

Young Explorers & the journey so far



Words by
Councillor Tina Short

In a first for any Parish Council in the UK, Hatfield Peverel is proud to be running its very own Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award programme. Since the start of the year, a small but enthusiastic group of local young people has been meeting regularly at the Village Hall to develop new skills, take on physical challenges, and prepare for their first outdoor expedition.

Richard and I supply the adult support, while the DofE skills instruction is led by Ben Blackborow, from [Essex Youth Services](#).

Our initial sessions involved lively activities so we could get to know each other and discover a bit more about each other's skills and interests. As the oldest adult present, I was staggered at how active these young people are out of school, compared to my far more reserved lifestyle when aged 14. Their interests in football, artistic swimming, pony racing and horse riding, plus learning various musical instruments made my handicrafts and membership of a choir seemed very tame in comparison! These skills and activities will be continued by the young people, or new activities have been selected, with them submitting evidence of their progress as part of their D of E Bronze Level activities for "Skills" and "Physical". They also will undertake activities to fulfil the volunteering element of the Bronze Award, such as litter picking or helping with younger members of Scouts or Guides.



After a session on basic First Aid, we moved on to map skills, using compasses and grid references to locate places on a map, then using the contour lines and illustrations on the map to describe the terrain and the features present in the area. As the weather improved, we moved outdoors to learn how to erect and use a small portable stove called a Trangier, plus we practised our navigation skills to follow an Easter egg hunt route around the recreation ground.



The most entertaining outdoor activity so far has been tent building. Quite straightforward to begin with but the second version involved 3 out of the 4 young people performing the tasks blindfolded and relying on clear instructions from the single sighted member of the team! It was very successful and hugely amusing for the adult observers!

As the summer progresses, we are hoping to run a weekend expedition to put into practice the map skills, compass work, knowledge of the Countryside Code and hopefully NOT the basic First Aid! This expedition will also involve one night's camping and a meal cooked on a trangier. Later in the year, we hope the participants will be ready for their real expedition which will be monitored by DofE assessors.

As we look ahead, there's a real sense of excitement and pride in what these young people are achieving—not just in ticking off the requirements of the Bronze Award, but in building confidence, friendships, and life skills that will stay with them for years to come. We're thrilled to be part of their journey and can't wait to see them complete their final expedition and receive their well-earned awards. It's a fantastic milestone for them—and for our village.