

horizons

professional development
for outdoor practitioners



Included in this issue of Horizons:

- Reviewing for Wellbeing
- How Useful is your Origami Sword?
- John Muir Award
- Sensing Balance
- Reflecting on Reflection
- Mountain Rescue Day for Young People
- Impact of Gratitude
- Oooooo Ahhhh Ort Report
- Character, Calmness and Carrying On
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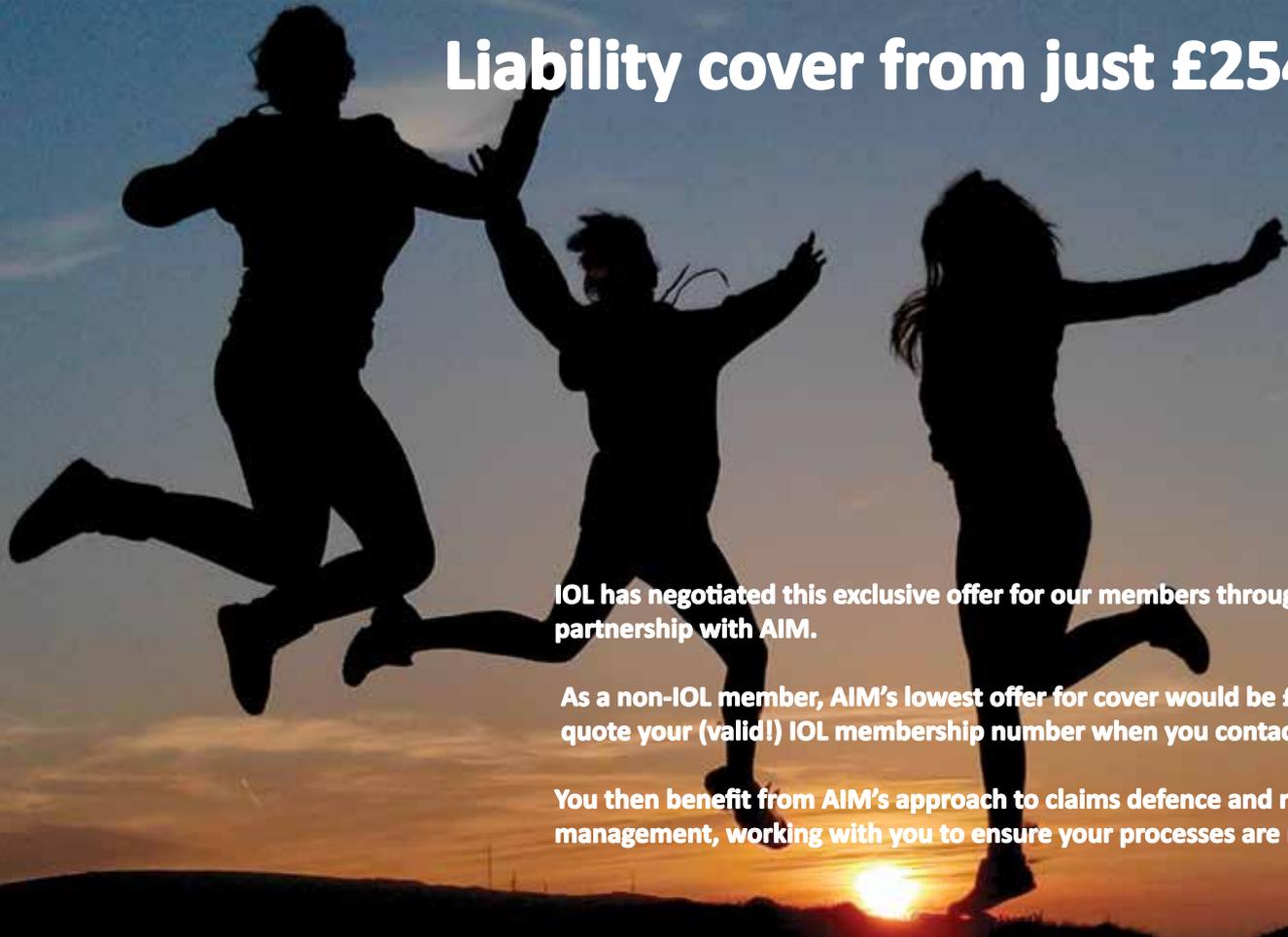
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The very successful 2014 IOL National Conference this autumn gave a good flavour of the future of the outdoor learning sector. It brought together a wide range of practitioners from across all areas of the outdoor field to look at some of the most topical issues for the future. The outdoor field continues to evolve as it expands to include a much wider diversity of interests than has been the traditional view of the outdoor sector. Outdoor education is growing up, in all sorts of ways, as people recognise the value of adventure and the outdoors for all ages and for a wide range of different outcomes.

The 'big new idea' in UK society at the moment is Wellbeing. Of course it is not a new idea – it's just the way the idea is being packaged and presented that is making it fashionable and bringing it into focus. It is not a new idea in outdoor learning either. I suspect it is so fundamental to our work that, like air, it's importance is so obvious we never mention it. We need to think about our work and its value to both individuals and society as a whole in much broader terms; and we need to be able to articulate this. In fact we need to shout it from the tree tops!

The economic value of happiness to a society first came to my attention with Marcus Bailie's Horizons article on Gross National Happiness in 2004.* The idea that being outdoors: getting some sunshine and fresh air, experiencing inspirational places, doing physical exercise, making the effort to overcome challenge or learning to take calculated risks... can be good for you and for society is hardly news to us. Nor would it have been news to previous generations. However, to western society that for the last 50 years has shunned risk, dirt, effort and discomfort and considered uncultivated land as having nothing value to offer – the concept is huge.

Health, Wealth and Happiness are often cited as the desirable outcomes from life choices. Being outdoors especially in wild spaces, helps us to be healthier and feel happier. The benefits of steady and regular exercise

are well known. Those who are familiar with wild places and outdoor experiences know it can help us think more deeply and talk to others more openly and sometimes we get to experience that sense of awe or feeling of 'being at one' with the universe. In terms of wealth, while outdoor experiences are unlikely to add to your bank balance; the knowledge, skills and understanding can help in later life, hence the popularity of D of E. Spending time in the outdoors, away from the media and hype, can create a more balanced perspective and a sense of valuing what we have. A couple of nights camping with no electricity, composting toilets and no shower can be a bit of an eye opener for any person who's whole life has had at least indoor plumbing if not full en-suite bathrooms.

So Wellbeing is not a new concept, but one that has been twisted by consumerism and hyped by the marketing of millions of products all designed to make us, supposedly, feel 'better'. It turns out that this kind of 'better' can result in an overweight, heavy-drinking sometimes lonely and depressed people who have multiple health related issues needing expensive care.

As the outdoor sector we need to think about what we are, and what we offer, in the light of this Wellbeing agenda. What do we need to change in our practice in order to assist others in their Wellbeing? There are several articles coming, appearing in this and the next few issues from practitioners who have started giving this some thought and are making changes to their practice as a result.

I hope you enjoy the range of practical and thought provoking articles in this issue and perhaps consider writing something yourself in 2015. ■

* To view the article go to IOL website-Publications-Horizons-PDF Archive Search

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How useful is your origami sword?

A simple approach to risk management documents

By David Crossland

As the barbarian hordes storm your last place of refuge how comfortable will you feel sheltering behind a paper barricade waving an origami sword? Not very I guess! And yet the instinct of so many of us is to shelter from the storm of repercussions that follow a serious accident behind a pile of risk management documents that often do not stand up to scrutiny. Many of the documents I have seen suffer from of internal inconsistency, lack of clarity, repetitiveness and prolixity – they're long, tedious and wordy! The axiom 'less is more' is very appropriate to documenting risk management systems – less paper, better evidence.

■ WHY KEEP PAPERWORK?

Good paper (or electronic) documents support what you do and allow you to defend your risk management from investigations and false claims. Poor paperwork wastes time and shoots you in the foot!

William Morris famously said “have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful” and this is a good thought to keep in mind when thinking about paperwork. There are only two reasons to create or keep a risk management document, either (a) it is useful as a management tool or (b) it is necessary to meet a legal requirement or to defend yourself in case of an accident.

■ WHAT GOES WRONG WITH PAPERWORK?

There are four common failings with documents:

- They aren't useful because they don't provide the information staff need in a straightforward and effective format.
- They fail the 'ronseal' test and don't describe what you actually do.
- They are internally contradictory and say different things in different places.
- They waste valuable time and require senior staff to spend more time filling in paper than they do on the real management of adventure activities. This is likely, in the long run, to lead to more accidents not fewer, while being less able to defend your actions!

The longer your documents, or the more you have, the more these failings arise. Sometimes these failings are linked to documents being out of date and no longer reflecting current practice. Often these failings creep up over time as different documents are edited and amended by different authors. How easy or difficult it is to keep your documents current and regularly reviewed is directly related to the simplicity or complexity of your documents. The bottom line is that if you hand poor paperwork to Environmental Health or HSE you pretty much hand them a reason to prosecute you. In the event of a spurious civil claim you make it harder for your insurers to fight the case on your behalf.

■ WHO IS PAPERWORK FOR?

While there are several potential audiences the two most important to consider when writing are: activity staff who need documents to provide them with information as simply as possible; and inspectors, insurers, solicitors and, in the worst case, juries who, following an accident will scrutinise what you have written. When writing a document it is salutary to imagine reading it in court! Few people enjoy reading long documents and this is true of juries. It is important that safety related documents are as short as possible, using simple language and short sentences – test your documents for readability (one measure is called SMOG – ‘simplified measure of gobbledygook’ – search for it on-line!). Customers are often cited as an important audience but, in my experience, they seldom read what they ask for – so you don't need to consider them when writing because whatever you produce will keep them happy as well!

■ A CONTINUUM OF PAPER

Documents and records sit on a continuum from minimalistic to overly bureaucratic, from a note in a diary (diaries are brilliant because the date is already written for you!) to a specific, detailed and longwinded form.

Decide where yours need to sit, depending on the size and complexity of your operation or organization.

From my experience many providers could simplify their paperwork with no loss of effectiveness. Maybe this is a function of smaller providers pinching systems from organisations larger than themselves; perhaps it is a fear that paperwork should look formal and important when, in reality it can be the back of a tatty envelope if it records what is needed.

■ PAPER FULL OF PITFALLS

Perhaps tabulated documents of rows and columns have always fascinated humans, or perhaps it is simply the ease with which a computer can add tables to a document at the click of a mouse. Whatever the reason forms requiring multiple ticks or crosses or signatures or dates may look smart and professional but they often let you down.

Any form requiring completion of multiple boxes is likely to have gaps where, because we are human, someone forgot, got bored, or just missed the box. The danger is that a form like this suddenly doesn't look professional when you need to show it to the inspector, or the solicitor. They may see it as evidence that you don't follow your procedures, or that an action was not done properly. You can argue until you are blue in the face that it was a clerical error but the paperwork damns you. How much better, in this case, is a simple handwritten diary note?

The more complex your records the more pitfalls there will be and the more time you need to devote to checking and reviewing.

■ WHAT PAPERWORK DO WE NEED?

In terms of management tools I can't tell you what you will find useful. Only you, and your colleagues, can decide what works in your context and is, therefore, useful. In terms of what is necessary the answer is easier.

Consider the questions that will be asked following an accident and what evidence will demonstrate that you acted appropriately.

The key questions are around:

1. Instructor competence
2. Operational procedures / risks benefit assessment
3. Equipment
4. Accidents and Emergencies

In other words can you evidence that you took appropriate steps to ensure that 'the right leaders were working with the right group, in

the right place, at the right time, doing the right activities, in the right way, with the right kit and that if it went wrong they knew what to do? Because if you did all this and still had an accident then chances are it was a genuine accident.

Taking these in turn:

1. Instructor Competence

This requires a suitable process for recruiting, selecting, inducting, training, assessing, deploying and monitoring staff.

Recruitment and selection

Minimal evidence is probably a CV or application form, references and DBS checks (where appropriate). You may need to keep other things for HR purposes.

Induction

Induction applies to all staff, no matter how skilled and experienced they may be. It is not the same as training. Induction needs to be appropriate to the role and where people will work. Looking at the continuum of paper your induction record might be a note in your diary. Or, if you prefer a more formal record to put in individual staff files, you can choose between the form full of ticks and signatures (and pitfalls) or one which simply bullet points what induction covered with a signature and date at the bottom. If you like belts and braces then it could have two signatures – one from the member of staff to say they received the induction and one from the manager to say they were given, and appeared to understand, the induction.

Training

There are two types of training:

- Ongoing / further training, which can simply be recorded in a diary or on an individual staff record if you prefer.
- In-house training to be a competent leader. At the minimal end you could simply refer to this in a statement of competence (see below). Alternatively you could take the NGB award model and produce a simple training syllabus; identify what experience, if any, you expect potential instructors to have; and then keep a note of when they were trained and by whom.

Assessment and deployment

It is essential that no instructor be deployed until you have evidence of their competence. Competence can be demonstrated in one of three ways: an appropriate qualification; experience; or in-house training and assessment. The last two need to be supported by a statement of competence from a suitably experienced and qualified technical expert.

So the simplest paperwork record is a copy of all relevant qualifications and statements of competence. There are excellent AALA notes (available on their website) giving more detail on what you need in terms of technical advisers and statements of competence – these are relevant to all activities not just those in scope of the Licensing regulations.

If you prefer the more detailed set of records for in house training and assessment then you can just add to your training syllabus some written assessment criteria and record when people were assessed and by whom.

