant that for some this was a mental challenge but the students kept going and made it to the departure checkpoint in good time - although Fox team did change their route slightly, which certainly foxed staff, but which gave the students a valuable reminder of the need to follow their route and visit the checkpoints.

Qualifying Expeditions

Following on from the successful practice expeditions, Friday 24th June saw the start of the qualifying expeditions.

After an exhausting Sports Day, the four members of SAS team had to journey from Edenbridge back to Moor House School. Unfortunately their tiredness saw them take a wrong direction or two but finally they made it back - just in time for a burst of rain as they set up their tents and got their stoves going for an evening meal.



The following morning they were joined by the four members of Fox Team, and the five members of Golf Team, as the expedition route went from Betchworth Rail Station, up Box Hill and through the Box Hill Country Park, up the Steps of Doom™, cross country to Headley, and then through Headley Heath to High Ashurst.

On this occasion Fox team's navigation was mostly very accurate, and it fell to SAS Team and Golf Team to have a few navigational difficulties - SAS Team missed the clue that Box Hill was a hill, so spent a few wasted hours on the plains below it before ascending and continuing their journey. Meanwhile, Golf Team took a wrong turn and ended up slightly off their planned route, which required some good communication skills and a little re-positioning to get themselves back on track.



The teams arrived into High Ashurst at around 7pm and promptly got organised with tents being put up and food put on to cook. The organisation and teamwork shown in the campcraft was particularly encouraging and represented an improvement over the already good work seen during the practice expeditions.

A benefit of the High Ashurst campsite was the opportunity for a hot shower, in a centrally heated bathroom, and many students took the opportunity to wash the sweat away after a very long and tiring day. The evening ended with students around a campfire - seemingly built partly out of Year 11 GCSE mock exam papers - doing impersonations of famous people and generally having a very fun time.



The final day of the expedition dawned warm and sunny, which was a sign of things to come - as it was to be the hottest day of the year so far. With glorious weather and a beautiful view from Box Hill, what could possibly go wrong? Okay, we shouldn't have asked... there were a few further wrong turns taken, but despite the heat and the exhaustion, nobody was inclined to give up - rather, they were determined to see things through to the end, and this they did.



All in all, a huge 'Well Done' is due to all of the students who took part and who made it a weekend to remember. I am pleased to report that all students passed!

Staff members on both expeditions were Nick Hart (Unit Leader), Laki Lee (Supervisor), Jane Davies (Assessor) and Kirsty Seaton (Volunteer).

Thanks also are due to Ashleigh Hollands and Darren Heine who manned checkpoints and assisted with the transport arrangements.

Our gratitude also goes to the parents, staff, families and friends who support the intentions of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

Particular thanks are due to those who support PSA fundraising events and who bring in Sainsbury's Active Kids vouchers - much of our communal equipment (including the tents) was obtained as a result of these activities. Our thanks also go to the Catering department who provided an excellent selection of snacks and drinks for the students to take with them on the expedition.