

INTERNATIONAL EXPLORERS

Graham Haddock reports on Explorer Scouting in action at the Jamboree in Thailand

EXPLORER SCOUTS

It is now three months since the 20th World Scout Jamboree participants returned home, exhausted and exhilarated. You have probably already read lots about the trip and had an opportunity to attend a report-back session at an AGM or other meeting to hear how your local Jamboree Unit got on. If not, then you should – you will be in for a treat.

My primary role at the Jamboree was as a member of the UK Contingent Management Team, with all that that entails. My regular Scout appointment also required me to look at the whole Jamboree experience from a second point of view – that of the National Commissioner for Explorer Scouts.

In the preparation phase for the Jamboree, Unit Leaders were asked to consider incorporating aspects of the new Explorer Scout programme and philosophy. Units were Leader-led but with lots of input from the Explorer Scouts, who played a major role in deciding Unit names, activities, designs of logos and T-shirts.

This approach was obviously very successful, as the UK's experience at the Jamboree demonstrated.

SCOUTING IN OPERATION

On New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, David Bull (our Contingent Leader) and I visited all 60 of our Units on their sites. We had been drowning in problems at our UK headquarters – most of which we managed to solve. Our visit to the Units was a real tonic.



The UK Explorer Scouts mixed with Scouts from all over the world – playing music, taking part in games and working together

Each Unit had established its own campsite – their own little patch to call home. Each had its own identity and its own little quirky characteristics. On one site, we found the majority of the members asleep in hammocks suspended from the trees that bordered their site.

The Explorer Scouts were obviously enjoying living and working together. They were mixing with Scouts from across the world. They were singing and playing guitars together. They were chatting about the previous day's experiences. Essentially, they were living the Jamboree as Explorer Scouts.

The most successful Units were those where the Unit Leaders had the confidence in their Explorer Scouts to let go a little – with no strict curfews and as few limiting rules as possible.

BALANCED PROGRAMME

The principle of the new Programme for



all Sections is that our members have the opportunity to take part in a Balanced Programme. The Jamboree certainly took that principle to heart. All eight elements of the Explorer Scout Balanced Programme were in evidence.

Almost all of the exciting and fun activities at the Jamboree took place **Outdoors**. These included water activities, hikes (known as exploring nature) and the now infamous assault courses, all of which constitute forms of **Physical Recreation**. **New Skills** were learnt on an almost daily basis. Whether this was learning Thai dancing, how to rap or some bizarre cooking experience, it all helped to make the Jamboree experience a varied and colourful one. **Community Service** appeared in the guise of a 'day of service in the community'. This was one of the most

popular activities in the Jamboree programme. Groups of Explorer Scouts were bussed off site to local communities where they helped paint a school hall, dig a new community garden and lay a paved area in a small village. Perhaps the most fun during these days off site was to be had interacting with the local children. Lunch breaks were usually occupied by various games between teams of Scouts and local children.

The **Environment** was a major focus of a number of activity areas. The Global Development Village (GDV) looked in great detail at many aspects of our environment, including how we protect our natural habitat, how we minimise waste, how we use water wisely and how we prevent famine. **Values** also played an important part of the programme. Drug



The Jamboree included all eight elements of the Explorer Scout Balanced Programme

abuse, attitudes to disability, religious intolerance, the impact of landmines and warfare were topics of workshops in the GDV.

Living with a group of more than 20,000 Scouts from 150 countries could not fail to bring home to our Explorer Scouts the **International** dimension of our worldwide Movement. And as for **Relationships**, many new friendships were established during the camp. Hopefully, these friendships will last a lifetime. Some of our Explorer Scouts are already thinking about visiting their new friends overseas as part of an Explorer Belt or camp.

