



LGS Headlines

7th October 2016





LGS Headlines

7th October 2016

From the Headteacher

Dear Parents

As the weather begins to develop an autumnal chill at night, it is hard to believe we have already been back at school for five weeks! As always, the start of the autumn term has been a very busy one for staff and students alike.



It has been a pleasure to welcome over 180 new students to the school this term, with our normal intake into Year 7 and a significant number of students joining our Sixth Form from elsewhere. All seem to be settling in well. However, the rhythm of recruitment continues throughout the first part of this term; we have held the 11+ examination and a very well-attended Open Evening for prospective parents. Our own students supported both events and were great ambassadors for our school. A number of families at Open Evening commented on how good their student guides were.

During the first half of this term we try and bring parents from most year groups in for briefings or consultations. These have been well-supported occasions in which we try and provide you as parents with appropriate guidance on what we do, and how you can best support your son or daughter. The presentations from these evenings are always posted on the website, where the dates of the remaining events this term can also be found.

Our student pages this edition are in a slightly different format, with two in-depth articles written by the participants in the summer term Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award expedition, and the Sixth Form expedition to Zambia. I hope you enjoy reading how these expeditions really took the students out of their comfort zone to give them some highly memorable - for some, lifechanging - experiences.

With best wishes

Mr J Constable - Headteacher

In the student pages of this issue.....

- **Open Evening**
- **Year 11 Mock Interviews**
- **Sixth Form Zambia Expedition**
 - Team Kabira report**
 - Team Mwandu report**
- **Gold DofE**

A small number of articles in this edition, but those on the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the Zambia Expeditions are written in some depth and make for interesting reading.

Mr M Aplin - News Manager

www.lgs.slough.sch.uk

As you know, the new school website has now 'gone live'. We will therefore no longer provide routine 'diary dates' in this newsletter as these are now easily accessible on the website. To find the calendar of events, just access the **Events** timeline from the homepage.



We hope you will find this much more useful than the old website format.

Langley Grammar School
Reddington Drive
Langley
Berkshire SL3 7QS
01753 598300
school@lgs.slough.sch.uk



Please visit our website at
www.lgs.slough.sch.uk



LGS Open Evening

On the 20th September, Langley Grammar School hosted its annual open evening for excited Year 5s and 6s and their families. Children from primary schools came to see what LGS has to offer. Students helped out in departments as well as guiding parents around the school on tours.

Parents and their children were able to explore every part of the school; from the marvellous music performances, to the exciting English rooms. Perhaps the biggest hit were the science rooms, full to the brim with interactive experiments and information.

Being a guide myself I can definitely say it developed our confidence in talking to people we may not know, and that was something we can all benefit from by taking part in open evening and this will undoubtedly help us in the future.

For all the students helping out, this experience was a great chance to meet new people and simply let people know how great this school is. Knowing that the family you were guiding could one day become a part of our cherished school community, showed us just how fascinating this school is to a perspective parent.

Overall it was an enjoyable experience for us to guide the parents around the school, as well as helping out in the separate departments. I would like to take this moment to thank Mr Adams for organising the evening as well as all other staff involved in the open evening. It was a wonderful experience for everyone.

Written by Jasmine Panesar, 10S

Year 11 Interview Day

To prepare ourselves for the world of work the Year 11s participated in practice interview sessions on Friday 23rd September. A workshop breaking down the essentials of a CV, covering letter and interview techniques helped prepare us for the big day. To mimic applying for a real job we chose and applied for the job of our choice from a list; before the summer holidays we submitted CVs and covering letters selling ourselves to potential employers.

To make the day more formal we were required to come into school in 'business wear'; on the day the Year 11 students looked smart and ready for success.

