



South West Notts District Explorer Scouts Annual Report 2003/04

Our first full year of Explorer Scouting in the District has gone by very quickly, and I'm very pleased to report on the successes that we have enjoyed over the last 12 months.

The first three Explorer Scouts Units in the District were set up in April 2003. Magellan ESU serves the centre of Beeston, *The Stapleford* ESU ("SESU") serves the Stapleford area, and Discovery ESU (formed from the Illustrious VSU, which was part of 2nd Beeston Sea Scout Group) provides a programme focussed on water activities. All three of these units got off to a flying start, and they have been joined more recently by two more District units. Trojan Venture Scout Unit converted to become an Explorer Scout Unit in October 2003, and Pioneer Venture Scout Unit, which was part of 2nd Chilwell (Christchurch) Scout Group converted to become an Explorer Scout Unit in January 2004. Formal Partnership Agreements have been established between some of the District Explorer Scout Units and some of their supporting Groups, with more agreements yet to be negotiated.

All these units have had a very busy year. There is only space here to highlight a few of the varied activities provided by and for the Explorers. SESU have had a visit from a Prison Drugs dog handler who demonstrated how the use of dogs has assisted in the finding of drugs within our prisons. Magellan invested some of their members on the climbing wall at Gilwell during the National Scout & Explorer Winter Camp. Discovery have formed strong links with the Trent Lock Scout Activity Centre where they have joined one of the Service Crews, enabling two of the Explorers to gain their Level 2 Power Boat Certificates. Other activities enjoyed this year included debates and a variety of sports as well as more traditional Scouting activities such as orienteering, camping, climbing, and backwoods cooking. Several Explorers enjoyed going on a survival weekend where the only equipment allowed was a sleeping bag, a knife and a ration pack! The new programme is also enabling many Explorers to achieve awards in the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme alongside their Chief Scout and Queen's Scout Awards.

Complementing the main five units that meet weekly, a Young Leader Explorer Scout Unit was started in January 2004. This unit meets on an *ad hoc* basis, and is led by Anne Linsdell and Dave Bagshaw. So far, around 30 Explorers have passed the unit "A" course, which enables them to start helping with a section. Anne and Dave are now planning the best way of delivering the remaining units in the Young Leader Training programme.

Even though our dedicated leadership teams are providing a fantastic programme of activities, Explorer Scout Units will not survive without a steady flow of new members. Already, some of the "old hands" have started moving on to the Scout Network, so new recruits are urgently needed. To help make the transfer from Scouts to Explorers easier, Ian Storm was appointed as the District Explorer Scout Administrator in October. He has taken on the awesome task of compiling and maintaining a database of current and potential Explorer Scouts, which will help us to ensure that every 14-year-old scout gets the opportunity to join one or more Explorer Scout Units. Any support that Scout Leaders and GSLs can provide to Ian will be greatly appreciated.

Regular District ESL meetings have been established, providing a forum for sharing ideas and for organising District Activities to foster links between the Explorer Scouts from different units. The first activities planned as a District are Navigation Training course including practical exercises in Derbyshire to boost skills in preparation for undertaking expeditions, a Plant and Garden Sale to raise funds for the Units, and a summer event on Barton Island just for fun.

Plans for 2004/05 are looking good, with several camps and expeditions in the pipeline, as well as a full programme of activities. Many Explorers have also nearly completed the awards that they're working on, so I expect to be presenting a few badges over the coming months! I'd still love to have more units set up in Bramcote, Toton, and Chilwell to give even better access to Explorer Scouting across the District. Once again, the only thing holding us back is the lack of adults to lead the sections.

I would like to formally express my sincere thanks to everyone who has supported Explorer Scouting over the last year, especially my wife, Carmel, who has seen even less of me than she did when I held a GSL warrant!