

Exmouth & Budleigh Salterton Explorer Scouts & Scout Network

Summer Camp 2012 France

27th July – 4th August 2012



EXMOUTH AND BUDLEIGH SALTERTON EXPLORER SCOUT UNIT

W: www.exbudexplorers.org.uk

Registered Charity (England and Wales) 301044

Friday 27th July

1pm at the scout hut and our 24hr journey had begun. Upon my arrival at the hut I was instructed to act as a slave and break my back by hauling Esther's ludicrous amount of luggage for she was too busy checking everyone's passports. Bob had left some important documentation at home so while he went back to Exeter to get it we all sat about on the grass in the sunshine.

We left Exmouth late and voyaged onwards to Newbury Services where we met up with the Guides we would be spending the next week with. We boarded their coach and we all sat at the back. These were creatures from a foreign land; they spoke with a strange tongue and none but the northerners amongst us could decipher their strange words.



When we had got about 20 minutes from the Ferry we decided to have a sing song because the Guides had stopped watching their films. It was good to pass the time with.

We eventually reached Dover and boarded the ferry about 9pm. The new Explorers were invested in the Explorer ways out on deck and we had our first group photo (and there were many!)

We then had to solve a puzzle in order to get our summer camp T-

Shirts. Lewis was given a T-shirt with 'Explorer 1' on the back and Will was given 'Explorer 18'. We then had to work out who got the numbers in between. It turned out to be age order, Lewis is the oldest and Will is the youngest but Bob had messed up the order but it was fine in the end. Sam & Sophie had to swap because Sophie's t-shirt was too big.



Esther bought us all a drink which we then enjoyed while either watching the Olympic Opening Ceremony or listening to music. We arrived in Dunkirk around midnight and had to get back on the coach for the rest of the really really really long journey.



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Saturday 28th July

Saturday began at 12:00 as we once again bundled into the coach and off the ferry we drove. After a brief spur of excitement many of us tried to get some sleep. The drivers turned off the lights so it was mostly dark; the only sign of life was the occasional yawn and groan as we tried to get a rest. I found it impossible to sleep and was content with talking to Boris and looking out of the window at France. I found no sleep until 4:00 and even then I only got an hour and was woken by the incredible pain from my back as the arm rest imbedded itself into me. For the next hour I watched the sun rise. The driver pulled in to a petrol station where everybody awoke and went to the toilet. We piled back on to the coach; many of us passed the time catching up on lost sleep. We ate our home cooked cakes and cookies that were delicious.

At 10:00 we stopped off at some services to have breakfast. We continued on and noticed that the landscape gradually transformed from flat to mountains.

When we finally arrived at Acorn Adventure's campsite about 14:00 we were greeted by the staff.

We were arranged into groups of three or four and put into tents, there was also a larger dining tent and a washing up area. After a little while unpacking we were homely and attempting to acclimatise to the new hotter environment.

We had lunch and after went for a swim in the cool river nearby with Bob & Max which was great fun.

In the evening after dinner we had to go to a barrel talk.



The instructor talked to us about what would be happening over the next 2 days and the kit we would need to take with us for our descent of the Ardeche. We were given a barrel between 2 and we had to go back to our campsite and pack everything ready for an early start on Sunday morning.

Sunday 29th July

By now we had spent over 25 hours travelling to finally reach our destination in what was perhaps the most uncomfortable coach journey of all time. However we discovered that the next couple of days would be even more tiring. 26km down the Ardeche in canoes over the course of 2 days.

We left for the Ardeche at 9.30am but first we stopped by a nearby town to go shopping in our swimming gear which is probably not how I would usually go about town, in the end I didn't even buy a single thing. Afterwards we carried onto the starting point of the canoeing river trip.



We passed the largest natural arch in Europe and after that we arrived at the site where we were going to start. We grabbed our helmets, life jackets, paddles and barrels that we had packed the night before. We walked to the edge of the river where we sat on the floor and got a talk on how we were to stay safe and signals to look out for.