THE CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT

In the next few weeks, every Explorer Scout who attended the Jamboree should receive a Jamboree Certificate of Achievement. This will record everything that they did in the preparation phase of the Jamboree, during the trip itself and in the reporting back phase, as each Explorer Scout stands up in front of various groups of friends and supporters who helped with fundraising and other things. Their achievement in attending a World Scout Jamboree as a member of the UK Contingent should not be underestimated. Indeed, it should be celebrated, and the Certificate will help to do that.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Spiritual development is something that most of us struggle to understand and find hard to include in our programmes. It is a particularly difficult issue to address with 14–18 year olds. On several occasions during our trip, I was stopped in my tracks by the response of Explorer Scouts to certain aspects of our programme. I suppose what I witnessed was real spiritual development.

On Christmas night, all 60 UK Jamboree Units and their Leaders (some 2,500 people) gathered together in a massive hall in a hotel convention centre for the party of a lifetime. We enjoyed a traditional Christmas dinner of turkey with all the trimmings. A live band kept us all tapping our feet and dancing our socks off. Halfway through the evening, a member of our Contingent Management Team announced that we were about to witness a dancing display by youngsters from a local orphanage. Everyone present would have to admit that there was a quiet but audible groan followed a by a slow hand clap – that is until the dancing team appeared. In the first group, each of the dancers came on stage with crutches. All had lost a leg through the effects of polio – a disease long defeated in the UK. Silence and a measure of quiet respect descended across the room. Our video crew was able to produce a live feed of the performance to two massive screens suspended from the roof at either end of the room so that everyone could see what was happening. The dancing display was breathtaking.

This group was quickly followed by a second dance team, who came on stage in wheelchairs. They were all paralysed from the waist down. Again their display of athleticism was astounding. At the end of the performance, 2,500 people got up on their feet and gave the dancers a ten-minute standing ovation. I was in tears at the back of the hall. This had to be spiritual development.

We had decided to pull out of Home Hospitality in the Philippines because of the uncertain security situation. Twelve of the Units that had planned to go to the Philippines went to Singapore and eight remained in Bangkok where we had arranged an alternative programme of activities. We spent one day on a trip to



the River Kwai, the site of the famous bridge and the infamous 'Death Railway'. This was the part of the Far East where hundreds of thousands of our countrymen had died as prisoners of war in forced labour camps. On the way



New friendships were made at the Jamboree and Units are now planning expeditions to visit their international Scouting pals

back to Bangkok, we stopped off at one of the region's war cemeteries. We asked the Explorer Scouts to take 20 minutes or so to walk around the cemetery to try to identify the gravestone of someone who shared their name, their home town or their age.

Ever the cynic, I doubted whether they would follow our instructions. To my surprise, they walked around the gravestones in silence and stopped for a few minutes in front of the gravestone of someone who shared something with them. One young lad found the grave of his great uncle. There were more than a few moist eyes that afternoon as well. Our Explorer Scouts were moved by this experience. The realisation that many of those who died were not much older than they were struck a chord with them. Again, I had witnessed a moment of spiritual development.

My experience at the Jamboree in Thailand left me in no doubt that we have a winning formula for a vibrant and exciting Section for 14–18 year olds. It is now down to the adults in the Movement to capture the excitement and energy that this event has undoubtedly generated for the new Section.

Explorer Scouting works – I have now seen the proof. ■

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

BY MELANIE PALMER

We all heard about this birthday card idea at the PRI launches, but do we know how we can use them to their full potential to retain members and make links between the Sections?

The birthday card idea is designed to help Explorer Scout Units to reach potential members in a fun way. They can be used to pass information to young people about Explorer Scouting in their area, letting them know what their options are and what activities they can take part in, and to get the young people interested enough to want to find out more. For the birthday card idea to be successful, Scout Groups and District Explorer Scout Administrators need to have good working relationships. Information and contact details for all members or ex-members of the Scout Movement approaching their 13th birthday should be passed on each term.