Recording anything beyond this should only be done if it works for your organisation, and is therefore likely to be completed. It is more important to ensure the assessment is robust than create a paper mountain. If your records show that an inexperienced instructor was trained on Monday, assessed on Tuesday and leading sessions unsupervised on Wednesday then don't be surprised if the robustness of this process is questioned no matter how pretty the paperwork!

Monitoring

The most important thing about monitoring is that it is done and acted on. The recording of monitoring is secondary but also useful and necessary. Essential monitoring records need be no more than a note in the diary of who was seen doing what.

Useful monitoring records will provide developmental feedback to instructors and allow information to be shared and analysed across larger organizations.

If you note something of concern during your monitoring then clearly this needs to be addressed and you need to make a note when this has been done.

2. Operational Procedures

Some key parts of your operation need to be documented but many of these can be combined in one piece of paper.

- Risk assessment: Doing this is a legal requirement and if you employ more than five staff you must write it down. As adventure activities carry inherent risks it is much better to adopt risk-benefit assessment, where you clearly identify both benefits and risks and explain how you manage the balance.
- Operating procedures: what you actually do to manage and deliver activity (including such things as ratios, minimum level of competence, safety equipment, venues or geographical limits – where appropriate). This must be based on the outcome of your risk benefit assessment.
- Individual Client needs and medical conditions
- Informed consent: Be aware that the most reasonable and supportive client may change following an accident and utter the oft-repeated phrase “I didn't know that might happen”; at which point it can be reassuring to point them to the consent form and their signature!

How much paperwork do we need here? Again, taking each in turn:

Risk benefit assessment and operating procedures

Contrary to what HSE have written risk benefit assessment is not simple. The management of adventure activities involves a complex interplay of training, experience, judgement, culture and tacit knowledge. Good adventure activity management is a process of continually challenging; adjusting and refining accepted good practice and constantly seeking an appropriate balance of benefits and risks. Recording this process is about writing down (as simply as possible) what this complex process has led you to DO.

It is common to see risk assessments and operating procedures as separate documents but this is not necessary. Two documents increase the likelihood of internal inconsistency; it is so much easier and safer to have just one document serving many purposes.

The simplest format, for me, is to have a philosophical risk-benefit statement explaining your approach and how you manage activities in order to maximize benefits while keeping risks at an appropriate level (see fig 1 for an example). You then can create a single, simple document for each activity.

For me the great benefits of this system are:

- You have a single sheet of paper for each activity that serves as risk assessment record, operating procedure, induction checklist, monitoring checklist and an aide memoire for staff who haven't delivered that activity for some time.
- One document per activity makes it easy to review and update, easy to see inconsistencies and inaccuracies, and yet very effective at demonstrating your risk management system (see fig 2 and 3 for examples of simple formats).

c. You can focus different audiences on different aspects of your risk management decision-making. The statement of philosophy and benefits is essential to set the scene for inspectors, parents and the courts but not something your instructors need on a daily basis. Hopefully your instructors are steeped in your organisational culture and well aware of the benefits of outdoor learning. The clear and straightforward operating procedures are what they need to hand.

Client needs and informed consent

The two key issues here are:

- a. Instructors are aware of any client medical conditions or needs, and manage the activity accordingly.
- b. Client consent is fully *informed*. It is sensible for your booking form, website or whatever to carry an appropriate declaration or disclosure of risk (the BMC has one for climbing, for example).

A single form allows clients to declare any relevant information and record their consent.

3. Equipment

Following an accident any safety equipment involved will come under scrutiny. What follows relates to personal safety equipment not to the inspection of fixed activity structures.

The most important check on safety kit is that done by the instructor on the day. The law does not require that you keep records of checks on equipment, just that the equipment is suitable. If all your kit is in pristine condition and perfectly stored then what more evidence do you need? However, in the real world, it is good to be able to show that there are periodic formal checks, carried out by a competent person.

Such recorded checks serve two purposes (a) they provide evidence that you check your kit and (b) they validate the effectiveness (or otherwise) of your daily instructor checks. If, in your formal checks, you find a lot wrong with your kit then your daily checks are not working and need sharpening up.

The frequency of recorded checks depends on the nature and frequency of use, the type and complexity of the kit and the number of people who have access to it. A minimum of once a year would seem appropriate for a small provider but it may be done much more frequently in more complex provision.

You also need a system for isolating and removing defective equipment - but this does not require any paperwork. It is far simpler to have a physical system for isolating damaged kit (such as putting it in a bin, or on the boss' desk or taking the seat off a defective bike).

Fig.1 Example Statement of risk – benefit philosophy

Plas Dol-y-Moch has a long and successful history of providing outdoor and adventure education activities to young people. The benefits of these activities for participants are numerous and include:

- Increased levels of trust and opportunities to examine the concept of trust (us in them, them in us, them in themselves, them in each other)
- Involvement in activities leading to greater academic and vocational learning with improved achievement and attainment across a range of curricular subjects. Students are active participants not passive consumers and a wide range of learning styles can flourish.
- Enhanced opportunities for 'real world' 'learning in context' and the development of the social aspects of intelligence.
- Increased risk management skills through opportunities for involvement in practical risk-benefit assessments ('what do we want to do and what do we need to do to make it safe enough?'). Giving learners the tools and experience necessary to assess their own risks in a range of contexts.
- Opportunities to practically examine the components of challenge (ie. Chance of gain or benefit / risk of loss or harm / accurate goal setting and judgement / willingness and commitment / activity outside the comfort zone (physical and/or emotional))
- Greater sense of personal responsibility
- Enhanced emotional intelligence (including a greater awareness of their own needs and the needs of others)
- Possibilities for genuine team working including enhanced communication skills
- Improved environmental appreciation, knowledge, awareness and understanding. Including opportunities to interact with a wild environment.
- Improved awareness and knowledge of the importance and practices of sustainability in the modern world
- Physical skill acquisition and the development of a fit and healthy lifestyle.

These benefits inform the centre's risk management policy. The centre's aim is to achieve an appropriate level of challenge to maximise the learning for each participant. The aim is not to make the learning environment as safe as possible but as safe as it needs to be.

Clearly adventure activities involve an element of challenge and, therefore, risk of loss or harm. This could involve participants, visiting staff, centre staff or members of the public in proximity to the activity.

Using the following strategies the centre will balance the benefits and risks in such a way as to bring the residual level of risk to an appropriate and tolerable level for each group and individual:

- Employment / deployment of competent staff
- Induction and initial / ongoing training
- Agreed and regularly reviewed operating procedures and practices
- Peer and management monitoring of delivery
- Awareness of and involvement in regional and national developments in activity delivery and management.

All teaching staff at the centre are competent to lead their programmed activities.

Competent means they:

- Either hold an appropriate NGB award or have been judged competent by a technical adviser / head of centre.
- Have been inducted into the centre's procedures
- Have received additional training appropriate to their role, including first aid, minibus training, manual handling and management of the water environment, as appropriate.

Reproduced with kind permission of Alistair Cook and Plas Dol-y-Moch

Fig.2 Example Risk Assessment / operating procedure format

Activity: Quidditch

HAZARDS

- Falling from height
- Hit by bludger
- Environmental factors
- Defective broomsticks
- Fatigue
- Getting lost

CONTROL MEASURES

- ✓ All activity is supervised by an experienced quidditch player who holds the order of merlin 2nd class or higher.
- ✓ All brooms are subject to appropriate recorded PPE checks. Defective brooms are removed immediately and used for firewood.
- ✓ Beginners are removed to appropriate padded, low powered bludgers.
- ✓ Quidditch will not take place in winds above force 18 or within 30 minutes of a thunderstorm. Sunscreen is available and used.
- ✓ The team nurse will always be on site for re-growing any broken bones.
- ✓ With younger players consideration should be given to using time limited snitches.
- ✓ Flying areas to be strictly controlled. No players will fly over the forbidden forest.

NOTES

1. Participants may use their own brooms provided these are checked and approved by the instructor beforehand.
2. All equipment must be cleaned and returned after each match

Fig.3 Example risk assessment/operating procedure format

Activity: Walking in Middle earth

Instructor minimum Competence: Wizard, Ranger or above

Ratios 1 wizard or Ranger to 8 hobbits

| Hazard | Instructors must | Instructors should consider |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Slips trips and falls | Ensure those who need it are wearing appropriate footwear | Hobbits are small and have 6 toes so are very stable on rough ground |
| Getting lost | Carry map and compass | Seeking help from an elf when in doubt |
| Other users | Beware of balrogs | Avoiding the area of Moria altogether |
| Weather | Interpret the likely effect of recent and forecast weather | Ear defenders |
| Nazgul | Avoid nazgul in any form | Reading a less scary book |
| Outbreak of war | Try to unite all the good folk of middle earth | |

Notes

There are some specific dangers in the Shire that cannot be discerned from maps. In the area of Hobbiton there are several unmarked shafts caused by hobbit dwellings. Extreme care needed. Thought needed about walking this area in poor visibility, allowing students to be "at the front" and during times of snow cover.

Entry into Fanghorn forest needs very careful consideration and there must be a sound and justifiable reason for doing so.

Some people grade kit when they do the formal checks (perhaps this has value if you are a big provider where someone does the checks and someone else oversees or monitors these). However, I would caution against this unless it meets the usefulness test. Good evidence is simply a record that on a particular day that piece of kit was checked as suitable by a competent person, after that you rely on daily checks and your system for isolating damaged kit.

As with monitoring, the simplest record is a note in the diary saying when you checked all your kit.

If you want more than a diary note then you can use a form requiring a date and signature next to each item of kit, or you can use a form which lists the kit in a particular store and requires one signature and date to evidence when it was all checked. The latter has fewer pitfalls and takes less time.

Two other useful things to record in terms of kit:

- When an item was bought or put into service (could be the receipt)
- What your formal checks consist of (for example 'buoyancy aids are checked for wear and tear on fabric and webbing, correct operation of zips and buckles and they are felt for evidence of shrinkage or degradation in the foam flotation').

4. Accidents and Emergencies

You need practiced and tested procedures dealing with an emergency. These are best written in the form of action cards or 'aide memoires'. They should never be written for a particular person but for a role. They need to allow for the key person being unavailable and their role being done by someone else. There are examples of this format in the 'emergency action cards' on the National Guidance website <http://oeapng.info/downloads/good-practice/>

You also need a form for recording accidents (and preferably incidents and near accidents, because the analysis of these is a great tool in managing activities safely). You can buy accident forms but you don't need to and these are not the best. Purchased forms may record the minimum information you need but they rarely collect all the information that you might want in order to learn lessons from the accident.

Document Retention

Be aware that civil claims for negligence can be made up to three years after the date of the accident or, for children, up to three years after they reach their 18th birthday. This means that retaining some key documents is important, but if you try to retain everything you will drown in records. Large organisations will probably have a document retention policy covering this issue but where this is not the case I would recommend the following:

- a. A statement to the effect that you record all accidents and incidents (and then make sure you do this).
- b. This allows you to argue that you have a clear policy and evidence that you follow it (i.e. all your incident records). When faced with a historical claim, for which you have no records, you are then able to make a good case that if something happened then the client had not made you aware of it at the time. If an accident had been reported to you or your staff you would have had records.
- c. When you do have an accident record then keep it, and keep with it the other key evidence around consent, medical information, staff competence, programme of activity, diaries etc. Plus, if it is serious, witness statements. Keep these archived until the deadline for claims has passed.
- d. For me this is enough but if you prefer something more robust then a short course report (diary entry for the small provider) which indicates, for example, 'no reported accidents' or '2 minor accidents, see records' might be useful. The obvious weakness here is that you have to remember to complete these reports every time - so they may be more use to larger and more complex organisations.

Clearly documents, whether physical or electronic, need to be stored securely.

EXAMPLES

1. One of the most useful documents for some providers is a daily log sheet (like a sailors log book) – these can be easily formatted to suit your operation and can be used to record and monitor a whole range of useful information.
2. Think about what you keep and how. One provider kept a signing in book for when groups returned at the end of the day. What it really evidenced was that the provider did not follow their own procedures because, according to the book, some groups were still off-site from several weeks ago. Human nature meant that everyone forgot to sign in from time to time! Changing to a whiteboard to record this information met the provider's needs without keeping the damning evidence of non-compliance with procedure!

CONCLUSION

There are two types of risk in adventure activities:

- a. Primary risk - the possibility that participants and staff will be harmed
- b. Secondary risk – the possibility that the provider will be prosecuted, sued, go out of business following a serious accident

Managing primary risk requires competent staff to do the right thing. Paperwork is useful only in so far as it helps them to do this.

Managing secondary risk requires that you did the right thing in the first place AND THAT YOU CAN DEMONSTRATE THIS. It is much easier to take what you have written into court than what you actually did. So, to manage this secondary but very real and important risk good paperwork is essential.

Secondary risk is important, not just for the individual organisation but for adventure activity providers as a whole and even for the whole of society. Heavily publicised accidents, where providers are found to be negligent, affect all of us, put us all under more scrutiny and can lead to an increase in risk aversion. Bear this in mind next time you review that dusty safety management file you have somewhere on a shelf and ask yourself the two key questions: how useful is this? Do we need it?

