

South West Notts Explorer

Newsletter



September 2012

This newsletter brings you up to date with the activities of the Explorer Scouts of South West Notts. It is sent to all SLs and GSLs in the District.

Richard Pratt, District Adviser

The September issue is devoted one of the two international camps which our Explorers attended, the District Portugal expedition. Another newsletter covering Tornado ESU's participation in the Essex Jamboree will follow shortly.

Portugal

11 Explorers from Discovery, Magellan and Pioneer ESUs travelled to Portugal to attend ACANAC XXII, the Portuguese national camp at Idanha-a-Nova, and after the camp they spent 3 days in Lisbon in the company of Pioneiros (Explorers) of Agrupamento 894 from Montemor-o-Novo, some of whom visited SW Notts in 2010.



The expedition was the culmination of 9 months preparation and fund-raising. On August 3rd they caught an early National Express coach to London Victoria, then on to Gatwick Airport for a TAP flight to Lisbon. Arriving there in the early evening they resorted to Shank's Pony for the short journey to the International Scout HQ at Praça Baden-Powell. After a trip to the nearby supermarket for provisions they had time for a short exploration of the local area.

In the morning a coach provided by the ACANAC organisers took them and another foreign contingent to Idanha-a-Nova, which is nearly on the border with Spain, so they covered the width of the country.

IACANAC is a four-yearly national for camp for all Sections of CNE (the Portuguese Catholic Scout Association) - Lobitos (Beavers/Cubs), Exploradores (Scouts), Pioneiros and Caminheiros (Network). 17000 in all, of whom just 300 were foreigners. SW Notts were the only Brits present. Some of the 300 were overseas members of CNE, from Switzerland, China and Macau, but there were also Scouts from Luxembourg, Sweden, France, Spain and Guinea-Bissau. One of the pleasant aspects of being the only British Scouts was that the Portuguese young members had been given the task of getting signatures from each country represented, so wherever our Explorers went they were besieged by Lobitos all eager to fill a slot in their cards.

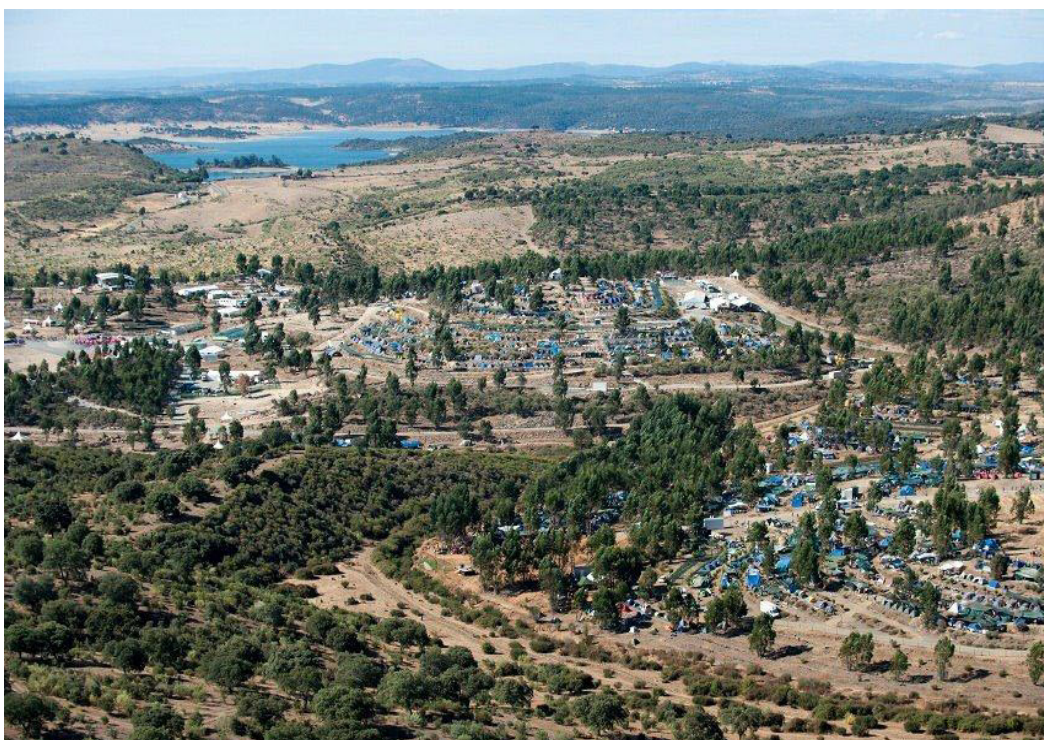


Opening Ceremony



Portuguese Scouting is more traditional than is ours in Britain today. Shorts and the B-P hat make sense in a much warmer climate, but for many of our Explorers it was a surprise to be making tables and benches from pioneering poles rather than having folding ones, to be organised into “Patrulhas” with a PL carrying a Scout stave with a triangular pennant on it, and to see some of the Pioneiros making elevated sleeping platforms with their tents on top. Also surprising, but less pleasant, was the introduction to latrines of the “long-drop” variety.

