

## District Explorer Unit

2004 has been a good year for Explorer Scouting in the Clitheroe District. The year has seen a large number of activities and achievements. At the core of the achievements has been the work by the Explorers themselves. The progression to gaining the Chief Scouts Platinum Awards and the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Awards this year has been excellent and the ESL's and myself are looking forward to being involved in the first ever presentation of these awards this year.

I would like to praise the achievement of individual Explorers this year. One member, Rachel Ruddock, has been announced as the "Voice of Scouting" and is undergoing training in dealing with the media in the build up for the World Jamboree in 2007. This is a unique opportunity and I'm sure will be both fun and educational. In 2003 the District sponsored training in kayaking and this is now paying dividends. Another member, Pete Williams, has now progressed up to "3 star level" in kayaking, taking a coaching test and canoe safety test on the way. A great achievement supported by scouting. New members Andrew Hodkinson and Richard Brooks of the unit have also shown some of the others "how it's done" by participating in County lead DoE training, completing their expedition practice and doing the expedition in less than 6 months. I could go on (most of the Explorers say I do) highlighting more individual achievements but I simply don't have the space here to do them all justice.

I've seen the unit growing in strength and enjoying a wide range of activities within a balanced programme this year. Mountain biking, hill walking, bivi-ing, orienteering, overnight wide games, band practice are just becoming "the things we do". Investitures on Pendle hill, around a campfire in Bowley and at the top of West View climbing wall have all added to the mixture. Indeed the structure provided by the programme zones has provided a varied range of activities on the Tuesday nights with lively debates on religion, war, drugs and marshmallows.

For the water weekend in June the unit camped at Great Tower and enjoyed the hospitality of Explorers from across West Lancashire. I wondered why they were unusually quiet on the Sunday of the weekend until I realised most of them had less sleep over the two days than I have in an afternoon nap, (Must be great to be young).

With some sadness I also noted some of our original Explorer Scouts moving on to other things. Thankfully most of these individuals are now involved with the Scout Network in some form (at University or at County level). I hope they enjoyed their time with the Explorers and I wish them all the best with their Scouting and individual futures.

I would also like to praise all the Leaders involved with the unit, Martin Peel again has been the quiet back-bone of the Unit making sure the unit works and Felicity Ruddock has done a fantastic job in developing the Young leaders. This achievement with the YL's should not be understated as they provide so much to Scouting as a whole and also for the individuals involved. I also want to welcome Paul Etheridge into the unit and I know his experience and enthusiasm are already making an impact.

2005 I hope will be the biggest and best year for Explorer Scouting in Clitheroe District.

If the take up for Eurojam by Explorer members is a reflection of this then we're already off to a god start.

Yours in Scouting

Paul Stevens