Early drafts of this article were greatly improved by feedback from Marcus Bailie and Julian Penney, for which I am very grateful. However, they have no responsibility either for the opinions expressed or for any remaining errors. ■

Author's Notes

David Crossland has worked in outdoor adventure learning as a teacher, lecturer, head of centre, AALS inspector and LA adviser. He has experienced the legal process from both the defence and prosecution sides, which has given him a painful awareness of the importance of evidence. He is now retired from full time work but maintains an interest and involvement through small amounts of inspection, guidance and consultancy work. He can be contacted at davidariege@gmail.com



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The Walker's Guide to Outdoor Clues and Signs : Their Meaning and the Art of Making Predictions and Deductions

By Tristan Gooley

REVIEWER - Jane Yates

'The ultimate guide to what the land, sun, moon, stars, trees, plants, animals, sky and clouds can reveal – when you know what to look for.'

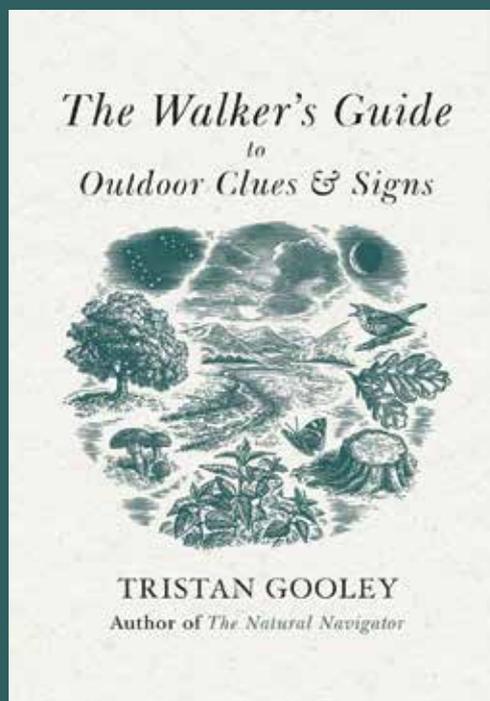
As someone who tends to plan their walks by pouring over maps, the suggestion to leave my trusty map behind when I next went for a walk, seemed a little disconcerting at first. However, this isn't to say that Tristan Gooley, in his latest book, is suggesting that we abandon maps altogether. Moreover, he proposes that when we venture into the outdoors, we should focus more on looking for clues and signs.

On first glance, the contents page resembles a typical 'nature walking handbook', where you might dip into a chapter about stars or trees, or whatever was relevant to you at the time. However, most chapters have an intriguing sub-heading, such as: "Why should we tread carefully when we see hotdogs?" or "Which butterflies will tell me how far it is to the pub?" The book is also interspersed with stories of Tristan's walks in places further afield. Of particular fascination are the specific chapters about his journeys to Borneo, to seek out the Dayak tribes people. These bring a holistic view to the book, and humbly remind us how much we have to learn from indigenous peoples around the world. I soon found myself reading the book as I would a novel, from cover to cover.

It is obvious that Tristan Gooley has built up an enormous wealth of knowledge about the outdoor environment, but his approach is so much more than imparting knowledge. The premise, is to give the reader the skills and motivation to make their own journey, in the art of making predictions and deductions in the outdoors. In a world where information is at the touch of a keyboard or screen, it is refreshing to read a book that ensues you to build your 'own' information about the outdoors. There's an almost child-like feeling of discovery learning, which is infectious. It's a rare book.

On finishing the book, I had an overwhelming feeling of not knowing where to start – but a helpful 'invisible toolkit' with instructions and references back to the relevant chapter didn't fail to set me off. On my well-trodden local walks, I enthusiastically spotted signs and clues that I had never observed previously.

This book is a must for anyone who likes walking in the outdoors, whether in rural or urban environments, places near and far. It is a book for people who take anyone, young or old, into the outdoors, whether as an outdoor practitioner, parent, family or friend. ■



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About the reviewer:

Jane has 20 years of practical experience of P4C with primary school children. She is a registered SAPERE trainer and has led P4C training for over 1000 primary and secondary teachers from over 150 schools across the UK and also overseas. Originally, Jane gained a BEd. (Hons) in Outdoor Education at Charlotte Mason College in Cumbria and a MSc (Environmental and Development Education) at South Bank University. Jane lives in the Eden Valley in Cumbria and is married to fellow adventurer and mountaineer Simon Yates. www.janeyates.net



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“ Informative. Inspiring Enjoyable



“ Inspiring, challenging, educational



'Wellbeing is not an absence of illness'



“ Great meeting people



Don't forget the opportunities that outdoor learning provides for retired folk to engage with young people.



Target the 'lost generation' of 20+ year olds who were not encouraged to play and learn outdoors.



Health & Wellbeing in Outdoor Learning - what are others? In what ways can I have more impact? Are there routes to funding?

Successful conference recipe:

- 205 delegates
- 30 trade stands
- 35 workshops
- 3 keynote speakers
- 1 legendary survival expert
- 12 discussion forums
- 2 capsizes!
- Plenty of time and space to network....

Films of the keynotes speakers and presenters notes are available on the Conference web page www.outdoor-learning.org

Special Interest Group

Natural Way to Learn

Lofty Wiseman for a very entertaining and insightful view into the world of survival training

Encourage the creative story telling in my delegates as it will expand my own understanding of their world.

Develop capacity to manage the mental as well as physical aspects of First Aid!

Bushcraft has more to offer - self confidence, insights into self and others, sustainable relationships with nature...

“ Energy, vibrant, engaging

What other communities of practice that focus on wellbeing is my practice overlapping with?

A Mountain Rescue day for young people

by Nick Winder

Over several years now we have developed a Mountain Rescue Team Challenge day, the structure of which is applicable in many environments, which may be of interest to other practitioners. It is run with year 9 up to 6th form (ie 14– 18 year olds), but could be modified to suit younger participants. It provides a good medium for testing teamwork and resourcefulness, and provides excellent opportunity for thorough and valuable feedback and reviewing.

After an initial briefing about the day, each team of youngsters, usually 10-12 in number (who have usually been working together for a while), decide who of their number will attend an hour long training workshop in either Mountain Rescue Skills, First Aid or Navigation. All must attend a workshop and it is recommended that more than one person attends each workshop. The

workshops teach them skills to share with their teams, and to allow them to succeed with the challenge.

WORKSHOP DETAILS

Mountain Rescue Skills – Tips on searching safely in pairs from the Point Last Seen, organising a short search, moving a casualty safely over rough ground, using a group shelter (KISU), building an improvised stretcher with the basic equipment available to them, carrying the stretcher safely, choosing a suitable helicopter landing area and signalling to a helicopter where to land. This workshop can be delivered by someone with knowledge up to Summer ML standard.

First Aid – Basic Danger ABCDE protocols. Putting unconscious casualties into a maintained airway position, identifying and treating fractures and wounds, caring for a casualty. This workshop is ideal for someone who is an experienced first aider with a lot of training under their belt.





Navigation – Grid references, map features, contours, pacing, timing, compass work, hand railing and general map skills. Again this workshop is ideal for someone with Summer ML level knowledge.

Each team is given basic kit to carry in addition to their own personal kit;

Personal kit = Lunch, drink, sufficient clothing for the day, walking boots, waterproof tops and trousers, all in a rucksack.

Group kit = Large (60L) rucksack, group shelter, 25m 8-9mm rope, tough orange survival bag, basic first aid kit, a map for each navigator, a compass, a karrimat and spare warm clothing.

One casualty per team is prepositioned in a location near their reported point last seen. Exactly how close is modified by personal choice and the conditions of the day i.e. poor weather means the casualty is easy to find in a sheltered spot. Each casualty will have some leg injury that requires treatment that prevents walking and some other injury, to keep more than one First Aider busy.

Each team is given written instruction saying

‘A casualty was last seen hill walking/ bird watching/ studying plants etc. at Grid Reference XXXXXX. Your task is to find them, treat any injuries and evacuate them to a suitable place for a helicopter to land/ambulance to drive and pick them up. Your task ends when you signal correctly for a helicopter/ deliver them to the ambulance rendezvous.’

All are made aware of a cut off time at which all must return to base, whether

successful or not. They must also stop for a full 20 minutes for a lunch break. The distance they have to walk is usually 2-3 km, depending on the terrain used and conditions on the day. Each team is shadowed by an experienced person with first aid kit and other emergency equipment and a mobile phone/radio. They will usually only intervene if time runs out, the group are attempting something unsafe or there is a real accident. They use judgement whether to help if the navigation is totally wrong after a reasonable period of time for the team to spot the error and self-correct. Each team plans a route, follows it and deals with their casualty. However not all succeed due to, most usually, poor navigation or simply slow progress. The majority succeed.

We have run this exercise on local foothills of the Brecon Beacons, in forests, and in lowland areas. We have operated from the centre itself, or a car park for the minibuses or a mixture of both.

Basic timeline of events for the exercise is:

| | |
|------------|---------------------|
| 0930 | Initial briefing |
| 1000 -1100 | Workshops |
| 1100 | Casualties deployed |
| 1130 | Groups depart |
| 1500 | Cut off time |
| 1630 | Full debrief |

If you try this event, or a version of it, please note it does require slightly more staff than two per group, due to the casualties, who are often the teachers, needing guidance to their locations. However it requires little equipment beyond that which an outdoor centre will already have, and as already stated it provides a great medium for quality reviewing and feedback by the ‘casualties’ and their peers. ■



Author Biog

Nick Winder
B.Ed. (Hons)
APIOL – Head of Tirabad Residential Educational Trust.
Worked in the outdoors for 25 years (where did they go?), for commercial centres and LEA establishments. Through it all I have worked to take youngsters into the wilds and build their awareness and self-confidence. I am also on the exec. of the Bushcraft SIG and have been in Brecon Mountain Rescue Team for 17 years.

Reviewing for Wellbeing

by Roger Greenaway

This article focuses on one of many ways in which being outdoors can support and enhance mental wellbeing. It shows how reviewing outdoor experiences can increase the chances that every participant in outdoor education will make significant gains in their mental wellbeing.

Reviewing is learning from experience. People who have trouble learning from experience are at risk of remaining stuck while their peers and the world move on. Not only do such people get left behind, they also find it increasingly difficult to cope with changes, problems and opportunities. A person's mental wellbeing is at risk if they find it difficult to learn their way out of trouble and through life.

You can find many clues about the kinds of reviewing that support wellbeing by taking a look at how wellbeing is defined. For example, here is a definition from Curriculum for Excellence, Scotland¹:

- *Mental wellbeing refers to the health of the mind, the way we think, perceive, reflect on and make sense of the world.*

In the accompanying guidance notes these four indicators of wellbeing appear most frequently:

- *receives regular praise and encouragement*
- *has a well-developed sense of identity and belonging*
- *has a well-developed sense of self esteem and self respect*
- *is confident and competent when faced by problems and new challenges in everyday life.*

It is clear from other indicators that there is a strong social dimension:

- *feels accepted and valued by their peers*
- *feels listened to and taken seriously...*
- *talks to others about his or her feelings in age-appropriate ways*
- *cares about and respects others.*

Several indicators emphasise the links between wellbeing and learning:

- *expresses a sense of achievement from their activities*
- *expresses a sense of achievement from what they are learning*
- *is learning new skills and applying them to meet new challenges*
- *is given the opportunity to develop skills for learning, life and work*

A healthy orientation towards the future is also part of mental wellbeing:

- *is generally optimistic and realistic about what he or she can achieve*
- *develops decision-making skills that will help them make good choices for the future.*

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Unless conditions are extremely unfavourable it is usually better to review outdoors, or at least start the reviewing process outdoors. Being outdoors signals a different approach to learning: learning from experience. Outdoors can provide inspirational places for reflection and an abundance of visual aids to assist communication. Outdoors there is usually plenty of space to switch between solo, paired, small group and large group learning processes. Outdoors you can capture opportunities for learning as they happen and while the experience is fresh. And outdoor journeys can provide good opportunities for review and reflection while on the move.

Of course, you can review for wellbeing indoors too, but you are off to a head start if the place you choose for reviewing has positive associations with wellbeing rather than neutral or negative associations.

An Observation Walk exploits many of these opportunities. It is a group journey of about 20 minutes that encourages noticing, sensing and sharing – in pairs and in the whole group. In this exercise you direct participants' attention towards self (sensing), others (noticing) and the environment (noticing or wondering). This is a simple tuning in process that creates a sense of belonging both to the group and to the place. [Ed. Most *phrases in italics* refer back to the opening bullet points about wellbeing.]

FROM NOTICING TO APPRECIATING

If what we pay attention to becomes our reality (a principle at the heart of Appreciative Inquiry) then we can enhance mental wellbeing by directing people's attention towards their achievements. In **Simultaneous Survey** you can ask each individual to collect positive feedback on behalf of one other person. The surveys can be carried out during a walk or in a large space. The question asked might be: "What is good about having this person in your team?" *Feeling accepted and valued by their peers* will almost certainly change self-perception for the better. Friendly feedback has most impact and value when it highlights what a person does or says to deserve that feedback. This form of Simultaneous Survey activates students' motivation to *care for*

each other. Everyone receives *praise* and *recognition* from their peers. Many factors supporting mental wellbeing are at the heart of this short and intensive exercise. Notebooks are useful but they are not essential if you limit people to passing on no more than five positive comments.