Careful thought should go in to the information that is put in the birthday cards. It could be a simple card or it could be more of an pack providing information on the District Explorer Scout structure, meetings, programmes, how to get in contact, linking activities between the Scout and Explorer Scout Sections or induction activities for those new to the Movement.

Not alone

One of the key concepts is that the birthday card should not be used in isolation. They can be used as part of the Moving On process, but they should form part of a full and well thought out programme to make the transition from Scouts to Explorer Scouts as smooth and exciting as possible.

Supporting the birthday card

What else can we do to inform young people about what we do?

For a start, we need to be Shouting for [Explorer] Scouting. We need to make sure that people know about the exciting things that we do, through the local news media and any other ways that we can think of – the more creative, the more memorable.

Secondly, we need to have good communications between Scout Groups and Explorer Scout Units. Troops and Units need to work in partnership to come up with a good range of linking activities for

young people approaching Explorer Scout age. These activities give Scouts a chance to get to know the Explorer Scouts and experience what is on offer and the type of activities they will be able to do. The linking could also include the whole Group so that all the younger Sections see themselves as part of the Scouting family.

Thirdly, we need to think about how to make the actual moving on date exciting and memorable. The best plan here is to ask the current Explorers what they would have liked to happen on the day they moved to Explorers and to get them to plan something memorable.

Finally, we need to think about those coming from outside the Movement. We should plan how to reach them, how to make sure they know about us, how to get them involved and how to introduce them to everybody in the Unit.

The birthday party

One good all-round activity is to hold a birthday party on the anniversary of the formation of the Unit on a 'bring a friend' basis, with the older Scouts invited too. Many Explorer Scouts will have friends who are interested in what they do, but would be intimidated at a meeting night. A party where there are lots of non-members would put them at ease. In addition to the normal party fun and games, a montage of activities could be shown or a video of the latest activity camp could be on in the corner. An information sheet including the cost and regularity of subs, meeting dates, times, venues and programme could be on hand for friends and Scouts to pick up.

Birthdays are a time of celebration. It is great to pick up on that and to use the young people's birthdays as one part of a fun programme. Use your creativity to get them involved in the party that is Explorer Scouting!



TIME	ACTIVITY	ZONE	METHOD	INSTRUCTIONS
30 minutes	Desert island dilemma	Values	Play games	The Explorers imagine they are going to be stranded on a desert island indefinitely. They should bring along a photo or picture of a person they would not mind being stranded on an island with and five items (or pictures of items) they could not manage without. They should be prepared to justify their choices.
Preparation and then at least 1 hour	Win me over	Values	Debate	A controversial topical subject should be picked and two Explorer Scouts should be picked to represent each side (to make it more interesting you could ask them to represent the viewpoint they disagree with). The debaters should research the issue and at the next meeting they should take turns to argue their point. The rest of the Unit could be asked for their views on the issue at the beginning and then again at the end, to see whether any have changed their minds.
Several months	Valuing others	Values	Service, Working together, Projects, Visits	The Unit should spend some time preparing this project. For some members it might count towards the Service sections of their Duke of Edinburgh's, Chief Scout's and Queen Scout's Awards. The Unit should make a connection with a local special school, school for the blind or deaf, residential home for the elderly or children's hospice and spend time volunteering there over a given period, getting to know the people who may have different needs. They could put on an evening's activity or entertainment. The emphasis should be on reassessing our understanding of people in different walks of life.
Indefinitely	Getting to know you	Values	Technology, Working with other Units, Expedition, Residential visit	A link could be made with a Unit from another country (particularly one different from our own), another faith community or an area in the UK that is completely different from the local area. The link could include swapping emails, video conferencing, writing and exchanging programme ideas, as well as visits, camp exchanges and so on.
3–6 months	Group Awards	Values	All	Take part, with another Section or Sections in your District, in the Environment, Faith or International Friendship Group Awards.



PROGRAMMES ON A PLATE

THIS MONTH'S THEME IS VALUES, WRITTEN BY TIM PIKE