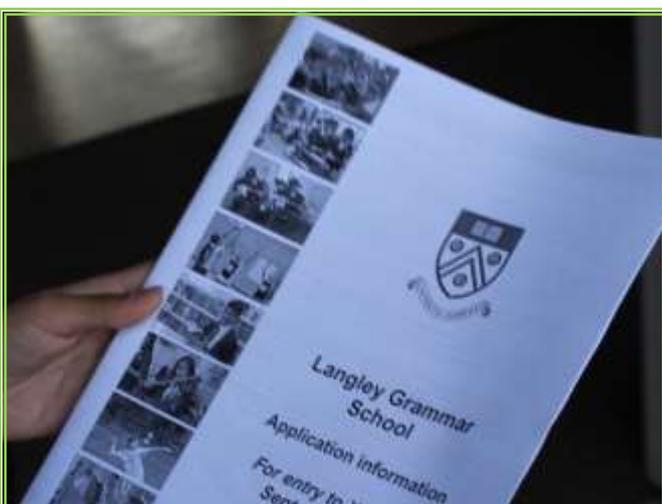


Despite the pressure of an intense 10-minute interrogation by professionals from companies such as Adobe and Fujitsu, most of us were generally pleased with how we coped. We were given feedback on our applications and composure during the interview, with helpful tips about how we could improve and edit our CVs ready for the 'real world'.



This day gave us a very helpful insight into the world of work. Although we were all nervous going in we came out feeling a lot better and more confident! We would like to thank all the companies who sent their employees to help with this day.

Written by Siddarth Shukla, 11H





Scouting in Slough

We were recently contacted by the Regional Development Officer for Berkshire Scouts. The Scout movement in Slough offers opportunities for boys and girls aged 14 or above to get involved in the Explorer Scout network and train as Young Leaders.



Do you love exploring new things?

Would you like to learn new skills to enhance your CV?

Have you ever considered how **Scouting** can help your future? Scouting in Slough is growing and we are doing more and more exciting things. We would like to give you the chance to join our adventures and become an **Explorer Scout** in one of our groups in Slough.

This means, that you can have a lot of fun doing activities like kayaking and abseiling and you can learn new skills and gain qualifications through our Young Leader Scheme.

Young Leaders are people age 14 – 18 who choose to devote a proportion of their time helping out with the younger sections of their local Scout Group.

This involves working with children aged 6-14. One week you may be rock climbing, the next doing a community service project. What we can guarantee is that no two weeks are the same.

The **Young Leaders' Scheme** helps you to develop and grow as an individual. It allows you to make a valuable contribution to your community and give service to others.



This is a fantastic opportunity for you to develop your skills and learn new ones which will help your future career be it management, teaching, youth work or public services. Putting Scouting experience on your CV can be a great way to stand out in the job market. We also offer the opportunity for you to work towards the **Duke of Edinburgh's Award**.

There are no specific skills or qualifications needed. Just enthusiasm, teamwork and a love of fun. We are open to girls and boys from all faiths, backgrounds and abilities and welcome everyone.

We can offer you a free DBS check, free training, masses of career skills, and a great chance to improve your CV. There's also lots of support from your fellow volunteers. Most importantly, it's great fun, incredibly rewarding and a chance to meet new people!

For more information please visit our website <http://sloughscouts.org.uk/who-we-are/explorers/>



Sixth Form Zambia Expedition Team Kariba

Written By Ben Randhawa-Hiscock, (6A) Mohinder Nagra (6F)

It all started a year before the flight, as we were given the task of raising £2000, and this alone was a very daunting prospect. However, through fundraising at sports days and open evenings, the team all managed to raise sufficient funds. The 13th July was a day we were all waiting for, and when it arrived we were all a mixed bag of emotions, fear, excitement and anxiety to name a few. We all arrived at the airport at six o'clock and it was time to depart, not just from the comfort of our own country, but our families who do almost everything for us, so surviving on our own was going to be a challenge, but one we were all ready to embrace. We separated into our two groups and through the havoc of customs, we finally boarded the plane.

