



# Moor House School News and Events

## Duke of Edinburgh's Award - Bronze Level Practice Expedition

8th - 9th May 2010



With blazing sunshine in the week leading up to our Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze Award Practice Expedition, it was entirely predictable that Saturday 8th May would dawn overcast, rainy and cold.

However, the ten D of E students from Years 10 and 11 were undaunted and up for the challenge of the practice expedition, and it was time to put the training they had received in the previous weeks and months into effect in the real and testing environment of an adventurous expedition.

After final checks to ensure that they had all the items they would need, the students were taken to their drop off point at South Holmwood near Dorking.



From this location the two groups - Charlie Team and Delta 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. Delta Team chose the direct but hilly route towards Leith Hill, whereas Charlie opted for a new and untested route figured out by Tom G. that skirted round the hills, leaving the climb to Leith Hill to the end.

On the Saturday morning the students were accompanied by a member of staff who provided basic guidance to ensure that the students were able to navigate successfully.

To begin with some of the students were taken aback by how hard it can be to follow a route - it may look clear and easy on the map, but it is quite a bit harder when you are trying to follow it in real life!

It soon became apparent that there was not much to be gained in yelling "THIS way!" while your teammate is pointing in completely the opposite direction and yelling "No, THIS WAY!!".



To their credit the teams soon settled into positive working relationships. The confident (but perhaps sometimes impulsive) characters learned to give reasons for their views in order to convince others, and to negotiate agreements as part of a team. The quieter (but no less skilled) individuals learned that staying quiet and leaving the decisions to other people doesn't benefit anyone in the long run, and that their contribution to the decision making process is vital to success.

On a number of occasions both teams were faced with having to make a decision about which way to go, with no completely clear understanding of which route was correct. Learning to deal with this kind of uncertainty is very important, as it forces you to think carefully and to use the tools and skills you have available to work out your best plan - and then to follow it. If, later on, you realise you have taken a wrong turn - then it's not the end of the world, you just have to make a change to your plan!

Despite initial nerves the students did well and managed to correctly navigate themselves to the top of Leith Hill, the highest point in South East England, and the cooler weather probably helped make the steep climb bearable. Low lying cloud and fog meant that the view from the top wasn't very good but this didn't matter because both teams were just over the moon to see each other and realise they were doing well.



After a hot chocolate and a snack break 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 using a combination of skills learned from the National Geographic Channel, and also the

Yellowbrick iridium satellite tracking systems! Fortunately, the only major concerns were the stealthy Ninja attack (middle picture above), and a rather under-dressed runner...

On arrival at the campsite the teams immediately set about putting up their new 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 under a garden tap in cold weather was a necessary chore but once completed there was time for some football, Frisbee and some proper old school fun on a rope swing.



As it started getting dark most people returned to the warmth of the campfire for a discussion about the day, and yes, the results of the election! This had the intended effect of making everyone even sleepier, and soon after it got completely dark people started heading for the comfort of their sleeping bags for some well earned rest. Most people settled down to sleep quickly, though the 'Disco Tent' did have a localised 5 minute rave session before bed, featuring Bracknell's version of Dizzee Rascal!

The night was a comfortable one for most people, though the murderous noises coming out of the chicken shed from 1am onwards did suggest that Gary Larson's 'The Far Side' sketches were accurate and that chickens do in fact engage in organised ritual sacrifices.

The morning dawned clear and cold with the cry of "Go Long!" being made repeatedly. This is not the call of the local wildlife, but rather of Bradley playing one-man Frisbee as a way to wake everyone up. The students cooked themselves a hearty hot breakfast of porridge, bacon and sausages using the Trangia stoves, and after packing up tents it was time for departure.

Charlie Team set off first, followed 30 minutes later by Delta Team, heading for the checkpoint car park at Broadmoor. 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 lure of a dry minibus and a celebratory Boost bar kept students going. It was great to see Delta arrive in high spirits with a rowdy rendition of the classic "Ev-Re-Where-We-Go-Oh!" tune!



All in all the students did extremely well, showing a positive 'can-do' attitude and developing teamwork, and keeping good humour throughout. Particular credit should go to Tom G. who was the mastermind behind Charlie Team's new route, which proved to be very effective. However, it was necessary to remind some students that Duke of Edinburgh is neither a competition or a race, and that the temptation to crow about one's own achievements, and in the process put others down, is something to be resisted!

