



# GOLD DofE EXPEDITION



# CALENDAR 2013

# January 2013



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# Meet the Team!



**Raff aka 'Plumber'**



**Shaun aka 'Odd'**



**Jess**



**Chris**

# February 2013



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## **The Beginning**

All enrolled on Gold Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) with no expedition planned for the foreseeable future, we decided it was time to take action. At the time our group consisted of several people but over the various stages of planning etc it was reduced to a size of 4.

We began by deciding our mode of travel. Horse riding, cycling, canoeing, kayaking or walking were all options, however it was decided that travelling by foot would be the most sensible decision, as all four of us had experience with this due to our previous expeditions for lower level DofE. Also Shaun and Chris had previous experience of a three week expedition to Mt Everest Base camp in Nepal.

Next was the decision regarding the location of both our Pre-Expedition and Qualifying Expedition. The team decided on arduous routes, as all involved wished for a physical (as well as mental) challenge, however research was needed as to the exact locations of both to see if the whole group would be able to cope with the stresses of the environment.



# March 2013



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## **The Location**

The Isle of Skye was first debated as a possible expedition location as the terrain of our (nearly) chosen route was varied and we were drawn to the idea of an expedition off of British Mainland. However after further research gaining knowledge of expense as well as environmental factors such as dreaded midges it was decided that The Isle of Skye was not for us.

The team next considered what mountains they knew of, and which they wished to climb. This soon led to Mount Snowdon in Snowdonia. Snowdonia has a network of walks for all abilities, and therefore would provide an excellent choice of routes, with the ascent of Snowdon as a possibility. Snowdonia was chosen as our Pre-Expedition location for this very reason.

Another arduous area we were aware of was the Brecon Beacons, where the Special Air Service (SAS) do the dreaded 'Fan Dance' as part of their selection training. The Brecon Beacon National Park contains famous routes, such as the Pen Y Fan Circular and the surrounding area of Talgarth. This led to the decision that Brecon was the place for us to complete our Gold Qualifying Expedition.

# April 2013



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## **DYA**

We soon enlisted the help of Derbyshire Young Adventurers (DYA) – a non-profit organisation whose aim is to help young people from Derbyshire and the surrounding areas achieve an adventurous activity that they may not be able to fund themselves.

These activities may include Adventurous Training activities, Overseas Expeditions with an appropriate aim or Duke of Edinburgh expeditions. For these reasons, we decided that DYA would be perfect to help us complete our planning while advising us and pointing us in the right direction.

## **Fundraising**

With the help of DYA, we soon arranged Bag Packing at a variety of different locations, including supermarkets such as Marks & Spencer as well as Wilkinson. Long days were required to acquire as much money as possible from the generous people of Chesterfield and they certainly did not disappoint.

As a result of this we managed to raise nearly the entire sum needed for both the expeditions, falling just over £20 short per person.

In total we raised well over £2500 from all fundraising activities.

# May 2013



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## CCAT

The team decided it would be beneficial to complete further training, therefore signed up for the Summer Mountain Proficiency Course (SMF) at the Cadet Centre for Adventurous Training (CCAT).

This course is open to cadets aged 16 and over, and is a 5 day introduction to mountaineering in summer conditions. Included are navigational skills, clothing and equipment, access and conservation, mountain hazards, weather, camp-craft, and includes a two day mountain expedition with an overnight wild camp.

We were divided into two groups over the course. The first day of the course started with an Instructor introduction, Student weather brief, daily risk assessment and safety brief for the day ahead, we then moved onto to issuing extra kit that we did not have with us. We then split off into our groups with our instructors Daz and Billy and headed out for a day of mountain navigation and Micro navigation.

On day two we started the day as usual with all the briefings and then out again into the mountains where we discussed and practised movement over varying terrain, discuss hazards, simple evacuation procedures and incident management the day ended in a well earned trip to the camp NAAFI.



# June 2013



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## **CCAT Continued...**

Day three started once again with the briefings and then out into the mountains for another day of walking. We learned about access and conservation and why it was important to keep to the country code, we also learned about constructing an emergency bivouac in an emergency situation. We then returned back to camp for evening meal and then we went out to the local supermarket to purchase food for the overnight expedition and then back to the rooms to pack out rucksacks.

Day four started out to be an overcast and cool day, we started again with the usual briefings and the instructors checking our kit to see if it was suitable for the overnight exped. We were all good to go and set out into the mountains where all our skills we had learned were put into practise. We walked an arduous route each taking turns to navigate. Eventually after a long and tiring day we set up camp at a stunning natural lake and cooked our evening meal as we watched the sun descend behind the mountains. Billy decided it would be fun to take a few of us up a 900m peak in the dark to see if we could see Blackpool Tower, we were not disappointed when we arrived at the summit after a half hour climb.

Day five started with an early wake up and breakfast before moving out for the walk back to the bus's. We arrived back around lunch, cleaned and tidied out lecture rooms and accommodation and had a final debrief and individual interviews, we all passed the course and some of us were even recommended to do Mountain leader training.

# July 2013



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## **Practise expedition—Snowdonia**

We picked Snowdonia as our practise expedition location as it had a number of challenging routes. The expedition started with a 17.9 km day. This was a challenging route and was a taste of what was to come, we trekked through open country side and along a ridge and climbed to a height of over 1000m and yes this was the first day. We had some great photo opportunities on the first day and snapped away, our aim was to make a calendar of our journey. We arrived at our campsite very tired but raring for the next day to arrive.