We arrived in Zambia fatigued from our lengthy flight with half of the group's bags still stuck at Dubai Airport, having not been transferred to our new plane during our changeover. Despite this, there was a sense of excitement amongst the group as we arrived at our accommodation in Lusaka. Having had a day to acclimatise to the conditions, we embarked on a twelve-hour journey to Lake Kariba where we would begin our project work. As we arrived at our campsite, we were greeted by a horrific stench and the information that we were camping at a crocodile farm! After we had put up our tents and cooked our first dinner as a group, we headed off for the night in preparation for our first day of project work.

The first half of our project involved us assisting in the making of compost for the school's crops at Kariba Bush Club School for the day. As we arrived at the school, we were welcomed by almost two-hundred children who greeted us with pure excitement, despite it being a Sunday! Immediately, a game of football erupted in the school's playground with almost every boy in the village participating, resulting in the most chaotic game we had ever seen. Members of the group led songs and we even learnt the villages traditional dance. The extravaganza continued throughout the day as we all took it in turns to assist with the project work and interact with the children whilst the intense Zambian heat drained us of energy. The second half of our project involved us helping with the construction of a chicken coup at Chisyabulungu school over 3 days. Having the opportunity to teach the children Maths, English and Science was something most of the group would not have thought they would be able to do. By stepping into the unknown we hoped that we could make a difference to their lives as they had so profoundly impacted ours. Witnessing the sheer passion these children had for education truly put into perspective how we take our education for granted. Despite living in poverty, every child appreciated what they had and showed us incredible kindness and hospitality. We could not carry anything without a group of children eagerly insisting on helping us, despite being half our age! We departed from Lake Kariba to Livingstone saddened by the fact that it was unlikely we would see these inspiring children again.





Sixth Form Zambia Expedition Team Kariba

Written By Ben Randhawa-Hiscock, (6A) Mohinder Nagra (6F)

Our stay in the city of Livingstone was brief as we were to proceed to the trekking stage of the expedition soon after we arrived. Nonetheless, we used our day in the city to visit the majestic Victoria Falls, a jaw-dropping spectacle, and bargain with the local shopkeepers to pick up souvenirs for our friends and family.

Our trek involved us walking in the beautiful Batoka Gorge. Hiking along the unstable rocks and witnessing the kayakers tackle the intimidating rapids was an exhilarating experience, albeit one that left us utterly exhausted. After we had completed the trekking stage, we returned to the city of Livingstone where we had the opportunity to wind down and explore the wonders of the city.

Over the next few days we ate lunch with elephants, took a safari (with the best safari guide of all time) and experienced Italian cuisine with a Zambian twist. Our cruise down the Zambezi river came with the added surprise of being reunited with the other group! As we spotted Hippos and crocodiles lurking in the river, we were able to exchange insane stories with our friends and teachers, giving us an opportunity to reflect on the wild journey we had taken.

Sitting in the airport ready to depart, the group felt a whole range of emotions. We were exhausted by the hectic nature of the last two weeks, relieved that we would not be sleeping in a tent and, perhaps most of all, sad that we had to leave this amazing country. Our expedition had been a truly unique experience and the friendships we created, the lessons we learnt and the things we saw will stay with us for the rest of our lives.





Sixth Form Zambia Expedition Team Mwandi

Written By Meha Vora (6D) & Nikhita Dhanoa (6G)

Sleepless nights, overwhelming emotions and political posters are the three things that come to mind when we think of our expedition. Nonetheless, Zambia was far by the most rewarding and challenging experience any of us have ever been through. Never did we think we could go 17 days without the help of our parents and day to day necessities such as beds, WiFi and social media.

The journey started in Year 12 as we were briefed about the expedition and given the rather daunting task of raising just over £2,000; at first we were anxious as to whether we were going to raise this money and whether or not we were capable of carrying out this expedition almost completely independently, but after various fundraising and sponsored activities everyone within the group had finally reached their target.