Feedback using Simultaneous Survey is usually one-to-one, but with **Spokes** the feedback process happens in a facilitated group setting. You first ask everyone to show how they rate their own performance (by how much they move towards the centre of the group circle). If anyone seems overmodest, the group and the facilitator can bring that person's attention to things they deserve more credit for – by inviting them to move further in while providing evidence to support their invitation. *The process tends to draw attention to those who are most in need of positive feedback*. In most groups there is a strong urge to bring in those who remain on the outside – because participants like helping those who appear to need most help. Young people like *caring for others!*

The questions for **Spokes** should be about performance and behaviour (rather than internal feelings) so that others can refer to real evidence on which to make their invitations. Examples of suitable questions are:

- How much did you give praise or encouragement to others?
- How much did you do to help solve the problem?
- How much did you attempt to overcome the challenge?
- How much did you respond in a respectful way to other people's ideas?
- How much did you demonstrate a caring attitude towards others?
- How much did you develop or apply new skills during the activity?
- How much did you contribute to decision-making?

These examples are in italics because they are closely based on the indicators of wellbeing listed at the start of this article. But the two-part **Spokes** process (self-assessment followed by invitations) will have a positive impact on wellbeing whatever desirable aspect of performance you ask about.



FROM SNIPPETS TO STORIES

One feature of the above methods is that they produce brief snippets of information. Rather than giving sustained attention to any one person, there is a tendency for the above methods to briefly highlight one point and then move on – either to keep the process moving or to ensure that everyone gets a go. At some time it pays to slow down and use methods that give more sustained attention to the individual and their emerging story. Rather than seeking isolated snippets, the following methods give more sustained attention to the stories and the storytellers.

If you ask an open question such as “How was it?” people will often give an unbalanced response that either selects all the best bits or all the worst bits. **Storyline** brings out relative ups and downs in a story and helps to make the story a balanced one. The questions “What helped/enabled you to achieve this high point?” and “What helped/enabled you to recover from this low point?” are designed to *pay attention to the factors that worked well*, especially if they relate to *how the storyteller influenced what worked well*. Each story becomes a story of what worked well.

Storyline also helps to develop emotional wellbeing because it helps the storyteller to *recognise and express their feelings*, it helps listeners to appreciate that others may have different feelings in the same situation, and it helps everyone to *understand how feelings affect behaviour*. My favourite place for Storyline is on a grassy slope using a rope of about five metres. The storyteller arranges their rope graph and then walks along it as they tell their story. The slope helps to emphasise the ups and downs. You can ask the questions at the turning points while the rest of the group listen. Storyline helps the storyteller *“talk to others about his or her feelings in age-appropriate ways”* and in doing so it is likely that many other aspects of mental wellbeing are enhanced.

FROM PAST TO FUTURE

Part of mental wellbeing is having a healthy orientation towards the future, and story-based methods can help here too. One of my favourite methods involves the student constructing a story that takes a person closer to their goal. The story is based on real assets and achievements and builds up progressively – one step at a time. I have named this process **Back to the Future** because the person walks backwards towards their goal while talking about what they can see in their past and present. A sequence of questions guide the story-building process. Every question takes the form: “What [something] do you already have that will help you on this journey towards your goal?” The “something” can be things such as: knowledge, experience, strengths, skills, values, motivations, resources, support, relationships etc. The goal must matter to the individual. It can be about giving up a bad habit or staying out of trouble. Or it can be about learning something new, keeping to a healthy diet, or making a wish come true.

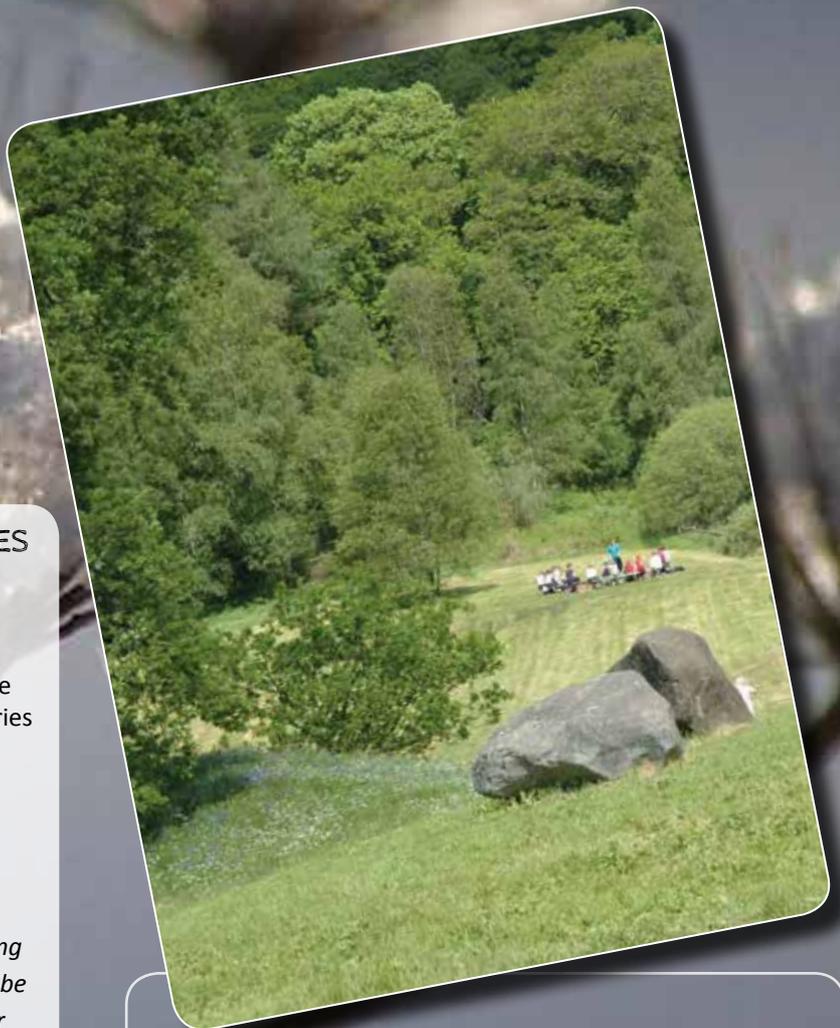
How does **Back to the Future** fit with outdoor education? Easy! Much outdoor education brings out what people can do and opens their eyes to new worlds and possibilities. The combination of outdoor education and Back to the Future can readily help students to be *“optimistic and realistic about what he or she can achieve”*. The questions “What [something] do you already have ...?” can be directed towards recent learning in the outdoors such as problem-solving skills, insights, discoveries or achieving what seemed “impossible”. Outdoor education enables the *learning of new skills* and Back to the Future helps students see how they *can apply their new skills to meet new challenges*.

FROM PERSONAL STORIES TO SHARED STORIES

The opening list shows that mental wellbeing has a strong social dimension. Stories about self that are shared and developed in a supportive peer group, or with supportive family, carers or teachers are more credible and sustainable than stories about self that are developed in isolation. Stories and outdoor learning go hand in hand. Through smart and sensitive reviewing we can assist students' story-making processes in ways that deliberately support their mental wellbeing and personal growth. In "Everyone's an author" I wrote:

"The making and telling of stories is often seen as something that other people do. In this way of thinking, stories might be for 'reading', 'hearing' or 'watching', but as for 'creating' or 'telling' stories, these are things that other 'more talented' people do. Such an attitude leads to people getting used to being bit players in other people's stories, and they become the victims of a reality that others impose. Personal growth remains at a low ebb until people are able to appreciate that alternative versions of reality are possible, and that they themselves can create credible stories and can be the co-authors of reality. This exchanging and adjusting of perspectives is central to a healthy and developmental reviewing process. Only through taking part in the authoring (or co-authoring) of stories about experience does learning become authentic."

And where better to develop and share such stories than in the authentic outdoors! ■



References

1. Curriculum for Excellence indicators:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright/background/wellbeing>

2. Everyone's an author:
<http://reviewing.co.uk/stories/intro.htm>

For more detailed descriptions of methods described above, please write to roger@reviewing.co.uk

About the Author

Roger Greenaway is the author of several articles [<http://reviewing.co.uk/articles>] and books including 'Reviewing Adventures'. He has been a school teacher, a tutor at Brathay, a training adviser with Save the Children and since 1991 he has been training people in reviewing skills and methods around the world. This article is based on Roger's workshop at the IOL national conference on "Health and Wellbeing in the Outdoors". Photograph - background by Fiona Exon. This page insert photo from the author.



About the John Muir Award

By Ruth Flynn

Over two thirds of children today cannot recognise wildlife such as a robin or blackbird and almost that number have never built a den. Shocking statistics. As professionals in the field of outdoor learning we all believe in the benefits of being outdoors, so what can we do to change these statistics for both the current and future generations?

The statistics mentioned come from a 2012 Npower survey conducted on children aged 5 to 13 years. These are the top results:

Top ten things children aged 5 to 13 **can** do:

1. Work a DVD player 67%
2. Log onto the internet 58%
3. Play computer games on games console (Wii, Xbox or similar) 50%
4. Make a phone call 46%
5. Use a handheld games console (Nintendo DSi, PSP or similar) 45%
6. Use an iPhone (or smartphone) 42%
7. Work Sky Plus 41%
8. Send a text message 38%
9. Search for clips on YouTube 37%
10. Use an iPad (or tablet computer) 31%

Top ten things children aged 5 to 13 **can't** do:

1. Recognise three types of butterfly 91%
2. Repair a puncture 87%
3. Tie a reef knot 83%
4. Read a map 81%
5. Build a camp fire 78% / Put up a tent 78.5%
6. Spot a blackbird, sparrow or robin 71%
7. Make papier mâché 72%
8. Make a cup of tea 65%
9. Build a den 63%
10. Climb a tree 59%

There are many activities, schemes and awards which do help to address some of the issues raised here. I spoke to Janet Raby, a teacher and Forest school practitioner at Totnes St John's C of E Primary School, Totnes about one scheme she had used to try and redress the balance a little.

The school chose to incorporate the John Muir Award into school life. She says *"I found out about the John Muir Award from Heatree Activity Centre where the younger children go for their residential. I decided to investigate what the Award could offer the students"*

This is an educational initiative from the John Muir Trust, which helps to build a lifelong interest in and therefore love of nature in all its complexity.

(John Muir was born in the 19th century in Dunbar, Scotland. He developed a deep love for the natural world as a child and emigrated to America with his family aged 11. He subsequently became known as the "founding father" of the world conservation movement and helped set up the first National Park.)

The John Muir Award is an environmental award, focusing on wild places. It encourages participants to enjoy the outdoors, find and explore wild places and do something to help conserve them. It's about fun



and adventure, it isn't competitive and every person that completes the award is sent a certificate. In 2013 over 25,000 people completed a John Muir award.

In order to complete the Award each participant must complete four challenges, to discover, explore, conserve and share a wild place. The wild place can be anywhere, not just a mountain or lake, but a back garden, school grounds, local woods etc. The exploration will help to find out more about it and its natural inhabitants, flora and fauna. Taking positive action to look after the wild space and then letting others know about your experience and achievements completes the scheme.

There are multiple levels of the award. Starting with the Discovery Level Award, which takes a minimum of four days (or equivalent) to complete, then the Explorer and Conserver Levels require participants to take greater ownership and responsibility for their plans and activities, as well as increased time commitment of Award taking at least eight days and finally the Conserver Award taking 20 days (over six months) or more respectively.

The school chose to complete the Discovery Award with their entire Year 6 class. St John's was built on what was a farmer's grazing land. As a result they have grounds that include some woodland, some grass areas and a stream. They already have an active Forest School and each year group has a half term of Forest School every academic year.

The school found that the Discovery Award could offer lots of benefits to the students and school including to heighten the awareness of conservation of the grounds, excitement for the children, a focus and progression for the year six students from their existing Forest School provision, good PR for outdoor learning and an opportunity for the school and students to have outside accreditation. Not to mention a new challenge for the teachers.

The head teacher was very supportive and the Year 6 children embraced the award wholeheartedly. The children were already committed to the outdoor space as a result of their Forest School experiences and liked the idea of having an award to take through life that they could progress in a similar way to the Duke of Edinburgh award, in the area of conservation.



Recommended reading: John Muir: My life with Nature (Joseph Cornell)

If you would like to find out more about the John Muir Award please contact the John Muir Trust at: <http://www.jmt.org/jmaward-home.asp> or for information about their training courses <http://www.jmt.org/>



About the Author

Ruth Flynn has worked in the outdoor education sector for the last eight years after spending a career in the IT industry. She is an APIOL and a freelance provider of outdoor education in the South Devon area.

Photographs from the author



Janet, their class teacher and forest school practitioner, told me *"The main aims for the children are encompassed by PHSME. In particular to encourage a personal responsibility for conservation and also to address self esteem issues as the SATs and secondary school loom ever closer."*

" Learning about the environment and the grounds that we have has made me think about the world we live in and how we should conserve it."

Janet put together a proposal which, after much conversation, was jointly agreed with the John Muir Trust. Many refinements were approved. The school Totnes St John's dedicated the best part of one intensive week to achieving the Award; other schools take a full term or year to complete and use the Award to provide a context for teaching the curriculum outside the classroom, particularly subjects such as Geography, English, Maths, Science and Art. They had agreed to suspend the curriculum for a week, with the exception of Maths which was fitted in to the start of each day.

A group of trainee teachers from Plymouth University were volunteered to assist with the project in February 2013. The children were split into small groups for their exploration and conservation projects and each group chose from a selection of activities prepared by Janet and the school staff.

The children had a fantastic time the whole week. Exploring the area took the form of various games and challenges such as; worm charming, scavenger hunts, environmental art and wide ranging games of hide and seek. The conservation projects included; clearing ponds to encourage wildlife, pruning overgrowth, making wooden walkways safe, creating bird boxes, and improving pathways. Each day the children recorded their thoughts and activities in their John Muir workbook.

