



South West Notts District Explorer Scouts Annual Report 2002/03

Ever since the two new training sections - Explorer Scouts and Scout Network - were announced, they have received a mixed reception. Opinion has been split about what it will mean for the Scout Section in particular - will Explorers 'nick' all the best Scouts? How will the patrol system function when the oldest scout is only 13? There has also been a degree of anger at the demise of Venture Scouting, after all, it was providing excellent Scouting for our more senior young members, wasn't it? (I was a founder member of a Venture Scout Unit myself, and I can assure you that the slogan "Venture Scouting Works" spoke the truth). However, times change and young people change, and no matter how comfortable we were with the old sections, the new ones are here to stay. We must all look forward, embrace the change and work together to build new relationships and develop new ways of delivering Scouting in S W Notts.

So, with my appointment as the District Explorer Scout Commissioner being confirmed in January 2003, Explorer Scouting has finally arrived in the District, and not before time. The District is lagging some way behind the County, as across our neighbouring districts, there are already some 50 Explorer Scout Units up and running.

The District census at the end of January indicated that there were 79 young people in Scouting in the 14-18 age range who will need access to Explorer Scouting during 2003 and a further 49 who will turn 14 by the end year! We all face a significant challenge to ensure that these young people have the opportunity to continue their Scouting in the District. As ever, the key to success will be finding enthusiastic and competent leaders to deliver exciting and challenging programmes.

I spent the first two months of the year canvassing opinion and forming plans for the first 3 Explorer Scout Units (ESUs) in the District. Initial discussions have been opened up with the Groups likely to support the first Units, and these will hopefully lead to formal Partnership Agreements between the District Explorer Scout Units and their supporting Groups.

8 Leaders from S W Notts attended the Nottinghamshire Explorer Scout Leader conversion training course at Sherbrooke on 2nd February - this was the strongest District contingent on the course, which was attended by 60 leaders from across the County. A promising start!

On 10th March, 11 adults and 13 young people attended an Explorer "Social" held in Stapleford to shape the launch of **The Stapleford ESU ("SESU")**. A great time was had by all. **Magellan ESU** held a similarly entertaining event in Beeston on 27th March, which was attended by 7 adults and 19 young people. Both these events attracted young people from outside scouting - a great omen for the future! **Discovery Water Activities ESU** have yet to decide how they're going to mark their beginning - no doubt they will make a splash! In the meantime, a team led by wannabe Explorers from **Discovery ESU** achieved first place at County MAD on 1st March - another great omen for the future!

On behalf of the District, I offer my sincere thanks to everyone who has supported the fledgling units in their first few weeks. Special thanks are due to Mel Johnson, Darren Guest, Chris Coats, Paul Shelton and Tom Genway - these are the brave people who have taken on the new roles of ESL and AESL for the first units.

SESU, Magellan and Discovery are now planning their programmes for the rest of the year - success for Explorer Scouting will rely on excellent programmes and strong links between troops and units. Looking forward, I'd love to have more units set up in Bramcote, Toton, and Chilwell by the end of 2003 to give access to Explorer Scouting across the District. I also hope to launch a Young Leaders unit this year to support Explorer Scouts who want to work with the Beaver, Cub and Scout sections. We are starting a new chapter in our journey of Scouting, and we have a fantastic opportunity to establish a firm foundation to take us towards Scouting's centenary in 2007. I'd be very pleased to hear from anyone who wants to get involved in Explorer Scouting at this exciting time.

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South West Notts Explorer Scouts

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