Before we knew it, departure day (13th July 2016) was upon us and after saying our emotional goodbyes to our parents and a brief problem at security we all boarded the plane feeling a mixture of nervousness and excitement. For many of us this was the first time we were going to leave our parents for a prolonged period of time and the first time any of us had gone abroad without the comforts of our family. We were delayed at Heathrow for quite a long time which meant that when we arrived at Dubai Airport we had 10 minutes to go through security (meanwhile losing half the team), run to the gate (which was on the opposite side of the airport) and finally board the plane... We all arrived at the departure gate just on time but then realised that within all this havoc, one of our team members had left his passport on the previous plane, this meant that he could not board the plane so unfortunately we were forced to leave him behind in Dubai Airport with Mr. Aplin while the rest of us went on to Zambia.





Sixth Form Zambia Expedition Team Mwandi

Written By Meha Vora (6D) & Nikhita Dhanoa (6G)

The rest of our group arrived in Zambia 7 hours later and went through immigration to find that less than half of our bags had made it from Dubai! Looking back, this was a very serious problem as most of us had our malaria tablets and other essential kit in our lost luggage, however we were all so fatigued at this point that all of us found humour in the situation and decided to not let this get us down. We then arrived at our accommodation in Lusaka and the next day embarked on a 7-hour journey from Lusaka (the capital) down to Livingstone.

We settled into our new accommodation (which became our 'home' as we returned here a few times over the next 17 days). Here we had a team meeting and delegated team leaders for each day. Livingstone is the tourist capital of Zambia and this is where we partook in various recreational activities (such as having lunch with a family of elephants next to the Zambezi River, visiting Victoria falls twice, going on a fascinating safari and on a cruise which had the added surprise of being reunited with the other group!). These activities were some of the highlights of the trip as it gave us a break from the other physically demanding elements of the trip.

The lost two members of our team finally arrived on Day 4 along with our bags; this was a pleasant change from wearing the same clothes, not being able to brush our teeth or have a shower and lifted the spirits of the group hugely. This enabled us to finally move on with our packed itinerary and enter our trekking phase; this was the most demanding hike we had ever been on as it was at a steep decline down the Batoka Gorge to the Zambezi riverbed, a night by the Zambezi river sleeping under the stars against the most beautiful backdrop and then another day trekking back up the Batoka gorge and to a local village called Mukuni Village. This phase was a real turning point within our group as we started to work in unison and really listened to each other and from this point on, we became less 'faffy' and more determined to work to a timetable and rota. The second day of the trek was the most exhausting day out of the 17 days we were there as we trekked up an incline so steep that we had to use our arms and pull ourselves up the cliff edge, this was incredibly unnerving as there were many loose rocks and you could hear and see the Zambezi River rapids below us and we were all scared to even think what would happen if we slipped and fell. We did this on an empty stomach (a huge mistake!) while carrying an injured member of our team and once we got to the top we trekked in the direct scorching sun for about another 6 hours to Mukuni Village.

Visiting Mukuni Village was an amazing experience, it was a village which had not really been touched by Western influence and was authentically Zambian. The first thing we wanted to do was visit a Zambian school and this proved to be such an emotional experience because the children (aged 3-8) decided to perform a poem for us about AIDS and to hear them talk about it in so much depth made us all realise just how much of a prominent problem AIDS was in Zambia. This tied in with the community - based project we were due to carry out later in the expedition, this project was our main focus of the entire expedition.





Sixth Form Zambia Expedition Team Mwandi

Written By Meha Vora (6D) & Nikhita Dhanoa (6G)

We spent 7 days at our project site in the village of Mwandi, our project was to build a house for 13 AIDS orphans (aged between 6 months - 16-year-old) and their carer. The thought of creating a home for these orphans was something that deeply touched all of us and after meeting the orphans and their carer made us even more determined to finish this house for them. The project consisted of three phases - making the mud, throwing the mud onto the walls and distributing the mud (the most difficult and laborious task) however, what made this project all the more special was the fact that we were building the new home right next to the old one so we could see the children's faces changes everyday and could experience every emotion they felt in seeing their new home being built right in front of them.

