

BRIGHT IDEAS

From going back to college to climbing Snowdon, **Andy Slaney** takes a close look at your high-flying Explorer Scouting events one year after it all started, and considers making those ideas 'which will never work' into achievable realities



IT'LL NEVER WORK

How many times have you sat in a meeting and the first thing someone says after an idea is suggested is "It'll never work"? There was no pause to consider the idea, no discussion about what was actually meant by the suggestion, nor anything that resembled a debate on the topic. It was decided right then and there that it just won't work.

So many good ideas stop there. It's a shame really, because if the other people in the room just opened their minds for a moment and considered the idea, then a new activity could be found. Maybe what was actually suggested won't work, but something very similar, constructed from that original idea, could be the best thing since sliced bread.

Occasionally, a good idea will gain the support of someone in the room who doesn't mind going against the majority (I always get called argumentative whenever I am this person!) and is determined to make that idea work. Sometimes they have to go it alone. At other times they have to do a lot of work behind the scenes, cajoling others into seeing the benefit of the idea rather than just the problems it will create.

Surely, in Scouting, we don't have problems – just challenges to be overcome. This section of your new-look Explorer Scout pages will be dedicated to those challenges.

Making it work

I want to hear from you about any unusual ideas which, on the face of it, 'will never work', but that you have managed put into practice and turn into successful events. It doesn't have to have originated from the Explorer Scout Section. As long as it can be adapted for Explorer Scouts, then it is worth letting us all know about it.

Let me share a small example with you to kick things off. Our annual County Venture Scout camp always had a theme. Television programmes and Christmas had been the very successful themes for the previous two years. I guess you can imagine the scepticism with which the suggestion of weddings for the next one was met.

However, after throwing a few ideas around we soon had a very interesting, balanced and enjoyable programme of events. This included dressing up the bride, designing the transport to the church, finding the flowers, and loads more stuff besides. With just a imagination, we managed to combine a bouncy assault course into the theme! Everyone even sat down for a reception and speeches.

There is no limit to what you can achieve if you put your collective minds to it.

Over to you, intrepid readers, to share with us your ideas that 'will never work'.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SUE HADRILL

EXPLORER SCOUTS

What a year it's been! Explorer Scouting, in some parts of the country at least, is just about a year old now. This seems to be a good time to assess some of what has been happening and, if Scouting works as it should, to spark some ideas for new activities in the minds of other Explorer Scout Leaders.

PARTNERSHIPS

First up, a novel idea that benefits everyone. Explorer Scouts from all over Devon, as well as some from neighbouring Somerset, started a partnership with a local college. The idea was not to sit at desks, but to get involved in a huge range of activities. The college's leisure management course staff and students offered to run an activity day for as many Explorer Scouts as wanted to participate. The Explorer Scouts got to have a go at activities such as canoeing, raft building, mountain biking, high ropes course, abseiling, sailing and many others.

The weather was fantastic and the students running the day were incredible (they used the day as part of

their assessment). As well as offering a wonderful opportunity for the students to do some practical training, the day gave the Explorer Scouts a chance to try out many new activities. This has given them the inspiration to include many of the activities they tried on the day in their future programmes.

Judging by the success of this event and the enthusiasm of all involved, I wouldn't be surprised if this activity day becomes an annual event.

FUNDING

We move further north for our second report. Ely District in Cambridgeshire launched their Explorer Unit in January and were very pleased to receive a cheque from the local Masonic lodge to help them on their way. More good news was to follow, as the person presenting the cheque offered the Explorer Scouts a flight in his plane later in the summer.

CAMPING AND CLIMBING

Still heading northwards, the Mafeking Explorer Scouts have also been busy. A September weekend was spent climbing

Snowdon – and this was not the first of their Unit's adventurous activities. The previous month they were at Waddecar campsite in West Lancashire for their first annual camp. It seems that they helped Explorer Scouting to develop a good name for itself, judging by the complimentary remarks made by the campsite staff. Andy, the Unit Leader, explains what the Unit got up to: "The programme for our camp was fairly relaxed, but it included pioneering, water activities, a day out in Blackpool and taking part in lots of camp-fires."

CYCLING AND ADVENTURE

Finally, two reports from the south coast. One Unit from Dorset spent a weekend cycling around the Isle of Wight. Another Unit enjoyed a very adventurous weekend at Phasels Wood in Hertfordshire, taking part in activities such as rifle shooting, archery, climbing and abseiling, as well as the more unusual pastimes of pedal karting and pot holing. This weekend was made even more adventurous, due to the fact that it was held during the weekend of the high winds last November. Sunday

morning dawned with the Explorer Scouts being woken at 6am and told to "get your tents down before a tree falls on them"! Despite this incident there were no mishaps, and a great time was had by all.

TELL ME WHAT YOU'RE DOING

Explorer Scouting is developing all the time, so I would like to include a report of events from around the country at regular intervals, probably every three months or so. That way we can try to spread good ideas and good practice to the benefit of as many Explorer Scout Units as possible.

I challenge you to get your Unit mentioned in the next round-up! ■

Contact Details

You can write to Andy care of the *Scouting Magazine* office at The Scout Association, Gilwell Park, Chingford, London E4 7QW or email him at scouting.magazine@scout.org.uk



GOING FOR GOLD

Tim Pike, Award Officer for England, explains how you can help your Explorer Scouts get started on their Duke of Edinburgh's Awards

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme provides Explorer Scouts with extra recognition for their Scouting activities. It is also recognised by colleges, universities and employers, giving Explorer Scouts something else to add to a CV or application form.