When I asked Janet what she felt the children got out of the experience there was a list; pride, a sense of achievement, making a difference to the grounds, a feeling of being connected to the grounds forever as a result of their efforts.

Some of the children's responses:

Olivia: *"It was a great week, because while we were working together to tidy up and improve our school grounds we also had loads of fun. Who said children can't multitask?"*

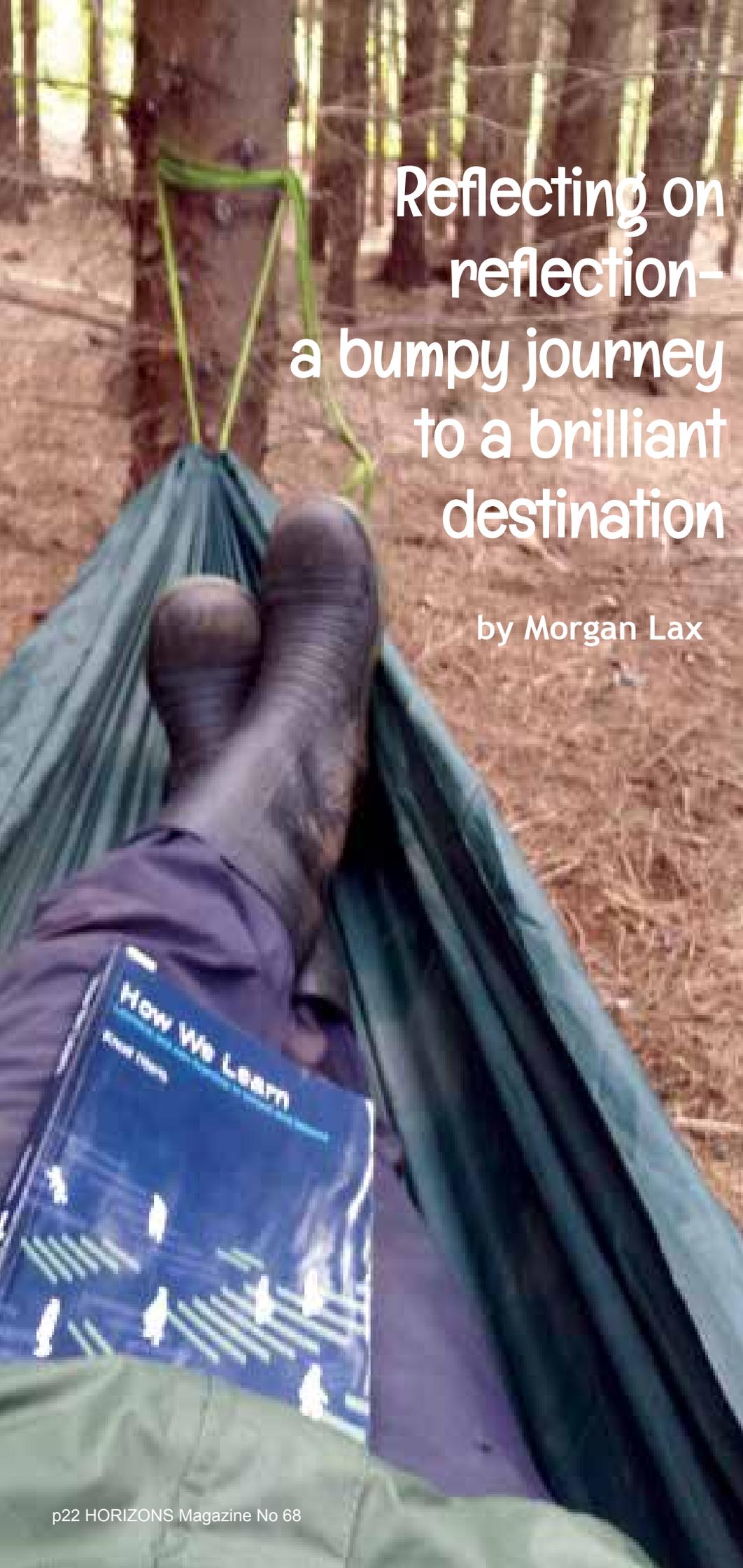
Finlay: *"The week was awesome and it was such a great way to help our nature area."*

Corey: *"I really enjoyed fixing the seating area, that was my group's job"*

Owen: *"John Muir week will stay in my memory for the rest of my life. I had a really great time with my friends."*

Honor: *"Learning about the environment and the grounds that we have has made me think about the world we live in and how we should conserve it."*

On completion of the award the co-ordinator submits a synopsis of the award and a request for certificates to the John Muir Trust. To top this off Janet was able to arrange for Jonathan Dimbleby to come to the school and present the children with their certificates (photo above of the presentation). ■



Reflecting on reflection – a bumpy journey to a brilliant destination

by Morgan Lax

Reflection and Reflective Practice – we hear these terms a lot now and many practitioners claim they reflect, but how effective are their reflections?

I say this, because about 10 years ago I was asked if I reflected on my practice; I rolled my eyes and flippantly exclaimed, “*everyone reflects; it’s natural, just common sense*”. It’s only recently when I asked somebody that same question and got that answer that I thought, ‘hold on, reflection is natural in the sense of mulling something over in your mind whilst driving home from work, but there’s more to it than these natural mental replays of what we’ve done or said’. I realised this as the gulf between what I thought reflection was 10 years ago and what I think it is now dawned on me. This is the first of two articles which presents my experiences of reflective practice. The first article is aimed at those who are new to reflective practice or those who have reflected previously but have been left with a bitter taste in their mouth (as I had after my formative reflective practice experiences). I hope what I share will reassure you that sometimes reflective practice isn’t a smooth ride and help you not to be put off by the early difficulties some people experience. The second article explains a method I now use to reflect having tried dozens; Gillie Bolton’s ‘through-the-mirror’ writing¹ allows your assumptions to be explored, thereby introducing an element of criticality, a hall mark of reflexivity.

In my experience some people are sick of hearing about reflective practice because it is so prevalent: at work; for professional accreditation or qualifications; within universities and for professional bodies. Indeed, the Institute for Learning have a CPD system which is called ‘REFLECT’ and the IOL’s Accredited Practitioner programme requires it. Although some people are sickened, there is the question, why is there such a need to reflect? My answer is – because it works! But (there’s always a but....), this requirement to reflect

on your practice can reduce the effectiveness. Therefore we have a vicious cycle, and the potential benefits and effectiveness of reflective practice are lost. I hope I'm talking to the converted- but I might not be; if you're not convinced by reflective practice then I think it should not be forced upon you, that'll just lead to a bitter taste in your mouth!

When you speak to people about reflective practice we feel assured that they must reflect because they can recall the stages of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle². But do they reflect? How do they reflect? There are loads of theoretical models around which we can discuss: Kolb; Gibbs³; Tripp⁴ and Brookfield⁵. Many reflective models tell us what we should do, but not how to do it. Yet, reflective practice is posited as an elixir for professionalism. Research and guidance on reflective practice is being produced at a phenomenal rate; academic journals and theoreticians are producing so much literature it's a full time job to stay abreast of current thinking. To what extent do practitioners take account of this? They can't- they're too busy being practitioners and enjoying the outdoors and possibly don't have access to academic databases. So these two articles are a snapshot of the journey I have taken from my common sense, natural mental replays, which I thought were reflections, to a critically reflective practitioner who has experienced the positives as well as the negatives of reflective practice; but believes that reflecting is a benefit and worth the pain.

Practice becomes a circle of familiarity

One of the biggest challenges to reflecting is that our practice becomes a circle of familiarity which we view through our own perception lenses; that is to say, we do what we do, because that's the way we do it. And when we view what we do, we view it from the same perspective that we had when we did it. So when we reflect from this point of view - we may be reflecting on what we've done a hundred times, and we're that familiar with what we do, there appears to be no surprises. I saw a quote recently on LinkedIn, it read 'the most dangerous phrase in the language is "we've



always done it this way" which sums up that sentiment - just because we do it that way does not necessarily mean it's the right way, the only way or indeed the best way. Returning to our practice being a circle of familiarity, I offer the example of your driving (I'm assuming that you all drive!), when you drive you just do it, there's no thinking about it, it's almost automatic (you, not the car...). Now imagine being asked to reflect on the last uneventful journey you made. How you drove, how you negotiated some traffic lights or a roundabout, why you took the route you took. If the answer is, 'I just did, that's the way I do it and it works', then that isn't, I would argue, reflecting. That's a mere recounting and vague justification. I've done that a thousand times.

To critically reflect on your journey, you've got to think about why you did what you did. What were the reasons for doing it that way rather than another way. Did your driving affect other road users? How did it affect others? What is their perception of your driving?

The answers will be there, you've just to look for them. At this stage you are then starting to become a critically reflective driver. Otherwise, our circle of familiarity is reinforced by unconsidered reasons, such as, 'it's the way I do it'. By breaking this circle of familiarity we get an insight into our practice that we previously have been oblivious to. Therefore we may change it or continue doing what we're doing because we now have a reason for it. Also, in the future, we consider what we're doing as we do it, acting with purpose and intent.

Because it's a requirement we create strategic reflections to satisfy that requirement

Reflective practice is often a required component of so many qualifications and accreditations; whether an academic course in education, outdoor leadership or management and the APIOL process. This presents a few considerations. The first is that people want to pass the course or gain the accreditation, so they want to show they can reflect. So, they may create something to satisfy the assessor that we can reflect but these reflections lack authenticity. My teaching portfolio is full of engineered reflective entries; it is a common criticism of assessing

reflection. Secondly, knowing that someone is going to read your reflections can prevent some people exposing what they see as weaknesses- instead they seek to paint themselves in a better light. Thirdly, if reflection is a constant requirement, we can fail to appreciate the reason why it is a requirement, instead it just becomes 'normal'. Therefore, are we producing reflective practitioners with an incongruous experience of reflecting who are reluctant to air a weaker side of themselves? I've often thought this when I've taught reflection and as far as possible I insist that engaging in reflective practice is done by choice, it should be voluntary- rather than a requirement of a role or qualification. I believe that to reflect effectively and get the most from it we've got to be ready and willing, and those who have had reflection forced on them can be reluctant to continue- because they've got a bitter taste in their mouth!

The purpose of reflecting is to develop future practice

This links to the very reason why we reflect; ultimately the reason we reflect is to ensure our practice is the best it can be, and not to merely pass a course or achieve a qualification. It's a bit like the chicken and the egg conundrum - do you see the benefits of reflecting and then reflect or do you get told to reflect in the hope that you see the benefits. For me, it was very much the latter, but I was fortunate to be surrounded by people who had seen the rewards that reflective practice provide and encouraged me to continue. After all, that's why reflection is included on all of these courses, because it's a good thing - but sometimes the necessity and prevalence of it causes people to be put off. Another analogy comes to mind - pushing a horse down to the stream for a drink!

The challenges of reflecting

One of the major challenges for me has been finding the time to reflect; not just the mental replay previously mentioned, but a quiet time where I can think and write an entry in my reflective journal. Then revisit it a few days or a week later and consider if I feel the same way. Typically, each entry I do takes 20 to 40 minutes, and has to be squeezed around work commitments, family and life. I do not have a set schedule to reflect, that I think would render reflective practice to an arbitrary task to be completed alongside other routines. Sometimes I can write two entries a day, sometimes an entry every other day - other times I'll go a fortnight between entries. It all depends with what I've done and how

I feel about things. Equally, you've got to be realistic with what you can achieve through reflective practice - it's got to be done little-by-little, reflection and the transformation of practice will take time and is done in small steps; there is no sudden enlightenment and reflective practice is unlikely to provide professional emancipation.

Benefits of reflective practice

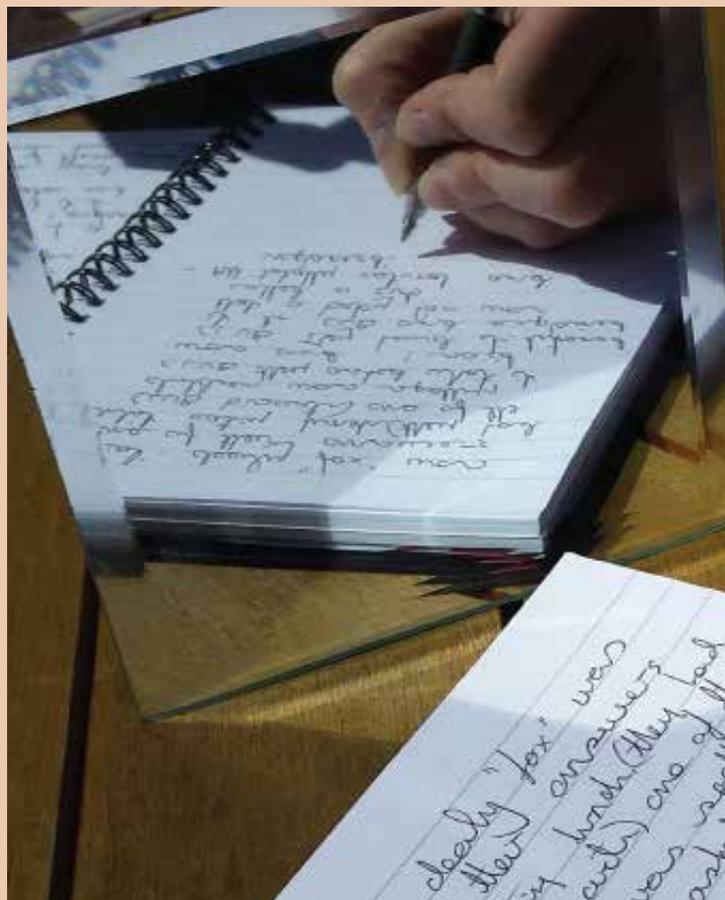
The benefits I have reaped from reflective practice can be summarised as having an informed opinion, acting with purpose and allowing professional judgement. Have you heard the saying that likens opinions to a certain part of the anatomy, and that some opinions stink? But by reflecting I know what I think and why I think it, thereby (hopefully) stopping my opinion from stinking. Therefore, when people discuss a certain topic I have often considered it, and have an opinion that has taken account of the 'what ifs' and other variables; I am able to discuss topics instead of presenting the only piece of information I know as an opinion (do you know someone who does that?). Flowing from my informed opinion my practice is purposeful, I do what I do for a reason; equally, I do not do some things for a reason. Through reflection I am able to explain to people why I do things a certain way - this is because on the whole I've considered what I do and



how my behaviour affects and influences others. All of this allows me to have professional judgement - that is, although I may not have encountered a particular problem previously, yet I have enough tools in my mental tool box to negotiate a problem with reasoned action.