We had a day off from making the house on Sunday and were invited by the rest of the village to attend church so we got up early in the morning, put on our nicest clothes and made our way down to the river where the Church was situated. This was the first service many of us had been to, it was amazing to see all the different gospel choirs sing hymns and how all the community came together to dance, sing and laugh.

We also had the amazing opportunity to visit the only preschool in Mwandi called "Aunt Beanor's preschool", the main aim of the day was to have fun interacting with the different children but to also donate the masses of gifts we had bought especially from England. The presents ranged from footballs to reading books and seeing the raw and genuine happiness on not only the children's faces but also on Aunt Beanor's face deeply resonated with all of us because in that moment it made everything that we had done worth it: the years' worth of fundraising, the travel and the chaos that came with it and the troubles and homesickness's we all had experienced because none of it even came close to what these people had to go through day in day out, this feeling was not one we can describe or put into words but it is one that we will all remember for the rest of our lives.

The last day of the project was the most emotional day as everything we had worked for had finally come to an end, we had to say goodbye to the orphans that we had grown quite attached to and the village that we had grown to love. There were a lot of tears and hugs as we gave out presents and finished the final stage of building the house - smoothing the mud walls - and then we were set to leave Mwandi to start our journey back home.



Personally the most challenging part of our whole expedition was having to live out of backpacks (or lack of in most of our cases) and trying to turn a tent into our temporary home. It was hard to get any sleep the first few nights because we weren't used to being in such a small and uncomfortable space with no heating or duvets. The temperature dropped from 30+ degrees during the day to about 6 degrees after sunset – we were in thick jumpers shivering in the middle of Africa!

Sitting as a group at Lusaka airport we reflected on our journey, the expedition and how we felt leaving Zambia and we all had mixed emotions. We were all excited as we got to see our families again, upset at the thought of leaving behind the people that we had grown to love so much and excited to see how our changed perspective on life and the world would affect our day to day lives back in England. The lessons we learnt, the bonds we formed and memories we shared will stay with us for the rest of our lives and we can honestly say that the only thing we wish we had done was stay in Zambia longer and help more people. Finally we would like to say a huge thank you to Mr Aplin and Mrs Sahota for all their help and support both before and during the expedition.



Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award Assessment expedition

After an eventful Gold DofE practice expedition back in year 12 we left for Wales one final time together as a Gold DofE group, ready to finish the exciting, but rather nerve racking 4-day trek ahead of us. Having learned and improved upon our mistakes from the practice expedition, we had packed better, lighter and were mentally prepared for the expedition, which I think, it's safe to say we were all looking forward to, being our last expedition together as a group.

Once our assessor John arrived, we embarked on our 5 hour journey to Snowdonia National Park. On the Sunday evening, we arrived at our first campsite, all prepared and geared up for the challenge; we set up our tents, and went for one last 'proper' meal, at a Local American diner. Fed and rested, our nerves were set at ease, as we went to sleep in our tents, ready to get up early and start our Gold DofE Expedition!

Group 1 – Amitoj, Selina, Lahiru, Haddon, Arundhati, Hamasa:

On the Monday morning, our group woke up early to start our expedition. One of the criteria for the expedition is camp craft skills, and leaving on time is a part of that and our timings got better as the expedition went on. The first day was challenging, as expected from our practice expedition; we didn't let the weather deter us from having a great time and having a positive group morale!

Thankfully, the weather was great and we had our lunch on top of a hill, having done a fair bit of climbing allowing us to take in the beautiful scenery while resting. Despite our fast speed, the other group overtook us - however we did not let this impact our positive team morale.

Much to our groups' excitement we stayed in a bothy on the first night. Here, we could relax in the small cozy building sheltered from the fast winds outside, and we didn't even have to put up our tents!



