

EXPLORER SCOUT UNIT REPORT

Roger Pettett, Centurions ESL



Attendance

Weekly attendance has been stable at around 20 with 26 currently in the register. Three new starters coming up from Scouts and six leavers with several remaining affiliated as Network and/or Leaders. We currently have four regular leaders. Our sincerest thanks go to Sarah for joining us as treasurer and to Paul for his years of service to the unit.

Top Awards

Several Duke of Edinburgh Bronze and Silver awards have been given this year, all completed through schools rather than the explorer unit. Congratulations!

I hope to provide more support for DofE in future, most likely in tandem with other neighbouring groups in the county, given the requirements for various permits, few of which are currently held in the unit.

Two Chief Scout's Platinum Awards have been awarded this year, to Michael & Francis, who completed the ICV requirements with a week volunteering with pilgrims in Lourdes last summer. Well done!

Camps & Activities

Kajo Jamboree (Kajo, Finland, Summer '22)

After the unfortunate cancellation of AJ2022 (Australia) due to COVID, Dan was offered a more “local” European expedition to Kajo, Finland. Jolly Jamboree Japes ensued, including three days in Tallinn and two in Copenhagen. Aside from some “interesting” catering, a good time was had. Luckily attendees have been offered a follow-up chance to attend AJ2025, pandemics permitting.

Summer Camp Scout Adventures (Lochgoilhead, Aug '22)

Seven explorers, one network and four leaders had a cracking week at Scout Adventures Lochgoilhead in Argyll, adjacent to the stunning Trossachs National Park. We enjoyed a packed week of adventurous activity with a lot of time on- and in- the waters of Loch Goil amongst the seals and submarines in a wide array of craft of varying seaworthiness. A highlight of the trip was a boat trip over to Kerrera in the sunshine, with a hike across the island and lunch at Gylen Castle. Afterwards we enjoyed an afternoon out in Oban sampling fish and chips and listening to the local school pipe band. The centre’s activities, staff and facilities were first class and we hope to return in coming years.

A roundup video of our trip is available on the Centurions ESU channel on YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQ8tzjb5PNw> with regular posts found on Instagram <https://instagram.com/centurionsesu>

County Marathon (Gradbach, Oct '22)

We entered a team of six in October, the first time the unit has competed in this event. County Marathon 2022 was a Friday-to-Sunday incident hike across the Derbyshire Dales for Explorers, Network, and Leader-teams from across Essex. Even though this was our first time, we entered in the Experienced category as most of the team had relevant Duke of Edinburgh expedition experience. We lucked out with beautiful weather for the weekend. That, and the countryside, made up for our coming last in the Experienced category. The only way is up! Thanks to Jeremy for all the driving..

ESMAT Winter Weekend (Derwentwater, Feb '23)

A team of four (Ben, JamesZ, Francis and Dan) joined other Explorers, Network and Leaders from across Essex at the Derwentwater Independent Hostel for a weekend of hillwalking. Wanting to break out the crampons but half-expecting torrential rain, as happened the previous year, we were disappointed on both counts, having to make do with a weekend of brisk temperatures, glorious sunshine, and the occasional tea-room. Thanks to 1st Dunmow for the loan of their minibus, and to Matt for doing the driving all weekend!



ESMAT Climbing Weekend (Gradbach, Jun/Jul '23)

Saffron Walden Explorer Unit in attendance offered spaces in their minibus. Thanks Matt (SW District Explorers)! JamesZ took the offer up and enjoyed a great weekend climbing.

David Clare Memorial Archery Competition (Skreens Park, Jul '23)



Four unit attendees competed in three different archery disciplines - Field, Olympic (sighted) and Clout. Congratulations to Francis who took 1st place in both the Explorer class, and the Field shoot.



Summer Camp (SA Hawkhirst, Northumberland, Jul '23)

Seven explorers and seven network / leaders up for a packed week of activities at Kielder Water. Mixed weather and clouds of midges didn't deter the group from enjoying a range of water and land-based activities and we even nipped over the border for a day trip to Edinburgh.

World Scout Jamboree (South Korea, Jul/Aug '23)



Five Explorers! Count them, five (!) from Hatfield Forest District made their way to South Korea this summer to join 40,000+ other members of the World Organisation of the Scout Movement at the World Scout Jamboree. Three weeks in Korea including several days exploring Seoul to top- and tail- the trip, plus a few more unexpectedly in-between. It was the experience of a lifetime and they definitely had a blast. Resilience and positivity were key to keeping up with changes to the plan due to issues on site and extreme weather.

To have so many Explorers selected to attend WSJ is a privilege but, due to COVID, meant an unusually large amount of fundraising and donations was compressed into only 18 months. Enormous thanks to all groups and organisations who have donated to make this a possibility, and also a huge shout-out to parents, families and Explorers themselves who have worked hard at their own fundraising. Opportunities like this would not be possible without your hard work and support. Next stop Poland!

EsEx23 Jersey & North America (Jul/Aug '23)

Post-COVID, County wanted to reopen international expeditions with a bang, so as well as supporting those attending World Scout Jamboree, two additional trips were laid-on. One to Jersey (originally pencilled in for Auchengillan), and another to North America.