What does the future hold?

Having considered all of this, and remaining at the viewpoint that reflective practice will benefit your practice - where do we go. What does the future hold? In the next edition of Horizons there will be an account of Gillie Bolton's 'through-the-mirror' writing; an approach to reflecting that provides answers to 'what' critical reflection is and 'how' we can reflect. This is the approach that I use now, having attempted several over the years. If you're prepared to try, have an A5 notebook and pen ready, that's all you'll need. But what about a 'Reflective Practice Special Interest Group', is there a need for one? What would it do? Would it advance practice? Also, do people want to take part in CPD workshops at regional conferences? Would you be interested? Finally, what are your thoughts on reflective practice? Do you agree or disagree with what I've discussed here? Do you reflect? Does any of this apply to you? Get in touch. ■



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Authors Notes

Morgan Lax has worked in the outdoor education and the adult training sectors for 14 years. He has studied reflective practice at under- and postgraduate level, as well as teaching reflective practice to undergraduates and to professionals. Morgan is currently employed as a 'Process Leader- Learning & Development' for a multi-national outsourcing company as well as running Compass Outdoor Learning & Adventure in his 'spare' time. Morgan actively researches educational practice and is keen to share that with practitioners for their, and their learners benefit. To get in touch with Morgan email morgan@compassoutdoorlearning.co.uk or connect on LinkedIn.

Photos: From the author.



Character, Calmness and Carrying-on

by Simon Beames



In the world of outdoor adventure education, the term 'character' seems ubiquitous. Members of the public and media sources appear to be fixed on the idea that a set of highly demanding outdoor challenges will yield transferrable and enduring personality changes in its participants. Just last year, I was interviewed by a journalist and carefully explained how learning outside the classroom involved enhancing the delivery of conventional curriculum by teaching some of it outdoors. The piece in the Guardian was well-written, but the title? ***Outdoor education builds character.*** I was furious.

Discussions of 'character building' go back to the early 20th century (think of Baden-Powell's vision, for example), however, deep critiques of outdoor education's capacity to elicit a change in a participant's character are more recent. (*In the academic literature, the most well-known is Andrew Brookes' Neo-Hahnian critique in 2002. Paul Stonehouse then did his PhD on this same topic and used Aristotelian virtue ethics to make sense of it all.*) What these experts agree on is that change in a person's character is unlikely to result from one short stand-alone programme. A person's character is highly durable and has been formed over many years; changing that character will almost certainly take a long, long time.

Let us return to popular notions of 'character'. Besides meaning people or figures in stories, there are two other common uses of the word. The first refers to people who are somewhat odd or eccentric, as in 'that person who wears the duck costume to the pub is a real character'. The second kind of character comprises a certain 'pluck', resilience, and doggedness that is consistent with the clichéd ***Keep calm and carry on*** rhetoric. This kind of character

has a very high social value and opportunities to display it are most commonly presented on the sports field, battleground, and, of course, on a hillside in the pouring rain: the wetter, colder and hungrier the person, the higher the level of character required (and presumably developed).

At this point, I hope we can agree that character change is rather difficult to orchestrate and that articulations of what constitutes this kind of desirable character are somewhat ambiguous. This brings me to my purpose of writing this piece and to one my favourite social theorists: Erving Goffman (1922-1981). In 1967, Goffman wrote an essay called *Where the action is*, in which he deconstructed the word 'character' in a way that I believe can be useful for outdoor educators who find themselves tasked with the unenviable job of developing someone else's character.

As we have seen, changing a person's character during a three-day residential programme is probably not going to happen. Still, there is no reason why outdoor instructors – like other kinds of educators -- cannot facilitate participants' encounters with circumstances that might offer them opportunities to demonstrate character. Following this rather wordy logic, we need to know more specifically what might be considered indicators of character. This is where Goffman comes in. He equated character with remaining 'correct and steady in the face of sudden pressures' and 'maintaining full self-control when the chips are down' (p. 217). He identified several aspects of character, which include gameness, courage, composure, gallantry, and integrity. Let us consider how these five aspects might manifest themselves through an abseiling activity.

Gameness is most commonly displayed by people saying, 'I'll give it a go'. Gameness is heightened when people have legitimate reasons for not participating (e.g. an injury) and lowered when reasons for not participating are not convincing to the audience. It is further shown by those who stick with their line of action when experiencing set-backs or pain – usually through high levels of determination and will-power. **Courage** can be seen when people are clearly afraid of what they are engaged in, but continue despite their fears of being harmed or of losing something of value. The girl who has demonstrated gameness by accepting the challenge of abseiling off the platform may then find herself struck by a powerful fear of heights once on clipped-in and standing over the abyss; this is when she can demonstrate courage alongside her gameness. (note that one cannot be courageous without also being afraid)

Composure is perhaps the most important and visible of Goffman's five aspects of character. Is the abseiler focused and thinking clearly about the challenge, or is she showing signs of irrational fear and unable to think clearly? Staying 'cool' and keeping one's head in times of stress is particularly valued by society, in Goffman's view. **Gallantry** refers to an individual's ability to maintain normal social courtesies when

facing hardships. Are the pleases and thank-yous, general politesse and grace, as evident on the abseil platform as they are in the classroom or at the dinner table? Humility and deference are others ways that gallantry can manifest itself in the outdoors.

Where composure and gallantry tend to be highly observable, integrity is perhaps the least public of Goffman's aspects of character. **Integrity** is about resisting temptations to depart from accepted moral standards – especially in private. An example of integrity would be if an abseiler showed very little composure while alone with the instructor, but felt morally obliged to raise his emotional outburst with the group during the evening review. In this case, there may have been personal 'profit' for the emotional abseiler in not sharing her lack of composure. This example demonstrates how character, according to Goffman, is multi-faceted: a person can be low in one area (composure), but high in another (integrity). Rather than discussing whether or not people show character in a given outdoor education situation, it may be more helpful to consider the degree to which participants demonstrate each of the Goffman's five aspects at different stages of the programme.

These five aspects of character were outlined in an essay written almost 50 years ago and which had nothing to do with outdoor education. Still, my hope is that terms like gameness, courage, composure, gallantry, and integrity will give outdoor instructors a more nuanced language with which they can discuss their important work. So, what do you say? Are you game? ■

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About the Author

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The Impact of Gratitude

by Kevin Long

Framing outdoor experiences for transformational learning and wellbeing.

Leaders have many tales to tell. This one was shared over coffee during my APIOL induction. I call this story *Famine to Feast* as it highlighted to me how much we have, and how easy it is to forget that we have so much. Over the duration of my APIOL process I thought about this story when working with my own students.

It seemed to me at times, that some of our children behave as if they too were short of resources. Not a famine of food but of belief. A world view with little confidence in effort, little hope in ability, little will to persevere, no belief in change. Some students clearly seemed to be in survival mode of sorts, for an acceptance, recognition and to get credit. There is no time for selflessness, for humility or empathy. Wouldn't that be for those who have given up? Or (paradoxically), those who are already abundantly well to do, 'famous' even? By losing their easy escape back to 'normality', the students in, Tim's story, were compelled to recognise the many things they had previously taken for granted. They had to find resources within themselves. Reality became immediate. The value of those everyday things became apparent only once they had been taken away.

Gratitude is a way of thinking that can turn disaster into a stepping stone¹. By realising that the power one has to transform an obstacle into an opportunity is personally liberating. Gratitude reframes a potential loss into something of assured hope. Without hope change is spiritually inconceivable.⁹ Gratitude recasts negativity in to positive channels for pragmatic action which, by its very definition, is pragmatic and solution focused.



Tim noticed a significant behaviour change over the following days– the students invested time on each other – they took opportunity to be of service to each other. They became more giving. The spirit of the group moved into a new frame of gratefulness.

Time and memory remould reality nearer to the heart's desire.² So is it not important to start here first? – by scrutinising the frame which we adopt – those assumptions which have a powerful hold on our ultimate behaviours to self, others and the environment. Should we not first fix the vices before building upon virtues? By looking at gratitude we address the spirit¹.

According to Robert Emmons there are five possible obstacles to living a grateful life³:

1. Pervasive negativity – Our natural attentiveness to bad news
2. A sense of entitlement – a cult of celebrity and obsession with self
3. Making comparisons - focusing on what we don't have
4. Apathy, boredom and fear - laziness and insecurities.

As practitioners we will certainly identify with these traits in the groups we work with. They haven't changed for more than 70 years! Kurt Hahn wrote similarly when he addressed the six declines of modern youth and proposed his I.D.E.A.L.S.⁷ For Hahn, a life of service was to be the beneficial outcome. Indeed, service is the ultimate outcome of a life of gratitude.

Our modern world view is greatly influenced by these pervasive obstacles. Our map of reality differs greatly from the cultures of other countries. This is often overlooked. As an example, I recently visited a school in which the staff were deeply impressed by the South African children they had seen on a school visit. They had seen the South African School children take ownership, plan and provide everything for the British students without the need for adult supervision. The African student's happy service on behalf of their school was remarkable. The British teachers wanted 'this' to exist in their children and they wanted to do it now, without delay and to do this they will put instructions in place to provide the same roles and responsibilities. Certainly a commendable and aspirational goal:

but worryingly to me, I felt there was something important missing from the plan. To expect that the outcomes will be the same for two completely differing groups of children with completely different world views and values overlooked the importance of starting from where the children are at. Perhaps we should first provide opportunities to challenge the assumed relationship between teacher and learner. This is a prerequisite for universal student participation. Secondly, we should present opportunities for students to construct a sense of gratitude – a prerequisite for a culture of service. These are two challenges for every practitioner to consider - they ask you to address the heart first.

“Gratitude is the hearts memory”

French proverb

Planning for Impact: A Cycle of Becoming
We are continually practicing, continually becoming. Our individual biography is continually changing. We continually have to adjust our view in light of experiences. However, if we are to learn from experience we must process it – and what we choose to process accounts for much.

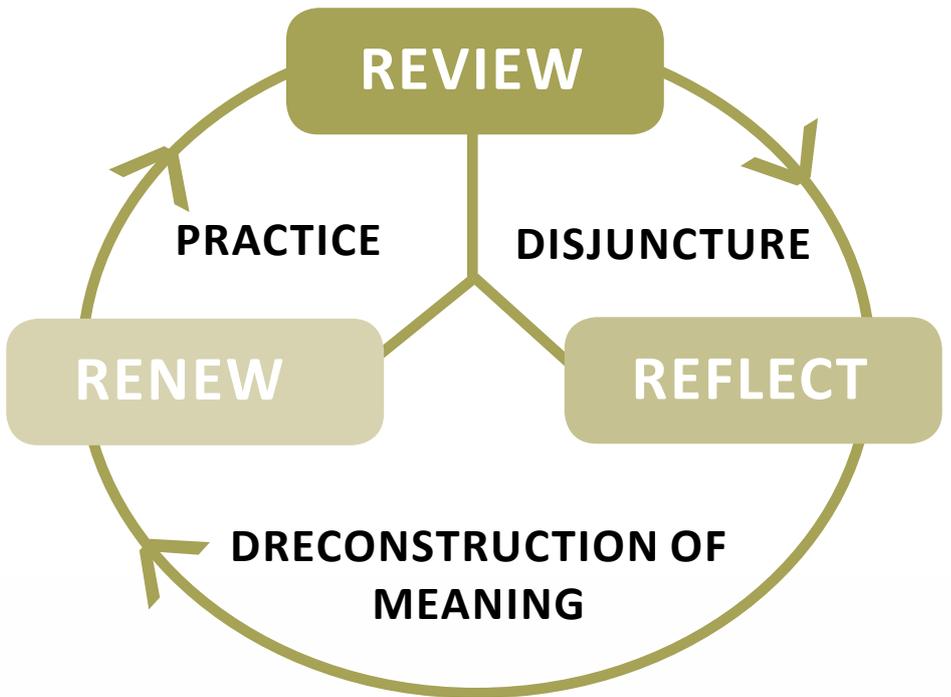


Typically we do not address our own thinking until challenged to do so. We take a lot of things as givens and we do not question norms. We need to pierce through our relationship to the assumptions that surround us.⁶ By facilitating opportunities for our students to do exactly this we provide for high impact transformational learning.

