

GOING FOR GOLD, PLATINUM AND DIAMONDS!

Achieving the highest Awards in Scouting is incredibly rewarding. **Mel Kesteven** looks into how we can support Explorer Scouts on their way to these Awards.

You arrive at one of the most impressive venues in the area – York Minster, the Guildhall in London, or Winchester – or somewhere equally amazing and imposing. You meet all the other Queen’s Scouts and the nervous small-talk turns to friendly banter as you start talking about shared experiences over glasses of fruit juice and a wealth of biscuits.

You head up to the main hall, beginning to get nervous again, but as you reach the door your anxiety vanishes as you hear the rousing music of the Scout Band. All the adults in the room stand up and clap as you (and your 20 new friends) walk into the room. Your turn comes and you walk across the stage, shake hands with the Chief Scout and tell him about your experiences. You then have to stop yourself skipping back to your seat!

On the big screen photographs scroll by, showing you, your achievements, your high points and the exciting things you have done. You turn to grin at your family and friends, who are giving you a proud thumbs-up from a few rows back. You’re brimming with pride, beaming, and excited. In your hand you hold a certificate, with a note from the Queen.

Hours, weeks and months of effort
This ceremony is the culmination of years of work. It recognises the hours, weeks and months you’ve put in to service to the community, learning and improving new skills and developing a physical activity. It acknowledges all the hours of training you’ve spent on wet, boggy terrain on your expeditions and the effort spent preparing for your residential project, developing your self-confidence as you’ve approached strangers, asking for or offering help. This is your Queen’s Scout Award.



The Queen’s Scout Award also acknowledges all the hard work you’ve put into your expeditions

You’ve been told this certificate will have an impact on your CV, your Record of Achievement and your job applications.

You always kind of doubted it. You thought, “Right, as if anybody out there is going to know what the Queen’s Scout or even Duke of Edinburgh’s (D of E) Award is about. As if they’re going to be interested in what I do with Scouts.”

In the end, you didn’t care; you were doing it for your own sense of achievement, because it was a challenge and it made you feel good. You’ve put it in your CV, but you don’t see it will have very much impact.

Lifelong rewards
That is...until they invite you for interview. One of the main questions is: “I see you’ve done your Queen’s Scout and your D of E Gold Award. Can you tell us what was involved in these?”

You find yourself talking about all the work you put in, how it has developed you as a person, and improved your

teamwork, communication, organisation and confidence. You explain its impact on your life, and describe your expedition.

You tell them that you got so much out of your time as a Scout that you plan on putting something back into it – by becoming a warranted Leader at the Cub Pack where you’ve been helping since you did the Service element for your Chief Scout’s Platinum Award.

The interviewers are delighted. The Managing Director – the main interviewer on the panel – was once a Scout (but he didn’t get his Queen’s Scout Award, and always wishes he had worked that bit harder). All the skills you’ve just described so enthusiastically are just the skills he wants in his workforce. You’ve got the job.

This is what the Queen’s Scout Award can do for you. This is the amazing impact it can have on your life. It can develop and benefit you in ways you never thought possible.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE...

How do the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award and the Chief Scout’s and Queen’s Scout Awards relate to one another?

All this is detailed very clearly on p47–58 of *Unit Essentials*.

In a nutshell, the Awards in The Scout Association are made up of the same activities you need to do to get the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, plus a bit extra – the icing on the cake! You can see the way they marry up in the table below.

The top Awards we offer to our young people really are top Awards. They are worth having not only because of the enormous amount that Explorer Scouts and Scout Network Members gain by achieving them, but also because they are recognised by university admissions staff and future employers.

We want the Awards to be worth even more, and valued and recognised for what they are. Talk about them and publicise the achievements of the young people on their way to the Awards, not just the awards ceremony.



