

DofE Dinghy Expedition

While speaking to various people about the RYA's status as a Duke of Edinburgh National Operating Authority, I met Myles Ripley , Senior Tutor from Sedbergh School. Myles posed the question about how they could feasibly do an expedition by dinghy rather than foot, overcoming the issue of not being by coastal waters.

With various options discussed, students Katherine and Nicola fleck, Chay Turner-Richarf and David Hendrickse from Sedbergh School CCF, decided to take up the challenge and planned their expedition. Here's a few extracts from their account:

'When the idea of doing our Duke of Edinburgh expedition by dinghy and not having to carry a rucksack or get blisters seemed like a no-brainer. So we started planning'

The major hurdle for most inland areas is finding a patch of water large enough to fulfil the timeframe DofE require. With the students looking at lakes in the Lake District, they immediately faced their first issue.....could this be overcome, if so, how?!

As I have heard many times 'never let a small problem get in the way of an big adventure!', and the students of Sedbergh certainly didn't. 'Knowing it was not possible to do our expedition on one lake, we started to look for another solution. Given the logistics and constraints of a school term for both expeditioners and supervisors the Lake District solution had to be explored. It was suggested that we should put in an expeditions variation request so that we could combine sailing on two lakes with a walk between the two while the supervisor moved the boat by road between lakes. This was agreed and we felt we could plan on a Coniston sail, Grizedale walk and a final day on Windermere.

Our practice expedition took place on Ullswater, launching from the yacht club, camping in Glenridding and then returning to the yacht club.

BUT the next planning problem was how do you plan a route for sailing when the wind strength and direction are totally unpredictable? The group planned various options of possible wind strength and direction and tried them out on their practice expedition.

One thing we needed to do was a capsizing drill with the boat loaded with our gear- a Wayfarer, fully loaded! We launched onto Killington Lake, our home water, and duly capsized the boat – so far, so good, until David stood on the centreboard andSNAP it broke. That was an unexpected additional cost to the trip!

So, with plans in place, risk assessments and protocols for the trip drawn up, it was one cold day in late April the group launched their boat onto Ullswater, shadowed by their safety boat, where a welcoming NW Force 3 to 4, greeted them. Choosing to reef, the group sailed down to Glenridding via a lunch break on the West shore - Hot soup being the vital food to keep up moral in the cold weather!





With a landing point organised for Glenridding sailing centre, the boats were beached below Side Farm campsite and they ferried their gear up on the campsite and lit the BBQ.

‘Another great benefit of sailing expeditions is that you can afford to carry more equipment than if it was all in a rucksack’. However, weather is a factor no one can control.....’Frozen boots in the tent that night emphasised how unseasonably cold it was this May but we enjoyed a fine weather walk up

to High Street on our middle day supervised in part by Amos the dog, and a much greeted return sail back North along Ullswater, SW force 3 to 4, the next day’.

All DofE Expedition must have an aim, or ‘purpose’, the group had many ideas of what could be explored on route, freshwater ecology; astronomical measurements and aspects of tourism, but finally settled on a comparison of density and style of lakeside buildings on the two lakes they had chosen to sail.

With their school exams over, it was time for the qualifying expedition! ‘We packed all our gear back in to the Wayfarer on the shore of Coniston Sailing club, with our first architectural note of the day..... Coniston SC changing rooms were once a dock for slate barges collecting slate from the Coniston quarries’.

‘Despite the apparent mirror like water and the need to row out of the bay, the wind slowly filled in and we were blessed by a beam reach the length of the lake and even into Octopus lagoon where we lost the Windex in the trees much to the shepherd’s amusement! Onwards to Peel Island, (aka Wildcat Island) lunch in “Secret Harbour”, where the hot soup needed in April was replaced with Soreen topped with salami and cheese!’

With the group suitably refreshed, they set off back to the north end of the lake, and landed at the sailing club, ready to set up camp and hitch the boat ready for its tow to Windermere.

As the group were splitting their expedition part sail part foot, the next challenge was their planned route through Grizedale.....’ greeted at the first bridle way with a “path closed” notice which necessitated a 2.5 mile detour, which was not welcome!You don’t get that by water!!

With the DofE principals in mind; initiative, teamwork and problem solving skills jumped into action and a new route was decided - a marked route through the forest. With lunch devoured, the group set north up out of the forest to Hawkshead and then onto the National Trust campsite at Low Wray on the lake shore.

‘We set the boat up and had a quick swim, our forecast had suggested light winds on our final day but as our supervisors rescue boat appeared and we could see from the state of his waterproofs that there was a decent wind out there. With a reef in place just in case, we beat out of the bay before

turning downwind, stopping briefly at Storr's Temple to see the memorial to the great naval figures of Nelson's times. Prior to tackling the final part of our journey - North to Ferry Nab, we stopped for lunch on the West shore, dreaming of our return to home soft beds and a decent shower!

With their Silver expedition successfully completed and under their belt, the group are already investigating what they could do for their Gold and when they can start planning!

The group would definitely recommend an expedition by water 'It was definitely a good decision and we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, even if passers-by were concerned by our (hymn) singing. We were blessed with mainly dry weather, favourable winds and apart from the practice quite warm conditions.

.....So what are you waiting for, get planning!! We look forward to hearing about your adventures!