Figure 1 depicts how this all makes sense on a personal level. It is built on the work of Jarvis⁵, who proposed that when we ask for a change in world view we effect a “Transformation of the Senses”.

An example: Tim’s students were faced by a real challenge and this was the source of great dissonance. They had to address their own thinking and

Fig1: “A Cycle of Becoming”



ways of behaving. The disjuncture was an assault on their assumed values. Through reflection the students individually processed their own situation, it led to reconsidered behaviour (some admitted the error of their ways and others began to share their precious chocolate). Importantly however the deepest impact, they addressed their own assumed values – they unlocked a personally lasting change in doing so. In finding their own solution over the following days on the Isle of Jura, they tested their new found values and saw how helpful and liberating this way of being was. Gratitude worked on a personal level – so they kept on doing it.

Expressing gratitude enhances the shared experience and the greater the number of people expressing sincere feeling of appreciation the more persistent people will feel positive.¹ Fortunately framing for gratitude can be quite straight forward - two methods for getting students to express gratitude are:

1. Think about someone who they were grateful to – Get students to answer generally at the start of the day and then move the attention to the team after their adventurous activity...see what happens.

2. Use descriptors – get students to describe something in their surroundings that they are grateful for. At the start of the day ask the students “what do they love?” You will be surprised to see how they move from loving their mobile phone in the morning to describing their love of the blue sky or sunlight on the water after a great adventure on a sunny day... it will be their waterproofs on other days!

Living with a frame of gratefulness is liberating. To begin to look at the things that we have, what our strengths are and what is working in our lives provides for a mindset of abundance. The benefits of an abundant mindset includes' greater satisfaction from relationships, higher levels of trust and inclusion, higher levels of effort and authentic behaviour that is aligned with personal values. With a mindset of abundance, people are less likely to fear failure and are more resilient in the face of uncertainty.⁴

To quote Proust:

“The only true voyage of discovery... would be not to visit strange lands, but to possess other eyes”⁸

You don't have to find yourself stranded on the far side of Jura in order to find such transformational moments. You can build gratitude into your practice, starting with your own personal example. See how well it works out when you do so. Keep it simple. If it works do more if it!

In doing so it is not so much solving problems, but dissolving problems. Focus on the present, where you are right now.

Life continually asks of us what we are to be. In turn we continually recreate ourselves through our choice of action. Through the freedoms of gratefulness we become abundant in our approach to life. We become the authors of our lives; not of a good life, but of a beautiful life ...now that's a journey we should all take! ■

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Autho Biog

Kevin Long. Kevin was a Senior Instructor at the Outward Bound Trust in the Lake District, Ullswater. He now liaises with schools across the Midlands to support their use of outdoor education and to ensure its impact is transferred back to school. He moved into Outdoor Education after

completing his induction as a qualified teacher. He is an APIOL and has an MSc in University of London. His current research interests include applied positive psychology and transformational learning.

Photos: from the author



Oooooooooo

Aaaaaaah

“Ort Report”

by Jeff Handley

These are words we often hear sung or chanted with actions in our dining room. Often this extends to activities and free time, just because young people like the song /chant and its actions. We have just been through our 3rd Green flag for Eco-Centres, our application was successful without preconditions. The assessor was impressed by our environmental activities, the progress with sustainable development and the commitment of the staff at the Centre. Especially highlighted was our Grade A litter free grounds and our work regarding the Ort Report. I think it would be great if the ‘Ort Report’ went ‘viral’ and lots of centres and organisations started using it. Going back in time we used to monitor food waste, however it was really difficult to engage or enthuse young people in this process. Several years ago, Henry Fairwood, a PGCE student from Bangor University, decided to turn things on their head, he had worked at Camp America and decided to approach things from an ‘Americanised’ perspective. He came up with the concept of the ‘Ort Report’

Ort – “waste food and scraps”

There is reference in Silas Marner, written by George Elliot to Ortas being scraps of food from the plates of the rich being thrown to the poor. There is also reference to Ort as being scraps of fabric.

The Ort Report is a key part of the end of all our centre mealtimes. The process is led and recorded by students. The waste food (no liquid to skew results) is weighed by two students, the room is silent, everyone gets their arms ready and students are asked to raise the rafters.....

“Ooooo Aaaaah Ort report, I said Ooooo Aaaaah Ort report”

Clap Clap

Ort Report

“Ooooo Aaaaah Ort report, I said Ooooo Aaaaah Ort report”

Drum role, then silence.....

“The Ort is....kg”

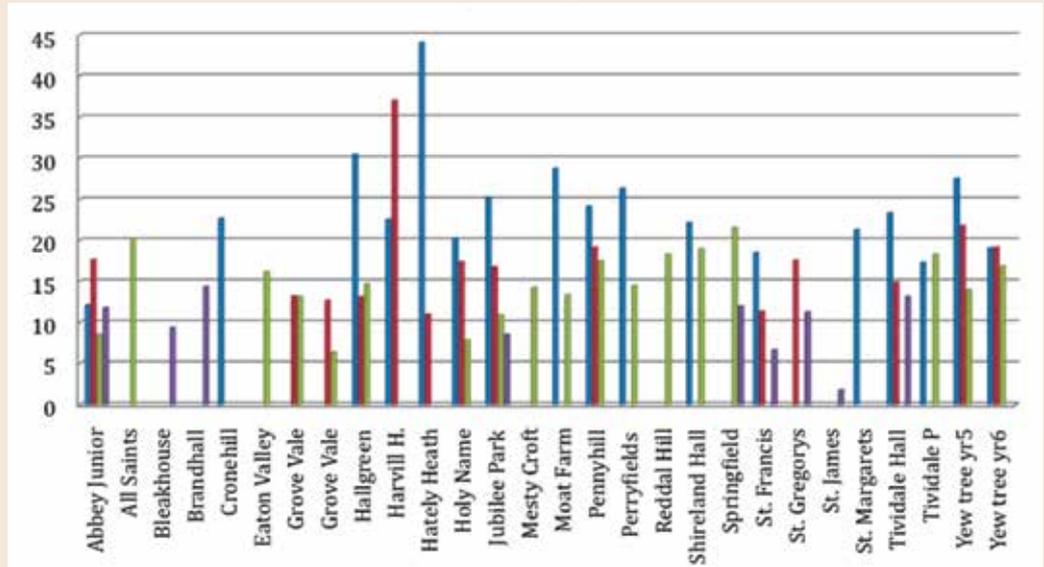
This is met with a loud cheer or boo. Ort is evaluated, and targets given to reduce ORT going forwards. ORT is recorded on a chart. It has even been known where there is no ORT for staff to do a ‘robot’ Peter Crouch style dance with the bucket on their head.

To help us achieve a positive slant to the week’s result, we have a menu that helps and the young people are given a choice of two evening meals at breakfast time so the group are able to choose the meal they prefer.

In the morning student brief a big deal is made of it. The young people respond really well to it and get really involved. We have displays of all schools including previous years of ORT, so direct comparisons can be made.

What benefits have we seen as a result of the Ort report?

- Positive engagement of young people with respect to understanding food waste and actively changing their habits over a week to reduce food waste.
- An in-road in terms of engaging young people in conversation about global issues with respect to food.
- Empowering young people with knowledge that can be transferred to other aspects of their life.
- Development of another thread that supports our sustainable environmentally sound philosophy.
- Reduction of food waste as a centre and all the associated benefits.
- Monitoring records to demonstrate progress.



When it was first implemented most staff were a bit reluctant to get involved, particularly with Secondary School groups, as the first nights duty included a public display of them chanting/singing and getting jiggy. Moving forwards, everybody now gets stuck in as they see the positive benefits. It is an expectation of visiting school staff, who often have their own ‘custom’ interpretation and is often talked about by returning young people.

I am grateful of Henry for giving us something positive that is now part of who we are. Long live the ORT report!

The above chart shows St James to have produced the least amount of food waste in a week, only 2kg, well done. ■



Author Biog

Jeff Handley has been working in Outdoor Centres for the last 22 years, the last 13 in management. In his current role he manages Sandwell MBC’s Adventurous Activity Residential Centre in Snowdonia and acts as Technical Advisor for their residential service and the Local Authority as a whole. Nowadays you are just as likely to see Jeff out in the Welsh hills with groups as you are to see him in the playground with his two young daughters. Photograph and chart from the author. Background image with Creative Commons License





Leave lawnmowers in the shed to protect bees

The Government has made an agreement with landowners including Network Rail and the Highways Agency to restore bee-friendly habitat throughout England. It is part of a 10-year National Pollinator Strategy. But some conservation groups say the plan does not go far enough. It includes countryside stewardship schemes, worth a total of £900m, to provide financial incentives for farmers to plant pollinator-friendly crops and let meadows grow.

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/29847474>



UK hotspots for sharks, dolphins and whales 'need legal protection'

The threat to dolphins, porpoises, whales and sharks from boat tours, windfarm construction and fishing nets around British shores has prompted conservationists to call for legal protections of hotspots to preserve such 'marine megafauna'. The Wildlife Trusts identified 17 hotspots of wildlife, from harbour porpoises in Cardigan Bay on the west coast to white-beaked dolphins on the east at Dogger Bank, where the 29 species of cetaceans and sharks that inhabit UK waters are most commonly found. This summer, killer whales were spotted off Cornwall and Northumberland, and basking sharks, the second largest fish in the world, are regularly spotted off the Lizard peninsula in the south-west. In the Farne Islands off Northumberland, orca and sperm whales have been spotted in recent years and white-beaked dolphins and humpback whales spend long periods in the waters.

Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/nov/04/wildlife-trusts-calls-for-protection-for-uks-17-marine-megafauna-hotspots>



Common bird species such as sparrow and skylark facing decline in Europe

Bird populations across Europe have decreased by over 420 million in the past 30 years, according to a study that brings together the results of scientific surveys in 25 countries. While some rarer species have seen an increase in numbers due to concerted conservation efforts, more common species across Europe are facing a steep decline. Some of the birds that have suffered the most alarming declines are the most well known species including the house sparrow which has fallen in number by 147m or 62%, the starling (53%) and skylark (46%). The study looked at 144 species across Europe between 1980 and 2009. Dividing the species up into four groups, from extremely rare to most common, analysts found that a small number of common species declined by over 350 million – over 80% of the total population decline of birds in that time period overall. Rarer birds, in contrast, increased by over 21,000 in the same time period. The results indicate that efforts at conserving rarer species seem to be having an impact but may be too narrow an approach, possibly at the expense of more common species.

Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/nov/02/common-bird-species-sparrow-skylark-decline-europe>



Thousands Give UK Coastline A Halloween Clean!

During the weekend of the 17th, 18th & 19th of October over 3200 beach lovers joined SAS, The Crown Estate and World Animal Protection at 123 beaches for the biggest ever nationwide Autumn Beach Clean Series. Volunteers came together from Bournemouth to Blackpool and the Isle of Skye to Sennen Cove, on the eve of Halloween, to sweep a staggering 10 TONNES of marine litter from the UK coastline. Autumn Beach Clean volunteers were also monitoring the amounts and types of Ghost Gear on their beaches as part of World Animal Protection's Sea Change Campaign. During the last two weeks of October alone four rare leatherback turtles have been found dead around Scotland, with one found yesterday in Dunbar that experts have confirmed died due to entanglement in lost or discarded creel fishing lines. This beautiful animal will have become entangled in ghost fishing gear whilst swimming and slowly drowned, weighted down and unable to reach the surface for air.

Source: <http://www.sas.org.uk/news/sas-news/thousands-of-beach-lovers-give-uk-coastline-a-halloween-clean/>

Science check call over badger cull

A journal of the British Ecological Society has offered to check the badger culling trials, amid questions about their scientific basis. The offer could address concerns about the lack of independent oversight of the government-run trials. The trials are to assess the effectiveness badger culling has as a means to control the spread of TB to cattle.

If the government deems its trials a success, badger culling will be used in other parts of England.

The Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) scrapped the role of an independent expert group last year which had found that the first year of culls had failed.

According to Prof Rosie Woodroffe, of the Zoological Society of London, Defra has given very few details of how it proposes to assess the effectiveness of the culls. The government began two pilot badger culls in Gloucestershire and Somerset last year to assess whether enough badgers could be killed to control the spread of TB to cattle. Earlier research had shown that unless 70% of badgers in an area were killed there would be a risk that TB infection in cattle could actually increase because the culling caused an increase in the movement of badgers.

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-29889067>



Sun's magnetic field boosts UK lightning strikes

The number of lightning strikes across the UK has been significantly affected by solar activity, according to new research.

Scientists say the Sun's magnetic field is bending the Earth's own field, increasing our exposure to cosmic rays. These rays are believed to increase the number of thunderclouds and trigger lightning bolts in some locations. Over five years, the UK experienced 50% more strikes when the Earth's magnetic field was affected by the Sun.

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-30103561>



National Grid's £500m plan to move biggest and ugliest pylons underground

Eight national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty on shortlist, and £24m set aside for measures in other areas. The "biggest and ugliest" electricity pylons slicing through some of the UK's most treasured beauty spots are set to be torn down.

National Grid will investigate ways to remove pylons from a shortlist of eight rural areas by putting the high-voltage transmission lines underground.

The firm has 571km (355 miles) of pylon lines running through national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) in England and Wales. The shortlisted areas are in the Snowdonia, Peak District, New Forest and Brecon Beacons national parks, and the Dorset, Tamar Valley, High Weald and North Wessex Downs AONBs, totalling 25km of lines.

