

LIFE IS NOT A REHEARSAL

Andy Slaney challenges you to take a look at the Explorer Scout provision in your District and to make the changes you need in order to give your members the time of their lives



Above: Team challenges are a great way of getting involved with 'self improvement' and will keep your Unit entertained!

It only seems like two minutes ago that we were basking on the beach, enjoying the height of summer and, I hope, making the most of the 'out' in Scouting. At the end of this month, the clocks will go back and we face the start of those long winter evenings, but this is no excuse to reduce the excitement we can offer to Explorer Scouts. In fact, it is just the challenge a motivated Leader needs to embrace.

Hopefully, those Leaders who are not really motivated at the moment will be encouraged by these pages and have their enthusiasm re-ignited. I'll do my best for you!



KEEP THEM INTERESTED

One of the best forms of encouragement is contact with other people who are oozing enthusiasm. Why not harness this eagerness, get the others to help you do the work and encourage you to enthuse with the best?

Here we are with a brand new Section, which is growing rapidly. We need to cater for young people who want to attend meetings every week. We need to assist these people in achieving Duke of Edinburgh Awards as well as the Progressive Training Scheme Awards. We need to be able to offer a 'drop in' service for those Explorers who don't want a weekly engagement, or those who have a commitment to another Section on a weekly basis and just want the comfort of their peer group once in a while. We really need to be on top of our game all the time, so how can we achieve this?

Self-improvement is a great way to encourage Explorers to get involved with their Unit. In the past, this would have been called 'training' and many people would have ignored it, but not any more!

Left: Listen your Unit's ideas to make sure you are running the activities that they want

REVVING UP

The first thing to do is enlist help. Start by asking members of your District training team. Large local companies can be another good point of contact.

I am not suggesting for one moment that you should run a training course every week, but there is no reason why you shouldn't include some training in your regular programme.

CONSTANT CHALLENGE

You will remember that back in the August issue (you know, the issue you read when you were lying on the beach!) I mentioned an old Venture Scout Section resource entitled *Getting Organised*. This resource included ideas for promoting teamwork, communication and other such interpersonal skills. My County have used a couple of ideas from this as the basis for a course.

As long as whatever you do is fresh, exciting and challenging to the age group, you will be on to a winner.

WORKING AT IT

Remember, each and every one of us, no

matter how experienced a Leader we are, can still undertake some useful training. We should continually push back our boundaries. We should strive to do that little bit extra for the young people whose role models we are.

To quote a phrase I have heard a few people use in the past, 'Life is not a rehearsal, it's the real thing'. Take every opportunity you can, and encourage the young people to take theirs too.

If you cast your minds back to August's issue where Gordon explained how the Explorers run their own committees and how they plan their own programmes, you will realise that the more training they can get to fulfil these roles, the better they will be at them. Encourage your County or Area Explorer Scout Commissioner to run courses, which, as well as teaching the Explorer Scouts these skills, will bring them together so they can share their experiences and ideas.

REACH FOR THE SKY

Explorer Scouting is a new Section and the sky is the limit when it comes to programme ideas and activities. If we think back to pre-Explorer days, we had a Scout Section and a Venture Scout

Section. Most Scout Section events have remained with the Scout Section (with the reduced age range), while the majority of Venture Scout events have been transformed into Scout Network events. This gives the Explorer Scout Section a fantastic opportunity to come up with new events and activities that are right for our young people. We should be attempting to capture their ideas, put them into practice and give them the time of their lives.

The most important thing to remember is that the Explorer Scout Section is fundamentally different to the previous three Sections that young people might have experienced. In the Explorer Scout Section we have to remember and cater for all the 14-18 year-olds in the District. Remember that these people can be a part of as many of the different District Explorer Scout Units as they like.

NEW SECTION, NEW DIRECTION

We need to be creative about how we deliver our Explorer Scout provision. Some Districts seem to be basing their Explorer Scout Units on their old Venture Scout Units and then applying the Explorer Scout rules.

OUTSIDE THE BOX

The Explorer Scout Section has been designed to be flexible and to meet the needs of each individual District. So far in my travels I have yet to find what the manual describes as a 'Specialised Unit'. The examples given include a Gang Show Unit or a Campsite Unit.

I am sure there must be Specialised Units out there. Whether you set up a temporary Unit for a set period of time, or if you run a permanent Unit to complement the other Explorer Scout provision within the District, please tell us about it.

How do you dovetail your activities with those of the other Explorer Units? Is it a completely different Leadership team, or do the staff overlap? Maybe there are Explorer Units out there that operate beyond the boundaries of one particular District to be County or Area based. Please contact *Scouting Magazine* and share your Unit success stories with us.



Encourage your Unit to work together

I challenge you to oppose this situation. Think laterally. Nothing should be taboo when it comes to getting Explorer Scouting provision right. Most Explorer Units will be approaching their first year anniversaries this autumn. Why not use this as an excuse to assess what you are providing for your members? Note down what you have learnt, and work out how you can improve your Unit for the future.

RING THE CHANGES

Make sure that you are responding to the needs of your Explorer Scouts, and not just following the trends set by other Districts. Their requirements may be very different to yours.

Be brave – take the plunge. You will never have a better opportunity to make such a huge difference to such a large group of young people. There are many different ways to provide the opportunities they need. ■



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A STICKY SITUATION

I've got a light-hearted and unexpected success story this month. Quite simply, if we had actually set out to achieve what happened, we would all have agreed that it was not possible. In fact, we still can't believe it now.