CALLUM FARQUHAR

SCOUTING AWARD	THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH’S AWARD BIT	PLUS..
The Chief Scout’s Platinum Award	Hold the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh’s Award or complete the equivalent challenges (so you may as well enrol for the Duke of Edinburgh and get the Award!). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take up a Skill and show progress for three months. Take up a Physical Activity for three months. Provide Service to an individual or the community for three months. Complete a two-day and one-night Expedition in rural country. Plus an extra three months in any of the skills, physical activity or service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be a Member of Explorer Scouts or Scout Network for at least six months. Complete six nights away as an Explorer Scout or Scout Network Member, of which four must be camping. Complete two activities from the International, Environment and Values list, which can be found on page 56–57 of <i>Unit Essentials</i>.
The Chief Scout’s Diamond Award	Hold the Silver Duke of Edinburgh’s Award or complete the equivalent challenges. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take up a Skill and show progress for three or six months. Take up a Physical Activity for three or six months. Provide Service to an individual or the community for six months. Complete a three-day and two-night Expedition in rural or open country. Either the physical activity or the skill should be for six months. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be a Member of Explorer Scouts or Scout Network for at least twelve months. Complete twelve nights away as an Explorer Scout or Scout Network Member, of which eight must be camping. Complete two activities from the International, Environment and Values list, which can be found on page 56–57 of <i>Unit Essentials</i>.
The Chief Scout’s Platinum Award	Hold the Gold Duke of Edinburgh’s Award or complete the equivalent challenges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take up a Skill and show progress for six or 12 months. Take up a Physical Activity for six or 12 months. Provide Service to an individual or the community for 12 months. Complete a four-day and three-night Expedition in open or adventurous country. Complete a five-day and four-night residential project in an unfamiliar environment with unknown people. Make a presentation of achievements so far. Either the physical activity or the skill should be followed for 12 months. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be a Member of Explorer Scouts or Scout Network for at least 18 months. Complete 18 nights away as an Explorer Scout or Scout Network Member, of which 12 must be camping. Complete two activities from the International, Environment and Values list, which can be found on page 56–57 of <i>Unit Essentials</i>.



BALANCING THE AWARDS

The Balanced Programme means all eight Programme Zones are offered over a given time – usually within a term. Offering exciting activities and getting them coming back week after week is excellent, but we must also ensure our Explorer Scouts have every opportunity and all the support necessary to complete their Awards.

How can you make it happen?

- Make sure your Explorer Scouts know about the Chief Scout's Platinum and Diamond Awards and Queen's Scout Awards, and their relationship to the D of E scheme.
- Tell them that even if they're doing D of E at school, their activities can still count towards their Scout Awards.
- In their mentoring sessions, discuss the Awards. How are they doing? What needs doing next? Do they need help making the next contact?
- Each time you try a new activity, point out it could form the basis of the Service or Skills or Physical Recreation aspects of the Awards. Tell them where they could go for more information.
- Make sure the Explorer Scouts have plenty of opportunities to train for their expeditions. Your County/Area may be running expedition training; they could go on a hill-walking (or canoeing or mountain biking) trip with other Explorer Scouts from your area. Talk with other Leaders at Meetings to find out if they have any teams that might like an extra member for their expedition.
- Even if you don't hold the authorisation to lead a Terrain Two expedition, their plans should not grind to a halt. There'll be someone in most Districts or Counties/Areas who has it and is happy to help out and get Explorer Scouts out onto the hills for their expeditions. Your limitations should not become restrictions to your Explorer Scouts.

DEAR DIARY BY ED FISH

The District Explorer Scout Commissioner from Grand Haddock District, writes about his month.

14 MARCH

Dear Diary,

Yes! The District Executive has begun to realise its responsibilities for Explorer Scouts! I've just come from a meeting. The District Executive Sub-Committee for Explorer Scouts have now met a couple of times since we were set up to discuss some of the meaty issues of Explorer Scouts and we reported back to the main Executive tonight. We had a strategy for how the finances should be managed, and we also had a wish list of a whole load of equipment that we feel we would like/need for our Explorer Scouts to run a full Programme.

We came up with some ideas of things the Explorer Scouts themselves could do to raise funds. The Executive had a few raised eyebrows and some growled questions (particularly from the man who'd been asleep at the last meeting – he wasn't even sure what an Explorer Scout is!), but then they suddenly got really helpful.

They liked our financial strategy and agreed that it would be a sensible way of working, and on seeing our wish list it suddenly dawned on one of them that there was a store full of equipment that had gone to the District when a Group closed, but nobody was really sure what was there. They suggested that they would look into the ownership, and that (if it was ok) the Explorer Scouts could sort through it to see if there was anything that would be useful for the Section.

Sounds great! We can work through that and then amend our wish list accordingly. I don't know what got them to be so helpful, but I'm certainly not objecting!