We got into our canoes and waited for the other groups to start on the first of many rapids, it was quite an easy and simple one. During the descent we'd have to do a 'heat wave' in where the leader of our group would yell 'heat wave' we would then have to jump out into the river and then climb back in. We were also told to drink plenty of water so the whole trip we were constantly jumping out of our canoes to pee, where we would have to put 1 hand on our head and just float until we were done.



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The Ardeche was amazing, the views, the landscape but Will was on a mission to “kill fish”, and our first catch was on Breezy Corner. We put the fish through the front loop of our canoe and from then on in it was our mascot, like a mermaid on the front of a big ship.

There were many rapids some hard and other easy but we all managed to get through them all. Around half way done we stopped for a rock jump which was brilliant fun and we all had a great time.

We stopped for lunch and had a baguette which we had the choice of meats, cheese, salad and crisps. Most of the Explorers went for seconds.

The day ended with us arriving at a campsite about halfway down the river. We had to help the Guides carry their barrels up from the river to the camp as they were too tired to carry them.

We slept outside on a large tarp and I fell asleep gazing at the stars above me. But of course I can't write the diary entry without mentioning the song made up by some welsh bloke who was one of the instructors during the decent down the river....

“Da Moose, Da Moose! Swimming ins the waterrrrrr! Wheeeeeereeee did he go? He under da water!”

Overall it was a great day with lots of fun and I'm sure the rest of us all had a brilliant day.



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Monday 30th July

Monday morning started very uncomfortable with many stiff necks and sore backs as many more stones had appeared under the tarp overnight. Esther and Bob tried and failed to find a Geocache at some early hour and the rest of us crawled out of our sleeping bags at about 7 – far too early in everyone’s opinion.

We had a very interesting breakfast of beans on toast (not 5* shall we say).

We put on our still soggy swim wear and buoyancy aids and packed our barrels ready to go. Then we had to walk down a long and dusty path in our wet clothes. Greg and Philo had a mighty fine idea of putting our water bottles in our life jackets but because they were full of water it did not work so they kept dropping them. Once we had put our barrels on our canoe we had to go back and help the Guides carry their stuff to the river.



There were many rapids where the river guides instructed us on the best route to take. The most memorable rapids was called ‘British Airways’ where our group rafted up by holding onto each other’s boats and navigated through the rapid singing ‘Living on a Prayer’.

After paddling a little further we stopped to do a 7m rock jump which Stevo (who is scared of heights) bravely did. When we had finished we went to the shore and ate either a marshmallow or waffle biscuit, I had a marshmallow.

After canoeing a bit further to lunch we went to another rock jump which was only for those over 18 because of the climb to get there. The Welsh leader did a back flip off it and Lewis the instructor went twice as high and jumped off!

When that was finished we stacked canoes together and jumped off them into the river, we got a video of us shouting our names out as we jumped which Max is going to include in the Summer Camp film when we get home.

When we got going again we were able to leave the Guides behind as they were so slow and kept holding us up. We paddled to the end watching out for French kids trying to capsise us. When we were finished we went to the coach park and got changed but because Aiden didn’t pack any trousers or shorts he had to wear my PJ’s around the coach park. Esther then bought us all an ice cream which was nice.

We got back on the coach and went back to the campsite and chilled before dinner.

My group decided to take our beds outside in the shade as it was so hot in the tent and decided that we would sleep outside for the rest of the week.



In the evening we went for a quick swim and played “King of the Rock” and after that we had a quiz with the Acorn instructors, my team came second. After this we went to the bar and watched some of the Olympics before heading to bed very tired after 2 hard days canoeing.



Tuesday 31st July

Tuesday was our first full day on the Acorn camp and this morning I was awoken by a chilled wind and covered by a thin layer of dew, this was because Greg, Philo, Ben, Aidan and I had decided to move our beds outside and sleep under the stars. I lay there for a few minutes until me and the rest of us were called to breakfast. We all gobbled our breakfast as fast as we could as we were very hungry. After breakfast the instructors announced that we would be doing problem solving and raft building in the morning and high ropes in the afternoon. So we went and got changed into our wet clothes and shoes.