On the second day we woke up slightly earlier to ensure we arrived at the camp site earlier and outside was a magnificent cliff face which we couldn't appreciate, arriving quite late the night before. After packing away our sleeping bags we went to cook breakfast outside, to find the positioning of the bothy meant it was incredibly windy! We all had to ensure we stored all our items in our pockets with closed zips to make sure they didn't blow away. We left on time and made a start towards our destination. Before leaving we were warned by our expedition assessor of the difficult navigation we would encounter. Inevitably we got lost. However, due to our positive outlook and the map and compass skills learned from the practice expedition, we could get back on track.

The terrain on this day was particularly hard to walk through, we encountered many boggy fields and steep climbs which were both mentally and physically challenging. Our morale towards the end of the day was a bit low as we were 4 hours behind our estimated arrival time. However, we worked together and motivated each other to reach the campsite in one piece before sun down. After we reached the campsite, the other group, who had arrived a fair bit earlier, set up our tents for us, while we set out to cook before the sun went down. We had a well-deserved sleep, for another action packed day to come.

Day 3 was particularly challenging, but perhaps the most rewarding as well, as it was the day we climbed the Mount Moel Siaboid. Prior to departing we were all particularly nervous as the idea of climbing another mountain and going uphill with our heavy packs was rather daunting.



Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award Assessment expedition

The hot weather along with the steepness of the trek definitely made the climb a challenge. However, as a group we could motivate each other to climb the summit, leaving us in very high spirits. Upon reaching the top, we could look down and realise the feat we had just achieved in climbing the mountain and all the hard work felt worthwhile. After taking a few group pictures we set off on the incredibly steep descent down the mountain as we were wild camping next to a stunning lake – a perfect location for the end of a hard day! The descent was extremely arduous as most of us had multiple blisters on each foot by this time. Despite this, we pushed on and reached the campsite, which felt great as today was campfire night! After setting up our tents and cooking, we all sat together and reflected on what we had achieved together as a group. Some of us stayed up for campfire, while the rest of us went to sleep, being exhausted and ready for another early morning the next day – the last day!

On the 4th day we woke up to a spectacular view of the lake we had wild camped next to, and seeing the mountain we had climbed up and down, made us reflect upon what we had achieved so far, as a group. Having efficiently packed away our kit, motivated by the fact it was the last day, we made a start to the day, just as it started to rain. We couldn't evade the rain, after having 3 days of brilliant weather, the 4th day started off with heavy rain. However, as usual, our team didn't let this affect our morale. Even though the rain did unfortunately make the walking harder as the ground was a lot more slippery, the challenging weather didn't stop us though, as we persevered through the rain, determined to finish the trek. In fact our group was so determined to pass our expedition and go home that we arrived at our finishing check point an hour earlier than expected, somewhat making up for the previous late arrivals! The final few hundred metres we could almost hear the traffic and anticipate seeing the minibus anytime soon.



When the moment came, it was pure delight, we were ecstatic, not feeling the pain in our legs. Finally, sitting down in the minibus, the sense of achievement from passing our expedition section of our Gold award was overwhelming and each of us felt proud of what we had accomplished.

Overall, upon arrival back home, the experience of this expedition was undoubtedly rewarding and unforgettable and special to each one of us in our own way. We have built upon many skills, including: teamwork, navigation, resilience, confidence, and a positive mentality. We are greatly appreciative of the opportunity we have been given to develop ourselves and would recommend this award to anyone who is up for a challenge.

Group 2 – Daniel, John, Oliver, Pratyush, Simran, Avneet

Our experience was similar to the other group, as in we did the same walk, however each group had a different individual experiences of the expedition which were unique to each group. Having completed a practice expedition, we knew, the most difficult part of the expedition wasn't the pure physical challenge itself but rather the mental endurance required to keep moving and stay positive throughout the expedition.