The next day we tackled a 16.7km route which saw us once again trek through the beautiful mountainous terrain. We climbed to a height of over 700m and ate lunch at a trig point taking in the views as we did so. As it had been raining heavily for quite a while before we arrived, it was very boggy and marshy especially in the forest near Capil Curig. Our assessor Fred met us there to guide us through the knee deep mud. We arrived at our wild camping site next to Llyn Treyn tired and ready for a good hot meal and sleep. Fred came out to check if we were all right and spoke to us about his day which made us all laugh quite a lot.

The final day and we had just finished breakfast when the heavens opened. It was decided that summiting Snowdon was a bad idea so we opted for a pre planned bad weather route...

# August 2013



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...the route was slightly easier than the previous one planned however it was still challenging. We pushed on despite all of the rain and covered a distance of around 17km. We all were very tired on the final day but we pushed through and finally made it back to the mini bus that was waiting for us in a difficult to find car park. We were all soaked to the skin so we stripped off and sat in the cosy mini bus while Fred decided to pass round what he called Rum but it was more like petrol, thank God no one had any matches!

The Pre expedition was a success and Fred was happy to sign it off as a pass, we were all over the moon as all our hard work and determination had paid off!



# September 2013



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## **Qualifying Expedition—The Brecon Beacons**

We decided that our qualifying expedition was to be done in the Brecon beacons as this place was notorious for its arduous routes, it did not disappoint.

We arrived at the campsite in the evening of what was to be a 48 hour acclimatisation period to get used to the area and meet our new assessor who coincidentally was also called Fred. The first two days were spent making sure that all our route cards were completed, looking over bad weather routes and making sure that all our kit was serviceable and ready to use. Unfortunately we were informed that Fred couldn't make it out until the day we were due to start so Jon our supervisor took on responsibility for making sure our kit was all ready and suitable for the time we were going to be out.

It came around to the first day of the expedition and we were all ready and raring to go. We drove to the start point which was a car park in a very remote place next to a quarry where we met Fred. We started out on which was a very challenging first day, we all got a serious wake up call from that day and it made us realise what we had let ourselves in for. The highlight of the day was passing the Chartis caves where we managed to get some good photos, the caves had a rich history and it was very interesting to read about them.

We also passed Talybont Reservoir and also managed to get some more pictures. We managed to make it through the day with a reasonable pace being set, we arrived at our luxury 5 star camp site for the night, we made the most of it while we could. We all felt a bit worse for wear after that day but we knew we had to continue.

# October 2013



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Day two came around a little too soon after a good nights rest and we set out again for another arduous day in the hills. We set off at a good pace and managed to climb the hills at a reasonable rate, we made our way through Craig Cwm Cynwyn and headed for the dreaded Pen Y fan. On our way to the fan we walked along a ridge line which was harder than we had anticipated to navigate as the fog came down for an hour or so and it was difficult to find our exact position however we managed to do so and even helped some lost Army recruits along the way who were on their adventure training package. We finally came to the base of Pen Y Fan, luckily it was still foggy so we did not see the extent of what we had to climb, and so it began a slog up the never ending hill. After around 45 mins of intense climbing we made it to the summit and were met by fred who pointed us in the right direction to get down again. We made it down to Storry Arms and broke right down a long and winding track to our campsite for the night. The camp site was very basic with no showers, 1 toilet and a sheep filled field to sleep in. We went to bed early that night but were kept awake for a while by some other noisy group.

# November 2013



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Day three, and we were up and ready to go for 9.00am. We set out on what was a nice sunny day and prepared our selves for another hard day. The day started with a gradual ascent up into the hills it soon turned into a slog up a huge hill which took us a while to summit. We eventually made it to the trig point which we had designated as a break point so we sat down and were greeted by another assessor who was out accessing another DofE group. He gave us some advice and told us to avoid an certain area on the map as it was dangerous and steep. We carried on as normal this time descending quite a bit until we came to a long roman road which we had to follow. We followed the road for about 8km until we came to a small river and another road which ran along side it up to some woods. We eventually came to the woods and were greeted by Fred who checked we were all alright and ready to continue. We continued through the woods and past a couple of wind turbines, by this time it had started to rain heavily so it was on with the water proofs. We slogged across boggy open ground until making our way through a small village and onto our last campsite of the expedition. The campsite was very nice except for the swarms of midges, this confirmed we had made the right choice of not going to Skye.



# December 2013



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At 5.15am on day four we awoke and were ready to move out for 6am. The sunrise was beautiful but it was a little chilly to start. We started the gradual climb to get onto a plateau where by this time the sun was out and shining and the temperature rose considerably. We carried on waling until we came to a fast flowing ford. We crossed with extreme caution and made it safely across, we then stopped for lunch. After lunch we continued on until we came to another set of hills. We knew this was the last push until we came to the car park for our pick up. Whilst in that area we came across hundreds of special forces recruits on their selection training, this spurred us on even more as we were determined to try and keep up with their pace. We finally made it to the summit of the last hill and were met by Fred on the way back down. When we reached the car park he congratulated us on a job well done and told us that we had all passed with flying colours.

We all toughly enjoyed our time in Brecon even if a time it was tough but we all gained a massive sense of achievement after completion of the expedition!