We did raft building first which was pretty good fun, we'd all attempted raft building before but we all agreed that this was the best raft we'd ever built because it didn't fall apart. We actually struggled to undo the knots we'd tied (probably because Megan and Sophie tied them and they're considerably hencher than the majority of the Explorers).



We then moved on to the mission impossible course which group 4 had just finished. They advised us to fill our water bottles up as much as we could which we assumed was due to the extreme heat and it not being an Acorn based activity. We could not have been more wrong! The leader in charge of the mission impossible activity was



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called Lewis, the instructor who had on the previous day purposefully caused Sophie and Lewis (the explorer) to break the 100% rapid success rate on the river by capsizing them. The activity itself was a series of team building games and the true significance of the water volume was understood when during one activity where we were crawling through a small tunnel holding hands, as we climbed out water was emptied onto our faces but we couldn't protect ourselves because we were holding hands. We then proceeded to a spiders web made of ropes where we weren't allowed to touch the sides but had to climb through gaps. However if we sung a cheesy song then we could touch as many as we liked.

We then went for a quick swim in the river to cool down and wash off the dirt.



For lunch we had a tasty pasta dish then we made our way to the high ropes course. We started with crate stacks then had a race up a vertical course. Max & Bob's tower was easily the most impressive.

Because it was so incredibly hot our instructor took us to the pool where we used the Explorers new GoPro waterproof camera to do some footage for the film. There was then dinner and another swim in the river.

Wednesday 1st August

We woke to another baking hot day and “enjoyed” a hearty breakfast of muesli, eggs and yogurt before setting off to the local town of Ruoms on the coach. We were left to our own devices to look round the shops. We all had ice creams and Lewis bought a mask while Tim and Greg bought a load of explosives, which were quickly confiscated by an angry Bob. After luring some of the Explorers away from the BB guns and Swiss army knives in the shops, the leaders took us down to the river and the tale of the whale starts....

It began with Callum and Lewis shopping and buying the rod of destiny. They were so absorbed in its awe that they cared not for its price at 8.95EURO. From that moment on they knew that they would achieve great things while the other Explorers were swimming.



Callum and Lewis scaled a 40m cliff to fish in the lagoon of doom. With the camera crew prepared and Mullac (Callum) trained to deal with anything, the casting began. The creature swallowed the bait and Mullac caught what can only be described as a monster, with help from Will the 2 metre long fish was hauled up the cliff. As it was pulled onto land Callum barely avoided death as it swung its heavy head like some kind of medieval mace. With their cool heads they used their expert fishermen skill to subdue the creature as they stood victorious and looked out over the Ardeche. As the locals were applauding and fishermen looked on angrily they knew that history had been made. As they released the monster back to its home they knew that things would never be the same, stories spread throughout France growing out of proportion. Statues were constructed commemorating the event. A new religion was born within the fishing community inspiring fishermen all over the world to fulfil their dreams.

Later we walked back into town and went to a restaurant for lunch. Most of us had pizzas which were really yummy.

We all then decided to walk to the local supermarket which turned out to be a long way out of town. We all bought a load of rubbish after Will walked back and forward either side of the tills and got yelled at by an angry French lady. We ordered a taxi for



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all the things we bought, apart from Georgie who decided that she couldn't be bothered to walk back and took the taxi with all the purchases. As we were walking back to the campsite our coach went passed with the Guides on board, luckily they stopped to pick us up as it turned out today had been the hottest day so far – 28C

Pasta bake was waiting for us when we got to the campsite. Most of us were tired after walking back so we went straights to bed after sitting in the bar and watching the highlights from the Olympics.



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Thursday 2nd August

Today we had an 8 o'clock start to get up for the regular 8:30 breakfast. We started off the day with kayaking. Whilst doing this we played many games, for instance we had a relay race where everyone one in each team had to get on one kayak with 2 people paddling, most people capsized quite frequently. We also played "Sharkey, Sharkey, Fishy, Fishy" which involved 2 people being Sharks and everyone else were fish, the rules were basically the same as Bull Dog except the "Sharks" had to tap the front of the Fishes kayak 3 times. We also discovered how to do the Pirates of the Caribbean thing which was basically flipping the kayak, going underneath it (where the air was) and just walking forward. Sophie and Megan had a great time doing this as they were laughing for 10 minutes straight and some tears of joy came out as well.