We were the faster team, as it was established on the practice expedition, which meant, every morning we could leave the campsite an hour and half after the other group, allowing them enough time to get a head start to reach the campsite at similar times.



Our group had bonded really well over the practice expedition, hence we knew each other's strengths and weakness and played that to our advantage when having a strategy in play for each leg of the four days.



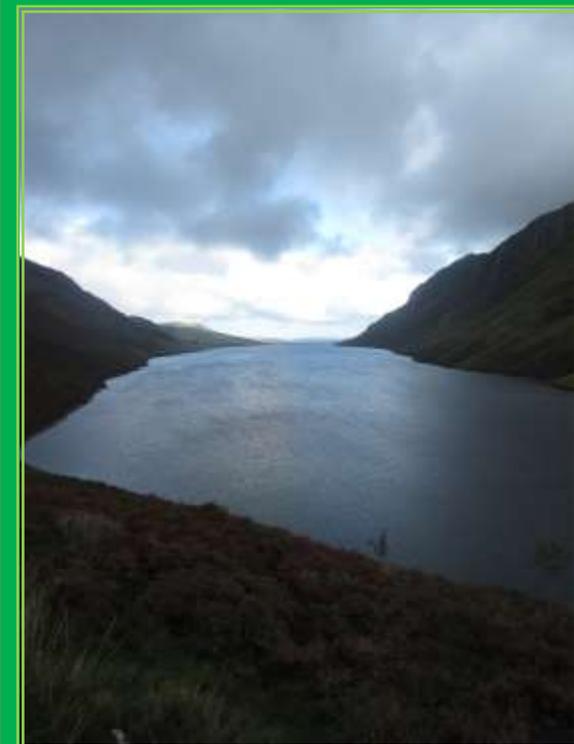
Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award Assessment expedition

Oliver's strength was uphill climbing, having a distance running background, stamina was not an issue for him, on each of the days, he kept us going and pushed us to our limits, and even beyond, kept us going when we thought we had nothing left. He was nicknamed mountain man, especially was his lack of trouble with a lot of the terrain we were struggling with, as he raced up the mountains and hills, loving the challenge. Seeing him further ahead made us believe that it is humanly possible to do it, so we did it!

Daniel's strength was navigating, being a relatively experienced climber having recently done some climbing in Italy in the summer holidays, he helped us make the correct navigation decisions in times of uncertainty and confusion. This really saved us valuable time, which meant we didn't take unnecessary diversions and didn't waste too much time. He really was our group leader and provided great support, often leading from the back, letting us take charge and experience navigating for ourselves. Of course navigation doesn't always go to plan, and when paths drawn on maps can't be seen in real-life, he helped to lead us back on track as we all did our bit to locate ourselves and navigate back on track.

John's strength was resilience, as he was a great person to look up to in moments of pain and doubt. Seeing John being able to do the walk and motivate others to do as well was great and gave us a, can-do feeling! He sometimes lead from the front, at other times stayed back to help the team members struggling on the particular leg of journeying and provide great moral support. His great music and singing throughout the expedition also made the experience that bit more memorable and fun.

Pratyush's strength was being able to see the bigger picture, he was able to motivate us when we felt down, unable to see the finish in sight, or sometimes wondering why we put ourselves through this! He was able to remind us constantly, what a great privilege and experience we are having, and the satisfaction we would feel at the end of it. He would be caring and look out for other team members, who needed help, lead from the front and stayed back as well and made sure we stayed together as a group.



Simran's strength was perseverance. She just did not stop walking. When Simran got going, it was great to see her persevering through all the struggles and keep on going at her steady pace. She knew and believed in the group idea that the faster we walk and the less breaks we take, the faster we get to the camp site. She provided great humor with her fun stories and it was great to see her go, even when she was tired, making you believe you can do it too! Her technique of small but quick steps was great. She stopped us from taking breaks too often and made sure we covered appropriate distance before taking the next break.

