



Duke of Edinburgh's Award

Sixth Form Expeditions

Join the Duke of Edinburgh's Award! Why? Read this article by Billie Morrison, our in-coming Head Girl, who writes about two recent unforgettable Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award weekends.

'On the weekend of 13th – 15th March 2015, five brave Augustinian girls and their incredible teachers went on an adventure and travelled into the vast unknown (aka Wales) on the journey of a lifetime (our training weekend)! On this trip, we stopped to admire the beautiful wildlife and scenery at the side of the A40 as the bus was fixed after.... well, for the sake of those involved and their dignity we are not at liberty to say. However, we are allowed to disclose that a certain chemistry teacher, who wishes to remain anonymous, made the simple error of putting the wrong fuel into our vehicle. Five and a half hours, and a lot of singing later, we made it to the Gilwern Adventure Centre, Abergavenny. The following morning, having cooked breakfast on our Trangias (stoves) we were re-taught by our Assessor, Cath, how to read a map and take a bearing using a compass and other necessary skills for surviving in the wild, barren planes of southern Wales! We spent the first day readjusting to walking with our equipment and navigating a route and the second day followed a route planned out for us by Cath; cue much moaning and complaining as we walked the scenic valleys of Abergavenny and indulged in a few snowball fights! This practice weekend was a lot of fun, even losing to Mr Thomas at cards and, although we were happy to return home to a shower and a hot meal not cooked in a pot, we waved goodbye to Wales with a sense of foreboding as we knew we were soon to return...

On the second instalment of our Award, we returned to Gilwern on Monday 30th March for our Practice Expedition. This involved four days of hiking and three days of camping, including one night wild camp. We had planned our route beforehand and felt we were prepared for what lay ahead with enough food supplies that would definitely last us four months, let alone four days!! We set off on our walk as soon as we reached Wales and were delighted to find that Wales was welcoming us back with glorious, bright summer sunshine and... Oh wait, no – it was raining when we arrived and it started to hail two hours into our walk. It was good to be back!!

We had four difficult days of walking and we expressed our discomfort with torrents of complaints whenever we met the teachers. We had to contend with sporadic hail storms, maps flying away, lakes going missing, sleeping bags getting wet, multiple breakdowns, tent pegs being forgotten at camp and getting lost (oh, so many times)! But I don't think we would change a thing! OK, maybe a few things, but our group thoroughly enjoyed every moment of the trip! As Katarina Krneta said, "Despite being difficult, I am so glad I did it". Anna-Rose Poyntz said, "It brought our whole team closer together – we really looked after each other."

We want to say a great, big thank you to Mr Thomas and Ms Hayden who accompanied us and bore our moaning and groaning without comment! We are really looking forward to our Qualifying Expedition in July and encourage anyone who wants an adventure to sign up for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. As Katarina put it "You don't know who you really are until you are soaked, hungry and crying but surrounded by friends who are holding a map above your head to keep you dry!"