24 MARCH

Dear Diary,

We got the go-ahead to have a good rummage through the kit! The DESA rang around the Explorer Scouts to see if any were available at short notice to come and help. Quite a few were working, but we still got half a dozen.

The store was a right mess. We pulled everything out and had a really good look at what we might want. I gave the Explorer Scouts a copy of our wish list to remind them that, while we wanted equipment, we were also after reasonably good equipment, not the kind of stuff that went out in Tudor times. They had a wonderful time pulling out old tents and so on. They found an old uniform and commented that they were very glad Scouts moves with the times – they wouldn't be seen out now wearing that!

It was quite an upside-down, higgledy-piggledy day, but in the end we had a really good sort out, and were able not only to cross some quite expensive items off our wish-list, but also to help half a dozen young people to think about the equipment needed for Nights Away. Looking at some of the things we found gave them some ideas, and they are keen to plan a camp themselves now. They also got some excellent ideas from the old uniform and equipment for some events that the District could plan for the Centenary of Scouting in 2007.

- Help them by keeping your paperwork up-to-date. If they completed their Award months ago and you haven't filled in the certificate or passed on the details to the relevant person, they will become disheartened. This especially applies to the D of E Award, where the enrolment form has to be filled in before anything starts to count towards the Award.
- Pass on details of who is doing what to the District Explorer Scout Administrator, if this is part of their role in your District. He/she might be asked by colleagues in another District if there's anyone doing a Chief Scout's Platinum Expedition, or the number in the District currently working towards the Chief Scout's Diamond Award – it'd be helpful to them to be able to pass on the information. ■



PROGRAMMES ON A PLATE

THIS MONTH'S THEME IS VALUES. WRITTEN BY MEL KESTEVEN

TIME	ACTIVITY	ZONE	METHOD	INSTRUCTIONS
One evening or several	Careers Fair	Values	Visits, Visitors, Discussions	Discuss careers options. What would your Explorer Scouts like to do and where, and how do they plan on getting there? Invite a representative of Connexions (which has taken over the remit of the Careers Service), or visit a careers fair. If there isn't a careers fair locally, think about running one for your District. Invite local businesses, local professionals, representatives of the Armed Forces and Universities to come and exhibit, and open it up to local secondary schools as well – this is also excellent PR for Scouts!
One day	Mothering Sunday	Values, Community Service	Technology, Projects, Debate	Find out more about Mothering Sunday this month and hold an event especially for the mothers of the Explorer Scouts – anything from a competitive wide game to a spa day! Alternatively, you could have a debate or formal discussion on the status of motherhood in modern UK society or the concept of parental responsibility, or organise a fundraising event for a local children's hospice.
One evening	My life, my faith, my people	Values	Visitors, Visit, Projects	Do you know how different faith groups affect the life of your community? Does a local Mosque run evening classes in English or Arabic? Does a local Synagogue run a school, or a crèche, or any clubs? How far does a Hindu living in your town or village have to travel to worship at a temple? Ask a local religious leader to visit your Meeting to discuss their role in the welfare of the community. Could you help with this work, as a Group? Could you visit a centre of worship and talk about the purpose of Scouting?
One evening	Balloon Debate	Values	Debate	Each person takes on the role of a famous person, living or dead (Mother Theresa, Saddam Hussein, Henry VIII, Tony Blair, Jesus, Kylie Minogue – go with your imagination!). They have information on that person to look at and absorb. Now imagine you are all in a hot air balloon that is too heavy and is going to crash into the middle of the ocean. Each person argues their value to the world, why they should be allowed to stay in the balloon. After everybody has said their piece, each person votes for who they think should be thrown out of the balloon and why. The person with the most votes is out. The remaining people can then add to or alter their reasons before the next round of voting. Things to watch out for: My Explorer Scouts wanted to throw Steven Hawking out because his wheelchair was too heavy, but left Bugs Bunny in because he was two dimensional and therefore weightless!
One evening or half day	Animal rights	Values	Visits, Discussion, Research	Visit an animal shelter or sanctuary, find out about cruelty to animals and what can be done to prevent it. What other animal rights issues are there?
One evening	International Declaration of Human Rights (1948)	Values	Discussion, Debate, Working together	Look at the International Declaration of Human Rights (www.un.org/Overview/rights.html). Are these rights being upheld throughout the world? Could they add any? Write a constitution for your Unit based on these rights.