

The Duke of Edinburg Award Scheme and Me

Unlike many who live in the parish and have served in the armed forces and may have met or been inspired by the Duke of Edinburg my only experience has been through the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

I think my love of hiking and camping and walking and exploring comes from my experience of the Bronze and Silver expeditions undertaken in 1958/9 while at Secondary school on the Isle of Wight.

My Bronze expedition was just a 15mile hike and camp from Newport via Godshill to the southern point of the island at St Catherine's point. A farmer showed us where to camp and we were just finishing our campfire meal when the invigilator suddenly appeared, and nearly caught us smoking! What the farmer never told us, but I am sure he knew, was that the beam from the Lighthouse would sweep through our tent every few seconds all through the night.

Our silver expedition was more adventurous, a 30 mile hike with tent and cooking equipment and two nights camping. The route was Newport to Yarmouth on the west of the island, ferry to Lymington and visiting Beaulieu Abbey and Bucklers Hard on the Beaulieu River.

After school on a Friday we left Newport along a disused railway line, taking bearings of a TV mast to evidence our route. We arrived at Yarmouth, at 8.15 and set up camp in long grass in pouring rain. Everything was damp in the morning, but we breakfasted on 'sausage, bacon and bread' before crossing on the ferry to Lymington.

This 'crossing' is the subject of Tennyson's poem 'Crossing the Bar'. Tennyson lived on the Island at Farringford House which has a view of the water between Yarmouth and Lymington. I have heard that poem read several times at funerals of ex sailors.

From Lymington we walked to Beaulieu Abbey where we sketched the ruined cloisters as more evidence of our route. From there to Bucklers Hard on the River Beaulieu. This is where the Romans, under Vespasian, and after conquering the Isle of Wight, landed in AD43.

We camped near the beach on a very windy night and in the morning caught the 9.30 am ferry Back to Yarmouth and a bus home.

Great experiences at the time and memorable now.

Richard Mabey



This was us setting off from Carisbrook, Priory Boys school in the background.
Derek Morris, Graham Overton, John Butcher.