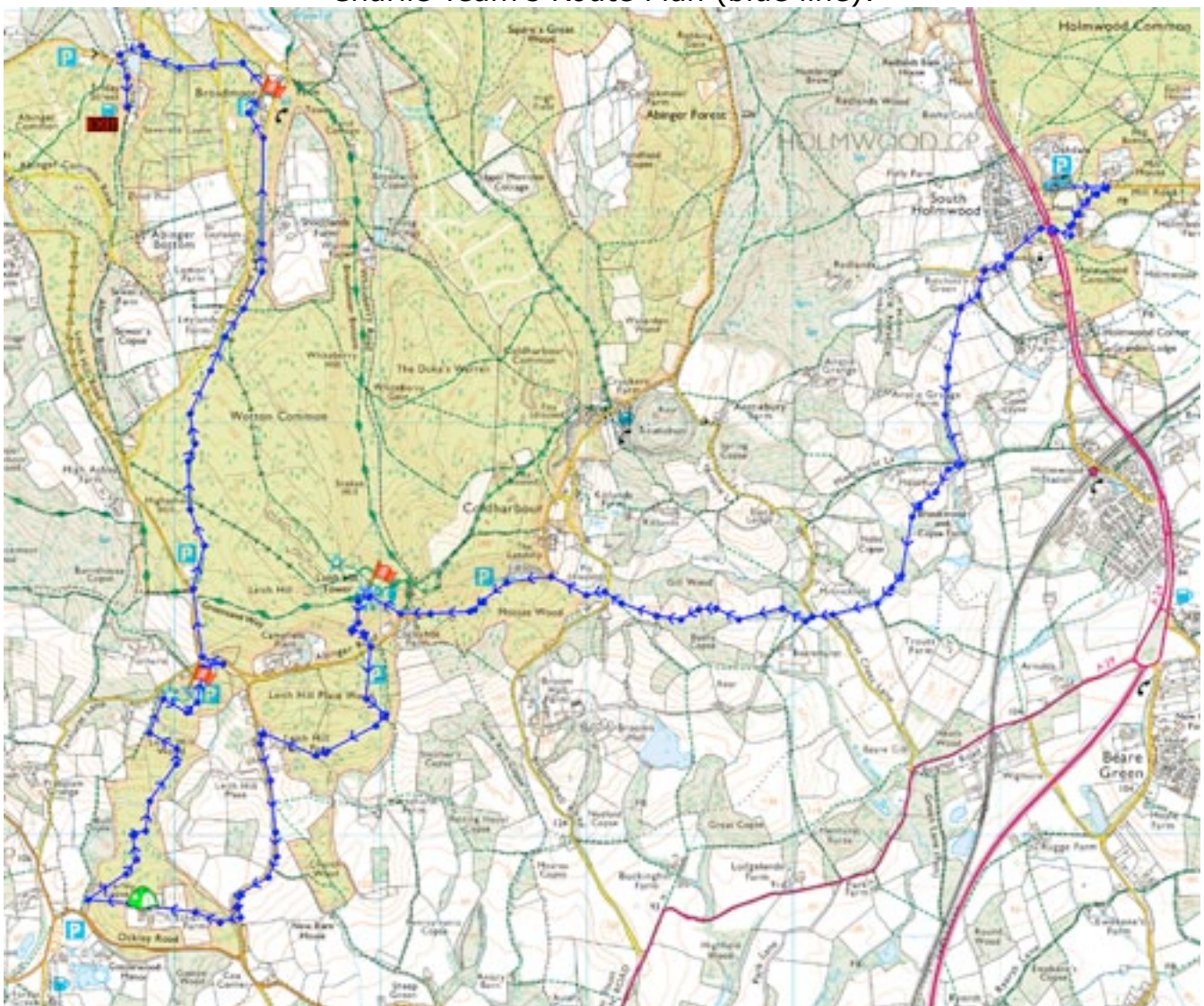
Overall this was a highly successful practice expedition, which allowed students to practice their skills in the field and gain in confidence. All students on the expedition deserve to feel proud of their achievements. The expedition also showed up some areas for future development to focus on in preparation for the forthcoming qualifying expedition, which is only two weeks away...

Staff members on the trip were Nick Hart (Unit Leader), Laki Lee (Supervisor), Jane Davies (Assessor).

Many thanks are due 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 consequence 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.

Charlie Team's Route Plan (blue line):





The YellowBrick trackers show the actual routes the teams took.

Charlie Team in blue, Delta Team in pink:



Report by Mr. Hart.