There were also a couple of other games and challenges we had but they weren't as fun as the others so I decided not to write about them.

We had lunch of jacket potatoes and cheese back at the campsite where we also chilled out listening to music and sunbathing. It was extremely hot and as Greg hadn't dunk enough water in the morning he had sun stroke and was sick on Esther's feet. It was gross so he had to spend the rest of the day lying in the shade drinking water.



In the afternoon we went climbing on the same area as where we had done the high ropes on Tuesday. There were two separate climbing walls, one that quite easy and people who were too lazy to do the harder one did this one. The harder one was a lot harder, for instance Tim went first and he was unable to do it but then everyone after him managed it. Esther came over during the afternoon with Greg to give us all some slices of melon which were lovely.



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As the weather was quite hot we were all quite tired and overheated so the Acorn leaders allowed us to go in the swimming pool for an hour and a half. In the pool we got some great video of us just sitting in a line underwater whilst Lewis with his GoPro filmed a video of us waving at the camera. We also did diving catches where we would jump into the water whilst attempting to catch a ball.



Later in the evening we then went back to the pool with the Guides and just played catch and jumped in. At one point we managed to get Lindon (who was fully clothed) into the pool.

We spent the rest of the night sitting in the bar watching the Olympics, we also did a bit of dancing.

When Philo, Greg, Tim, Lindon, Ben and Aidan were asleep outside (they had slept outside every night) some of the older Explorers & Leaders decided to play a prank on them by moving their beds around. It was really funny to watch as Esther, Max, Bob & Sam struggled to lift them in their beds and move them to other locations in our camp area. They only managed to move Aiden, Ben & Greg as the others woke up mid-move but it was so funny to watch.

Friday 3rd August

Today we all had to get up early and get our bags packed as we would be leaving at midday for the long journey home. When Ben & Aiden woke up they didn't have a clue where they were and it was really funny to watch. Greg was in the middle of the circle of tents so when he woke up he was so confused. Ben woke up to with the Guide leaders laughing at him as his bed has been moved to by the washing up sinks.

Our leaders decided there wasn't really enough time to go caving as planned for the morning so we all went down to the river for a swim and to play 'King of the Rock' for one last time.



Greg was also trying his hand at fishing but he didn't manage to follow in Mullac's footsteps by catching a huge fish.

When we had finished swimming we went back to the campsite to shower and finish our packing. We also had to sweep out the tents and bring the mattresses to the main marquee as our campsite wasn't going to be used again this session.

We said bye to all the Acorn staff and we boarded the coach at midday after another group photo.

We have had an amazing week in France in the sunshine but we could have done with more food!

Now for the long 24hr journey home.

The coach driver was really grumpy on the journey and wouldn't stop for people to go to the toilet at any services so Aiden blocked the toilet on the coach which was funny. We got to Calais really late and had to drop Lewis & Boris off as they weren't coming back to England with us. Boris was meeting his parents to go on holiday and Lewis was meeting his cousins to go long boarding in Switzerland.



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We ended up missing the ferry home but it was fine, we sat at the port for 2 hours and played ball games and had a jamming session. It was great fun to spend a few more hours off the coach before we all got home.



When we finally got on the ferry most people just found a bench and went to sleep.

Saturday 4th August

We got back to Newberry services and had to change coaches. It was hard getting all our stuff from the coach and making sure we hadn't left anything behind but it was really good to get away from the grumpy coach driver. We all had 2 seats each for the last part of our journey which was great.

Max spent most of the journey interviewing people about summer camp for the film. It was great to get home and get off the coach but it was also very sad to be going home as we've all had such a great week together in France.

Thanks to Esther for organising our camp.

Here's hoping that summer camp next year is as good.



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