One other feature of Portuguese Scouting that they didn't really get used to, was that the Portuguese Scouts don't seem to need sleep! The camp's Closing Ceremony finished at 2am, with a reception for overseas Leaders *afterwards*, but at 7:30am they had to be at the gate with kit packed, ready to board transport.



Aerial view of camp

The camp-site at Idanha-a-Nova is in a sparsely-populated area. The arrival of 17000 extra inhabitants would have strained local suppliers, so food was ordered in bulk for the whole camp. The Explorers had no choice, therefore, but to eat what the Portuguese were eating, including salt cod and squid. In temperatures which reached over 40° water-melon was a popular dessert.

Cooking was still on gas, because open fires would have been too much of a hazard. Several of the Explorers likened the site to a camp in the desert, and “dust-devils” were seen on occasions whirling across the open areas. Whereas we take awning and dining shelters to keep off the rain, in Portugal the important thing is shade.

Activities at the camp were as varied as might be expected. An all-day “Desafio” (Challenge) was an incident hike starting from a distant village, a “Raid” was a night-hike (using maps and instructions in Portuguese). Although they were so far from the sea, water-activities took place on a large artificial lake within walking distance of the site. As our DESC comes from a Sea Scouting background, he got roped in as an instructor. Although Portuguese children start learning English in primary school, their vocabulary doesn’t stretch to “port”, “starboard” or “duck when the boom comes over”, so Chris found dealing with 300 Lobitos, in his words, “interesting”.



Sailing on the “Barragem”

There were some events for the whole camp - the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, the Eucharist on Sunday conducted by the Bishop of Oporto (as mentioned above, the camp organisers were the Catholic Scouts), and an attempt at the Guinness Book of Records for a “group hug”. The previous record stood at just over 10000; we are still waiting to hear whether Guinness have accepted ACANAC’s figure of 17000+.

There were also events for the Pioneros’ sub-camp - a camp-fire (without a fire!) and a “party”. At one of these Karen Wood (Pioneer ESL) found herself teaching “The Grand Old Duke of York”, with actions, to 1000+ cheering Scouts.

When the camp ended the Explorers returned to Lisbon where they were joined by Pioneiros from Montemor-o-Novo. This time they were staying at the HQ of Agrupamento 80, Santa Maria de Belém, within a few yards of such features as the Belém Tower and the Monument to the Discoveries. Together the Explorers and Pioneiros travelled around Lisbon itself by train, tram and Metro (and a lot of walking!), then out to the historic city of Sintra, and on the third day they relaxed by visiting the beach at Cascais.



Agrupamento 80’s HQ



Explorers and Pioneiros mimic the Monument to the Discoveries



.... and the portrait of one of Nottingham's local heroes



At Cascais

Shade!



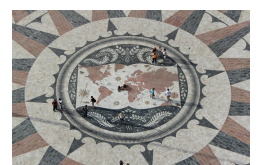
The achievements of the expedition were the immersion of the Explorers in a foreign culture, letting them see another way of doing Scouting, and forging friendships which will be pursued using Facebook and email. It was also valuable in enabling Explorers and Leaders from different Units in our own District to come together and work to a common end.



Our thanks go to the ACANAC organisers, especially Senhor Vitor Borges of the CNE International Dept, Agrupamentos 61 and 80 for the use of their HQs, and Senhor Luís Santos from Montemor-o-Novo for organising the activities in Lisbon.

For more information about ACANAC see <http://www.acanac2012.org> . On the first page, "Fotos" and "Videos" should be self-explanatory; "Diretos" are the recordings of events originally broadcast live on the JOTI network. Under Noticias->Jornal de Campo you will find the camp newspaper.

The site http://euroscoutinfo.com/2012/09/05/int_dim_acanac/ gives an English language summary of the international side of ACANAC; in the photos our Explorers and Leaders are the ones in red, white and blue scarves.



Our own photos will be added to the SW Notts Explorer web-site soon.