

EXPLORER SCOUT UNIT REPORT

Roger Pettett, Centurions ESL



Summary

2023/24 has seen a disappointingly light programme run, with minimal adventurous activities of our own and, partly as a result, a low number of top awards given. This has been driven, to various degrees, by low numbers of leaders, low numbers of activity permits, limited facilities and equipment storage and “best-efforts” support rather than a concerted delivery programme.

Scout Leaders are volunteers. They dedicate their time to building a fun and educational setting and imparting skills for life to our young people. If you would like to help make a difference, please speak to the leadership team.

Attendance

Weekly attendance has been stable at around 22 with 24 currently in the register. Five new starters coming up from Scouts and seven leavers with several remaining affiliated as Network and/or Leaders. We currently have three and a half regular leaders.

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!

We struggle to provide sufficient support for DofE in the district due to a lack of adventurous activity permits currently held. We try to remediate this by engaging with neighbouring districts and Essex County Scouts, specifically the Mountain Team, and other Explorer groups in the county and beyond, with event information regularly circulated in our communication channels.

One Chief Scout's Diamond Award has been awarded this year, to Francis who completed his Silver DofE back in 2023. Two Chief Scout's Platinum Awards have been also presented to Elli and James. Congratulations!

Camps & Activities



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.

A roundup video of our trip is available on our very own Centurion ESU Youtube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@centurionsesu5748> and on our website <https://centurions.uk/> with regular posts found on Instagram <https://instagram.com/centurionsesu>

ESMAT Winter Weekend (Derwentwater, Feb '24)

Relatively fine weather accompanied our third winter weekend with the Essex Mountain Activity Team. Based at the Derwentwater Independent Hostel, walking groups spend the weekend planning and executing all-day hikes across the hills and valleys in the Lake District.



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 '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 2023 we saw good shortwave propagation, reaching Istanbul in the morning and easily across Europe for the rest of the day, with contacts further afield using digital modes and internet chat. We had a disappointing turnout of scouts and cubs compared to previous years, possibly due to timings with school holidays. Changes to publicity and/or a slot-booking system are likely to be used in 2024.

Scouts and Explorers interested in communication technology might like to research how to obtain a UK ham radio licence to join in and operate some of the radio equipment. Congratulations to James who passed his Foundation License exam in May!

The 2024 JOTA/JOTI will happen 18th-20th October 2024. <https://www.jotajoti.info/>



Supporting SAS at Saffron Walden Crank-Up (Apr '24)



A massive thank-you to those Explorers and parents/guardians who came to Crank-Up to assist the Scout Active Support group (SAS) selling refreshments in the cold and wet. It's one of the SAS' biggest annual fundraising events to support the district and fund services like the minibus. A huge thank you for the donation of £1,500 to Explorers expeditioning to Bulgaria this summer (see below).

District Fun Day (May '24)

Five explorers joined over two hundred cubs, scouts and beavers from across Hatfield Forest District for a day of fun and games at Skreens Park. Accompanied by glorious sunshine and a lot of last-minute organisation, a good time was had by all, and we were even able to give the new District Air Rifles a good run-in..

Takeley Group Fête (Jun '24)

A beautiful sunny day saw a successful and well-attended community fête at Takeley Group. A tomahawk range was run all day and the £100 raised has been earmarked for the international expeditions to Peru (x3) and Australia (x1) in 2025. Thanks to Rob Warner (Takeley Cubs; Bushscout UK) for assisting all day.

Coming up...



Explorer Belt (Bulgaria, Summer '24)

A team of fifteen Explorers and Network will be joining Slough District for ten-day, self-led expeditions across Bulgaria this summer. Notably, the members of our unit represent a quarter of the whole expedition. Starting and finishing in the capital Sofia, teams plan their own routes

and activities around the Explorer Belt aims and project requirements. The EB 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!

Essex International Jamboree, (Summer '24)



Five of our Explorers and Network: Elli, Aoife, Róisín, Amy and Elisabeth will soon be attending EIJ at Boyton Cross, mostly as staff or young leaders. Aside from experiencing a large international event, EIJ presents an excellent opportunity to participate as a volunteer, fulfilling an international activity requirement from the ICV list for Chief Scout and King's Scout awards. <https://eij.org.uk/>

Kent Explorers Machu Picchu (Peru, Easter '25)



Three ex-members of our unit, Michael, Francis and Will, all now Network, will be expeditioning with Kent Scouts to Peru over the Easter break in 2025. The itinerary includes walking the Machu Picchu trail at up to 4,000m, visiting Rainbow Mountain, and participating with a community project in the Amazon basin.



World Scout Moot (Portugal, Summer '25)

The run-up has begun for the 16th International Scout Moot for those in Network. More information available at

<https://worldscoutmoot.pt/>

Finally...

It's been my pleasure (and occasionally, dismay) to run the Explorer unit for the last three years, but the time has come for me to step down.

I count in my successes over the past three years a small number of organised activity camps, sending five to Korea, two to France, three to Peru in 2025, and furthering top awards with a handful of Chief Scout Platinum and Diamond awards, progress on King's Scout, plus the first fifteen ever in District to embark on an Explorer Belt expedition. However, I find myself unable to devote the time and energy required to maintain and grow the section to the level it requires and deserves.

With the right levels of engagement and support, and with a solid international and adventurous activity programme, Explorers can be a very rewarding section to run. It's a formative time of life for teenagers and over these recent years I've had the pleasure of seeing dozens of exceptional young people grow and develop their skills and talents. I know they will go on to achieve great things and I'm pleased to have played a small part..

Roger