GETTING STARTED

As the Section Leader, you will probably be wanting some resources to support you and your members with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. *The Award Handbook* is a good starting point. It is a concise guide to the Award and the requirements for the various sections.

The *Programmes File* has a one-page summary of the popular options for each section of the Award, plus guidance on the expeditions section and contacts for organisations that run residential projects. A CD-Rom with all this information on it is also available, and more information can be found on the Duke of Edinburgh's Award website at www.theaward.org.

EXPEDITION PLANNING

The comprehensive *Expedition Guide* contains all you need to know about running expeditions. It has information on training young people to complete an expedition, and chapters explaining the different ways of completing the Duke of Edinburgh's Award expedition section. This resource is available to download from www.scoutbase.org.uk or from the Scout Information Centre.

THE PARTICIPANTS

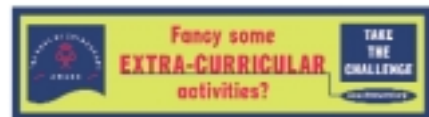
Explorer Scouts wishing to start their Awards will need a *Record Book*. There is one *Record Book* for each level of the Award – Bronze, Silver and Gold. An *Entrance Pack* can be purchased, which provides supporting information.

Record Books are usually obtained from your County Adviser, but in some

Counties this role is undertaken by District Advisers. In Scotland, *Record Books* are obtained from Scottish Headquarters (www.scouts-scotland.org.uk). Your County Adviser also has access to a wide range of promotional material, much of which is free. Your District Explorer Scout Commissioner will know how the system works in your County or Area, so please ask.

THINKING AHEAD

The rule for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award is that no activities can count for an Award before the *Record Book* is obtained, unless they were undertaken in the three months prior to receiving



the *Record Book*, or participated in through an access organisation. This three-month flexibility is helpful in Scouting, as it may take a few weeks to obtain a *Record Book* once an Explorer Scout has expressed interest in starting the Award. Once obtained, the date of issue should be noted in the book, together with the Explorer Scout's name and personal details.

WHAT NEXT?

Now that you have the resources you need, you can get started. It should be up to each Explorer which options they take. Hopefully, you will be able to inform your Explorer Scouts of a range of options that will be available locally.

Once an Explorer Scout has decided on an activity, an appropriate assessor needs to be found. The assessor will probably be someone who is qualified or experienced in the activity chosen. For example, if swimming is chosen for the physical recreation section, then a swimming teacher would be the best



person to assess the Section. The assessor will also need a basic understanding of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. This can be gained from sectional leaflets, which are available free from your local Adviser. Assessment for the expedition section is different and information on this can be found in the *Expedition Guide*.

YOUR ROLE

The role of the Explorer Scout Leader where Explorer Scouts are taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award is:

- To liaise with the local District or County Adviser for the latest information and support. Information can also be found in the *Award Journal* that can be obtained free by registering on the Award website (www.theaward.org).
 - To comply with the administrative and operational procedures for the Award as laid down in the *Award Handbook*.
 - To obtain and issue *Record Books* to Explorers from the local Adviser.
 - To forward completed *Record Books* to the relevant Adviser to sign off.
 - To arrange for the presentation of badges once Awards have been confirmed.
 - To help Explorer Scouts choose activities for each section of the Award and to find an appropriate assessor once an activity is chosen.
- Hopefully, in a couple of years, many more Explorer Scouts and members of the Scout Network will be obtaining their Gold Award Certificates from HRH The Duke of Edinburgh himself. ■

Safety note: With all the activities listed above, it is important that Leaders follow the relevant guidance and rules in *Policy, Organisation and Rules*, ensure that the correct qualifications and permits are held for the activity or terrain, and that risk assessments are carried out. For further guidance, contact the Scout Information Centre on 0845 3001818 or email info.centredscout.org.uk, or contact your local activities team. Running some meetings before the activities for preparation, planning and training may be appropriate.

TIME	ACTIVITY	ZONE	METHOD	INSTRUCTIONS
One night	Night hike	Outdoors	Activity, Teamwork, Planning	This can be as large or small scale as you want to make it – from sunset to sunrise or just a couple of hours. The start and finish points should be defined, either beforehand or on the night, so that the Explorer Scouts can devise a route and go. To make this more interesting you could provide challenge bases along the route, and different Units or Districts could compete.
One weekend	Survival weekend	Outdoors	Activity, Skills, Teamwork	Carefully select an area of wilderness and give the Explorer Scouts a restriction on what they can take. This could be a weight limit or specific items excluded from the kit list. They are set loose in the area and have to make their own shelter, find their own food and so on. Preparation for this activity could include finding out what food is available and how to prepare it, and, of course, what not to eat.
Two evenings	Wide game / scavenger hunt	Outdoors	Fun, Games, Activity, Local area	Set teams of Explorers a challenge to devise a wide game or scavenger hunt that is fun and uses their local area in a novel way. On another evening, the teams could swap over and try out each other's games.
One day	Water activities	Outdoors, Physical recreation, Skills	Activity, Expedition, Training	In advance, the Explorers should think about water activities and the variety that are available. These could include canoeing, rafting, sailing, gorge walking, sub aqua, or, on a slightly different tack, activities relating to water habitats and the environment. The Unit could then get in touch with the relevant instructor or training centre and arrange an activity day based around water.



PROGRAMMES ON A PLATE

THIS MONTH'S THEME IS OUT AND ABOUT, WRITTEN BY MELANIE PALMER