What if?

Picture the planning meeting that never happened.

A large international camp. A team of us sit in the Explorer sub-camp marquee. Present are the Explorer sub-camp team (comprising six Leaders), a member of the safety team who is a disco DJ when he is not Scouting, and his mate who just likes to get involved in anything that is vaguely interesting and different.

The DJ has been asked to compere the Explorer sub-camp talent show and has agreed to help our over-stretched sub-camp team.

"How about," says the DJ, "getting a bamboo cane – one of those you have painted red and white and use for marking areas of the site – calling it 'Stick', and then getting everyone to worship it – sorry 'him' – for the rest of the camp?"

I can't really see it. Can you?

What really happened

The DJ and his friend were asked by a member of the Explorer sub-camp team to do a special job to help the overworked members of staff. They turned up at the sub-camp not knowing what was going to be asked of them, and found out that they were running the Explorer sub-camp talent show, with just enough warning to return to their own tents and get changed into some decent stage clothes.

Upon returning to the talent show area, the DJ picked up a red and white painted stick with one hand as he took the microphone in the other. He introduced himself, and he also introduced Stick. A huge cheer went up from the gathered throng.

Throughout the show, Stick made various appearances, sometimes in the hands of the DJ, at other times in the capable hands of the roadie (who was also wearing a set of fluffy bunny ears, but that's another story, and I don't think I should go into the details here!).

However and whenever Stick appeared, 'he' was given a huge ovation. He even helped out with the judging on the Cheerometer at the end of the night.

We thought that was the end of it, but we were wrong.

Stick had enjoyed his taste of stardom and wanted to see more of the camp. He was issued with his own ID tag (so that security wouldn't throw him off the site), and off he went to partake in some of the activities. He even managed to get a mention in the camp newspaper the following day.

At the Closing Ceremony of the camp on Friday night, the DJ and the fluffy-eared roadie were working front of stage. The Explorer sub-camp entered the arena and paraded Stick before them. Stick was ceremonially handed over and quickly whisked onto the stage where the compere introduced him to the rest of the camp.

And we thought it would never work!

Scouting magic

Every camp, activity or Scouting event has its magic moments that you cannot plan. Sometimes it is just the achievement of one individual who you thought couldn't do something. Sometimes it is the group that surprises you by working together when you thought it was never possible. Sometimes it is 'just a stick' that captures everyone's imaginations.

Whatever your particular memorable moment might be, it brings home to every one of us why each of us play this magical game called Scouting. If you were one of those less motivated people I mentioned at the top of page 34, just put this magazine down for a moment, close your eyes, think back to your last camp and relive your own 'Stick' moment.

How can you fail to be inspired? The young people in our care continually surprise us. Let's make sure we are there for them.

One last note. Keep your eyes open for Stick – I don't think he has finished his travels yet...

TIME	ACTIVITY	ZONE	METHOD	INSTRUCTIONS
One evening	Fire eating	Outdoors, Skills	Working together, Outdoor activities, Challenges	As the nights draw in, a 'cosy' evening struggling to build, light and cook on a fire (outside in the rain) should appeal to everybody! Why not run an activity to improve your fire-lighting skills? Can you use fewer than three matches? Get your fire up to cooking temperature and then learn some camp-fire recipes. Eating your food around the fire afterwards and learning the important, but often forgotten, skill of putting the fire out properly are all part of the fun.
Day or weekend	Wild country	Outdoors, Physical recreation	Outdoor activities, Activities with other Units	Many wild country activities become a little more dangerous in the autumn, with risks of fog, wind and rain on hill walks and rivers running too high for canoeing. However, you can't beat the wild country colours and scenery at this time of year. With the right permits and precautions, organise a suitable activity and get out in the wild.
Morning or afternoon	Cycle scavengers	Outdoors, Physical recreation, Relationships	Working together, Outdoor activities, Local study	Devise a scavenger trail that involves teams of Explorer Scouts travelling by bike around your area and finding out more about their local environment.
Light evening or part of a weekend	Tree trail	Outdoors, Environment, Skills	Local study, Working together, Projects	Give the Explorer Scouts a 'tree key'. They go out into the local area to try to find as many of the different tree species as possible and mark them on a map. This could form part of an environmental project or a project on tree recognition for Young Leaders to use with their Sections. The Explorers could also collect tree seeds to ready for a tree-planting project in the future.
However long it needs	Maintain it	Outdoors, Community Service	Projects, Activities with other Units, Service	A bit of well-timed maintenance on the local Group or District HQ or campsite in autumn can pay dividends by preventing heat loss through the winter and preventing storm damage. Now is the time to secure those shutters, fill those holes, bring boats in and prepare for the winter. Do a bit of outside maintenance service and earn your Unit permanent popularity!
Half an hour for several evenings	Wide Game madness	Outdoors, Relationships	Games	Dark evenings can make for some great wide games. Get the Explorer Scouts to devise, organise and run wide games for one another. Give them time to plan properly and support them in considering safety and risks and so on.
Light evening or part of weekend	River canyon challenge	Outdoors, Skills	Games, Challenges, Working together, Outdoor activities	Pioneering exercise – give out ropes, pioneering poles and instruction cards (showing different ways of building pioneering bridges) and challenge the Explorers to bridge a stream in as many different ways as they can with the time and resources they have available.