Avneet's strength was belief and hard work. She was able to move past the physical pain she was feeling and the injuries she had and was able to battle through to finally complete the expedition. When going downhill, she really hit her stride and lead from the front at times, having perfected the technique to downhill climbing. Seeing her motivated and able to put aside physical pain was inspiring and helped us complete each day.



Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award Assessment expedition

Some thoughts from our group members:

Oliver: One of the most rewarding experiences was reaching the summit of Moel Siabod; a great achievement added to by the great weather, which meant we had stunning views from the top. Having worked so hard to get the team to the peak, it was immensely satisfying to be able to see Mount Snowdon and the surrounding area whilst we enjoyed lunch, proving an opportunity of self-reflection and what we had achieved as a team together. It provided meaning too and offered a positive side of trekking through bogs with wet feet.

Pratyush: One of the most challenging, yet rewarding moments for me was coming down from the top of Moel Siabod; the last leg of downhill climbing to reach the campsite on the 3rd day was monstrously steep in my opinion, an opinion not shared to the same degree of extremity by the rest of my team! In hindsight, it wasn't as bad as I initially perceived it to be. Thanks to the help of my team members and the efforts of Ms Kenner to help me, I successfully (and safely...) reached the bottom of the mountain. The satisfaction of overcoming my fear of heights which I thought I couldn't conquer, and finally reaching the bottom, seeing the face of the mountain I just came down felt like a great feat to achieve personally.

Daniel: Navigating in the mountains and valleys of Snowdonia National Park is certainly a step up from what is required at Bronze level - we were required to be out for 8 hours each day, and we were tackling far more mountainous terrain. For the most part, the navigation was straightforward in terms of directions, but we still needed to pay attention as there were a few places where it was very easy to take a wrong turn or lose track due to poor visibility or a lack of path! Thankfully (and with a bit of luck) we were successful, leaving us with the main navigational struggle - the terrain underfoot. It was an interesting, exciting, and challenging experience, something we sure can't expect back home!

Most of us (not all!) found walking uphill one of the most challenging aspects of the expedition, partly due to the sheer amount of energy needed to walk up steep hills. To overcome this obstacle, we used the skills and techniques we learned from our practice expedition and further research. We took breaks when required to replenish energy banks for the next stage of climbing, and pushed on at a steady pace that all the members of the group were capable to walk at. We found that walking quickly with small steps was the best technique and made it a lot easier to climb the mountains as it reduced the amount of energy we lost and therefore allowed us to withhold that energy when needed. Reaching the top of the mountain felt great and putting in the effort was worthwhile, for a view you just can't get without that effort.

Overall the experience was an eye opening and memorable one, allowing us to push ourselves to the limits to which we thought we could be challenged to, strengthening our beliefs in our own strengths as well as a group and a team. Throughout the expedition during our DofE journey we learnt so many skills, which really is hard to experience in many other ways. The expedition was one of the hardest experiences we have yet encountered, but the satisfaction and pride you get from completing the expedition is unrivaled. It's not easy, but generally in life good things are not easy; if it was easy anyone would do it. If you are up for a challenge and ready to have an experience of a lifetime, be sure to do Gold DofE!

Finally, we would like to thank Ms Kenner for coming along with us supervising, providing some great moments and stories, to our assessor John, who was very understanding and nice as well as inspirational. Lastly but by no means the least, Mr Podbury, whose commitment to DofE in school has been amazing, with him spending so much time planning, and going out to locations to check and organise everything. Thanks to everyone present, for providing us with a great experience, that we will cherish and the feeling of which we hope to keep with us for a very long time.

Amitoj Heer, Selina Saini, Haddon Lionel Ganippa, Lahiru Tennakoon, Hamasa Hamed, Arundhati Verma, Oliver Way, Daniel George, John Carlton, Simran Bhandal, Avneet Poonia and Pratyush Jain