Four of our Explorers were lucky enough to be selected originally to attend, with, unfortunately, two of them dropped out along the way. Tazmin and Elisabeth had awesome times on their respective expeditions to Jersey and North America.

ESMAT Summer Expedition (Écrins National Park, France, Aug '23)



After an evening presentation from Nigel to introduce ESMAT and their activities to the unit, Michael and James joined their summer expedition to Écrins National Park in the French Alps. The ten day trip included a range of exhilarating experiences like white water rafting, glacier/crevasse traversal and black-rated via ferrata.

The next ESMAT summer expedition being planned is to the Dolomites in summer 2025. More information will be provided when available.

District/Community Events

Over the last twelve months, Explorers, and very often families of Explorers, have been out and about assisting with fundraising activities across the district. Here are a few events we've been involved with over the last twelve months.

JOTA/JOTI, 1st Dunmow (Oct '22 / Oct '23)

JOTA/JOTI, or Jamboree on the Air / Jamboree on the Internet is an annual, international, "virtual" jamboree, which aims to promote communication around the world. A drop-in event at 1st Dunmow HQ runs over the JOTA/JOTI weekend, providing Ham Radio equipment and computers for voice- and text-chat with other scouts and Radio Amateurs around the world. In 2022 we chatted to scouts from Sible Hedingham to Victoria, Australia and even Gilwell Park and many other places in-between, even listening in to some geosynchronous satellite relay conversations. Explorers interested in technology might like to research how to obtain a UK ham radio licence to join in and operate some of the radio equipment.



Supporting 1st Takeley at Easter Egg Hunt (Apr '23)

Undeterred by chilly Spring weather and a forecast of rain, Tomahawk-throwing in the drizzle proved very popular for six hours, amongst a range of other crafty activities, at the 1st Takeley Easter Egg Hunt.

Supporting SAS at Saffron Walden Crank-Up (Apr '23)

"Just a short note to thank you for your help over the weekend. Can you please also pass on our thanks to Josie, Dan, Catherine & Eleanor. It was a brilliant weekend and your help was much appreciated. Final total not in yet but we took in the region of £4.5K and expenses likely to be around £1K - so I reckon it was a great effort all round!" - Judy Brand

Fancy Dress Halloween party event for 1st Dunmow Beavers

A busy Saturday afternoon of games, crafts and food run by parents of Jamboree participants and the participants themselves. Online ticket sales totalled over £500.

Supporting 1st Dunmow and Dunmow RT at Soapbox Race (May '23)



A hard day's work, running trolleys of water up and down Braintree Road in Dunmow, supporting the Great Dunmow Round Table's annual Soapbox Race. We managed to turn-over more than £500 selling bottled water to visitors. Well done to Assistant Section Leader, and Thunderbird 1 driver, Alfie whose work-apprentice team took second place!

Coming up...

Lake District Hillwalking (Sept/Oct '23)

~~We are delighted to be able to offer a weekend of hillwalking from Kentmere, thanks to Arnie. We have the remote Kentmere residential centre lodge booked for ten and look forward to a fun and probably wet weekend in the Lakes.~~

Unfortunately due to a generator failure at the Kentmere site and no ETA for a fix we have had to cancel the hillwalking weekend. We are investigating replacements and refunds will be issued where necessary.

Explorer Belt (Sofia, Bulgaria, Summer '24)

A team of fifteen Explorers and Network will be joining Slough District for a 10-day, self-led expedition to Bulgaria in Summer 2024. Notably, the members of our unit represent a quarter of the whole expedition. Starting and finishing in the capital Sofia, teams will plan their own routes and activities around the Explorer Belt aims and project requirements. The Explorer Belt represents a unique opportunity to meet people in foreign countries, overcome language and cultural barriers and discover the destination. These are understood to be the first EB expeditions ever in the district.

Explorer Belt (Sweden, Summer '24)

Another opportunity has recently come to my attention, to join Surrey District Scouts for an Explorer Belt expedition to Sweden between 10th - 23rd August 2024. If you are not signed up for Bulgaria but would like to complete your explorer belt (very worthwhile!), then there is a Zoom informational call on **Saturday 4th October**. Sign up quickly!

<https://www.surrey-scouts.org.uk/events/explorer-belt-sweden-2024>

Essex International Jamboree, EIJ (Summer '24)

Aside from experiencing a large international event, EIJ presents a super opportunity to participate as a volunteer, ticking off an international activity from the ICV list (for Chief Scout and King's Scout awards). You can apply here <https://eij.org.uk/make-it-happen/>



Kent Explorers Machu Picchu (Peru, Easter '25)

There are a few places left for this "over 18" expedition to Peru over Easter 2025 for Network and Leaders.



<https://www.cognitoforms.com/SpectuliseLtd/MacchuPichuPeru2025>



World Scout Moot (Portugal, Summer '25)

Elsewhere, for those "graduating" from Explorers, do also check out the next World Scout Moot in Portugal.

<https://worldscoutmoot.pt/>