The "biggest and ugliest" electricity pylons slicing through some of the UK's most treasured beauty spots are set to be torn down.

National Grid will investigate ways to remove pylons from a shortlist of eight rural areas by putting the high-voltage transmission lines underground.

Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2014/nov/09/national-grid-500m-fund-to-put-pylons-underground-in-beauty-spots>



Consumers offered cash for old gadgets in new recycling scheme

Consumers will be urged to trade in their unwanted electrical gadgets at retailers in return for cash – with the products to be refurbished and resold – as part of a national initiative unveiled on Tuesday.

The government-backed plan to improve the disposal of electric waste is supported by 51 companies and organisations including Samsung, Dell, Sky, B&Q, and the owner of Argos and Homebase.

Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/nov/18/consumers-offered-cash-for-old-gadgets-in-new-recycling-scheme>



insights....

A quick tour of some of the activities undertaken by those working on your behalf for IOL and the outdoor sector. IOL meets its charitable objectives by working with the contributions of a wide range of folk across the UK, many of whom are voluntary. Below is a sample of contributions in the last quarter. A big 'thank you' to all who have been helping deliver the IOL charitable aims of increasing access to outdoor learning and developing quality of outdoor learning.



INFLUENCING beyond the field & REPRESENTATION of membership and the Outdoor Learning field

- **Scottish Government Review of Adventurous Activity Licensing.** Representing UK wide interest in the Scottish Government consultation and surveys being conducted by the Scottish Adventurous Activity Forum.
- **Re-write of English Outdoor Council's publication High Quality Outdoor Education.** Supporting the re-write of the new publication which reflects the developments in the sector in the past 5 years and is aimed at assisting users of Outdoor Learning for schools and youth groups. It should be available in early 2015.
- **Working with National Citizen Service.** Influencing heads of outdoor education centres in their approach to developing new business models to work with the rapidly growing volumes of young people going through the NCS programme.
- **EU funded definitions of the outdoors.** IOL continues to ensure that Outdoor Learning is appropriately represented in the development of EU wide initiatives to encourage mobility of the labour force and definitions of professions.
- **Designing a legacy for the Learning Away research findings.** Representing practitioners in guiding the Paul Hamlyn Foundation as it considers how best to develop and use the findings of its research into the impact of residential programmes in education.
- **Survey of Adventuremark holders.** Acting on behalf of the Adventurous Activity Industry Advisory Committee (AAIAC) to obtain feedback from the holders of Adventuremark and from the wider sector, on the suitability of the award.

- **AAIAC.** Supporting members of AAIAC in developing a sustainable funded model for the body that seeks to provide guidance to the sector on Health & Safety related issues.
- **Guidance to National Trust.** Exploring how the Trust might develop its outdoor learning guidance to staff and users of its properties.
- **British Activity Providers Association conference.** Representing Outdoor Learning practitioners at a conference considering the strategic changes in the outdoor sector and identifying approaches to increased collaboration and co-ordination.
- **Outdoor Education Advisors Panel conference.** Representing Outdoor Learning practitioners and seeking to identify ways of the sector working together more effectively.
- **Continuing to represent outdoor learning practitioners at English Outdoor Council** considering a range of topics and actions for the sector including lobbying Westminster, developing publications and representing the wider sector.

PROFESSIONAL Development and CPD Activity

In addition to a range of regional and SIG based CPD activity....

- **National Conference.** 200+ practitioners attended the IOL National Conference in Loughborough. The event sought to consider outdoor learning's role in health and wellbeing through a series of presentations and workshops. Keynote addresses and a selection of conference materials can be found on the members area of the IOL website

- **NE Region Conference.** As the newest region of IOL the region celebrated a very good attendance at its third regional conference with a very wide variety of practitioners from across the North East sharing good practice and exploring new service opportunities.
- **Other Conferences and Workshops.** The Institute's hard working regional executives continue to arrange conferences and workshops to support the development of practitioners and strengthen the value of the sector.
- **Employer's SIG.** A meeting at Kingswood's Dearne Valley site considered support for AAIAC, increasing collaboration in the sector, delivering NCS, achieving diversity in staff and participants, early career option such as apprenticeships and managing freelance staff.
- **Adventure Tourism.** Advising representatives of the Adventure Tourism Research Association in the development of a conference to share good practice and consideration of common issues for practitioners in the Outdoor Learning sector.

Keeping in touch OR representing your practice area

Please don't forget to let IOL know if you are meeting your local MP, lobbying in the interests of the outdoor learning community, or have developed new or innovative ways of promoting access to outdoor learning.

If you would value the opportunity of representing and promoting outdoor learning or developing standards in outdoor learning please contact one of the IOL Trustees, Regional Chairs or any members of the professional development team.

Contact details are available on the IOL website: www.outdoor-learning.org

Accreditation & Quality Assurance

● **New Professional Standards Manager.** The Institute has appointed Neal Anderson to manage individual accreditation and quality assurance services.

● **APIOL Coach.** Two successful CPD workshops have been run to enable many experienced mentors to make the transition to APIOL Coach and support candidates as they work towards accreditation.

● **Individual Accreditation.** We have developed some updated marketing information for RPIOL, APIOL and LPIOL that helps describe the benefits and process of individual accreditation with the Institute. These are available from the IOL office.

● **APIOL & LPIOL holder map.** All holders of AP & LPIOL have been given the option of having their name and location of practice shown on a web based map. The map is can be found in the Accreditations section of the IOL website.



IOL DEVELOPMENT of new projects/services

● **National Association of Field Study Officers (NAFSO).** The executive of NAFSO are proposing to the association's members that they form a new group within IOL, seeking to share good practice in field studies and related outdoor learning and to encourage more practitioners to develop such disciplines. The members vote on the proposal at their AGM in January 2015.

● **Mapping the benefits delivered by Outdoor Learning.** The Institute is exploring with the Blgrave Trust how the Trust might support an exercise to identify the impact of the various activities in the outdoor learning sector. The initiative is seeking to assist all practitioners in influencing policy makers, government and other funders. ■

AROUND Regions & Home Nations (see regional IOL website pages for contact details)



EAST REGION

● **The East Region Meeting November 2014.** Enjoyable, especially the first half hour, in which those

attending shared ideas on ice-breaker and team building tasks. Then healthy discussion on Health & Wellbeing in the Outdoors and what this meant to us as professionals.

NORTH WEST REGION

● **NW Conference 2015** plans are gathering pace for the big NW IOL Conference taking place in January 2015. Delegates will enjoy a day of workshops and networking.

● **Enabling Outdoor Learning** – more events are planned for 2015.

SOUTH REGION

● **The 2014 Conference** took place in November at Plumpton College. Well known writer and navigator Tristan Gooley was Keynote Speaker. There were workshops morning and afternoon and lunchtime forum sessions.

WESSEX

● The Wessex Exec are putting together all the details for their 2015 IOL Conference taking place on February 6th at the Mill on the Brue. There is to be a keynote speaker and workshops. ■



NEW IOL ACCREDITATION AWARDEES

● We would like to congratulate the following on achieving their LPIOL, APIOL or RPIOL recently.

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● Stuart Meese



● Kevin Mansell



NEW APIOLs

Accredited Practitioner of IOL

Stephen Parkin Geoff Mason

Richard Liggitt Jim Godfrey

Andy Moore Matthew Hopkins

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Louise Gigg Richard Crapper

Chris Thirtle Graeme Kelly

Sophie Pinder David Bowler

Bob Johnston Sam Patalong

Andrew Bennett

Jack Hockenhull

HAVE YOU VISITED THE NEW APIOL AND LPIOL MEMBER MAP ON THE IOL WEBSITE?

CHALLENGING the System

EARTH WISE

by Geoff Cooper

I recently took part in a Real World Learning conference at Castle Head Field Centre in Cumbria. The Real World Learning network has been developing and promoting the teaching of science outdoors and showing how this can contribute to sustainability. Richard Dawson, Sam Rudd and Tom Deacon gave a comprehensive explanation of the project in Horizons 67. The conference attracted a wide range of outdoor practitioners from across Europe from as far afield as Iceland and Turkey. The main purpose of the meeting was to present and test a model of learning for sustainability which has been developed by the network. Based on the hand, the five fingers represent the themes of understanding, transferability, experience, empowerment and values and these form the basis of outdoor learning for sustainability. These interconnected themes can guide the way we present our activities and programmes. They are relevant to outdoor learning whether based on fieldwork, adventure, conservation, art or gardening.

In much of the Western world we suffer from education systems that are painfully inadequate in meeting the challenges of a rapidly changing world. School teaching in Britain has not changed greatly since Victorian times. We

still separate learning into subject boxes where content and knowledge are more important than critical thinking and creativity. Ken Robinson in his TED talks gives an enlightening and entertaining view on this.

Traditional science teaching is based on a mechanistic or analytical approach where everything is broken down into its constituent parts. It has become divorced from values and from the interrelations and complexity of everyday life. On the other hand, outdoor learning brings the real world into focus and can cut through subject barriers and offer ways of understanding our relationships with others and with the earth. The "hand" model of the Real World Learning network is a valuable tool for outdoor leaders to review their practice in this area. During the conference outdoor science educators from across Europe demonstrated how they are using the model in their programmes. One significant development is seeing how outdoor organisations are now blending a range of methods to encourage personal and social skills, environmental awareness, critical thinking and understanding. The strict divisions between the more curriculum based fieldwork and adventure based personal and social development no longer persist.



With colleagues over the years, I've used several outdoor learning models to encourage environmental awareness and sustainability, such as Earth Education and the John Muir Award, and I know through experience that these can have a powerful influence on attitudes and values. But are we going to make the major changes needed for a more sustainable society through this educational work? We are faced with a dominant culture; an economic system rooted in competition, commercialisation and growth. Our schools and colleges have increasingly become part of this competitive system and their success or failure is measured in how they meet a narrow band of academic and management targets.

There are some glimmers of hope. During the conference Peter Higgins, professor of outdoor and environmental education at the University of Edinburgh, outlined the work he and others have achieved in establishing outdoor learning and sustainability as key components of the education curriculum in Scotland. He is now working at a political level advocating the need for other departments of the Scottish Parliament to consider sustainability as a core part of their work.

Several questions arise from this: Should we as outdoor leaders be putting even more emphasis on political lobbying? There have been considerable efforts made over the years by many organisations including IOL, the Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres, the Field Studies Council, the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, the English Outdoor Council and the

Campaign for Adventure to put messages across to the political parties. There is also a host of reports on the educational, health and spiritual benefits of nature and the outdoors for people of all ages. But there is still a huge gap between providing this evidence and getting the support for change.

Is there a role for outdoor leaders and organisations in challenging the dominant culture of competition and commercialisation? Are we questioning or reinforcing this culture through our organisations, programmes and personal actions? The outdoor learning models mentioned earlier say little about understanding and engaging with our social, economic and political systems. Isn't knowledge and understanding of how decisions that affect our lives and the health of our planet are made just as important as understanding ecological concepts? If we are interested in encouraging more sustainable lifestyles shouldn't we at least be raising these questions as part of our practice? ■

References:

Robinson, K (2006) Available from: www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity

GEOFF COOPER is a Fellow of the Institute for Outdoor Learning. He chairs the Adventure and Environmental Awareness Group and is an interviewer for LPIOL and author of "Outdoors with Young People".

Background photograph: Fiona Exon



In rude health

Society's interest in the outdoors is higher than it has ever been in my memory. The wealth of interest in nature, outdoor exercise, environmental sustainability, outdoor learning and other related activities and issues is very apparent. The recent IOL National Conference was a fantastic gathering of practitioners that reflected the many different faces of outdoor learning and was all the more impactful for the variety of practices shared and explored.

As I write this, what seems to have become the key season for outdoor related conferences is approaching its end. Participating, one way or another, in quite a few of these gatherings has left me with a favourable impression of the state of our sector. Individuals and organisations (involved in outdoor learning) are thinking carefully about how they engage effectively with their clients/learners, how they can make their learning facilitation more impactful, how they might reach more people and challenging how sustainable their practice really is.

My thanks go to Neal Anderson, the Institute's recently appointed Professional Standards Manager, for reminding me that wellbeing is not simply an absence of illness. His statement at the IOL National Conference, that was considering Health & Wellbeing, got me reflecting. It caused me to consider the parallel scenarios where an absence of the negative was not

necessarily an indication of the positive. An absence of visible mistakes in our work with clients/learners does not mean good practice is prevalent OR an absence of conflict or obstruction when working with others does not mean collaboration. This thinking is helpful at a time when a number of this season's conferences have been considering how the outdoor learning sector might be better prepared for the future.

In seeking to be better prepared for the future of the sector, there is an increasing recognition of a need to define what we mean by Outdoor Learning. To do this we must collaborate in identifying the benefits of our practices and develop resultant messages to government, policy makers and funders. Importantly, we must become better at co-ordinating our efforts to communicate those messages to the right audiences.

So what's the problem? I see two main dangers in our current position. Firstly there is the risk that the reasonable health of our sector allows us to believe that we have reached our potential positive impact on society. We are far from this position. Just consider the education agenda around sustainability or the impact we are having on healthy lifestyles and associated health costs. Secondly I am concerned that we may sacrifice skilful, knowledge rich and impactful practices in reaching greater collaboration and co-ordination across the sector. I believe it is possible to have a greater reach and influence with decision makers whilst also developing innovative and impactful practices. I am determined that a more joined up sector does not mean that established or emerging more specialist practices in areas such as adventure therapy or field studies are no longer valued. ■

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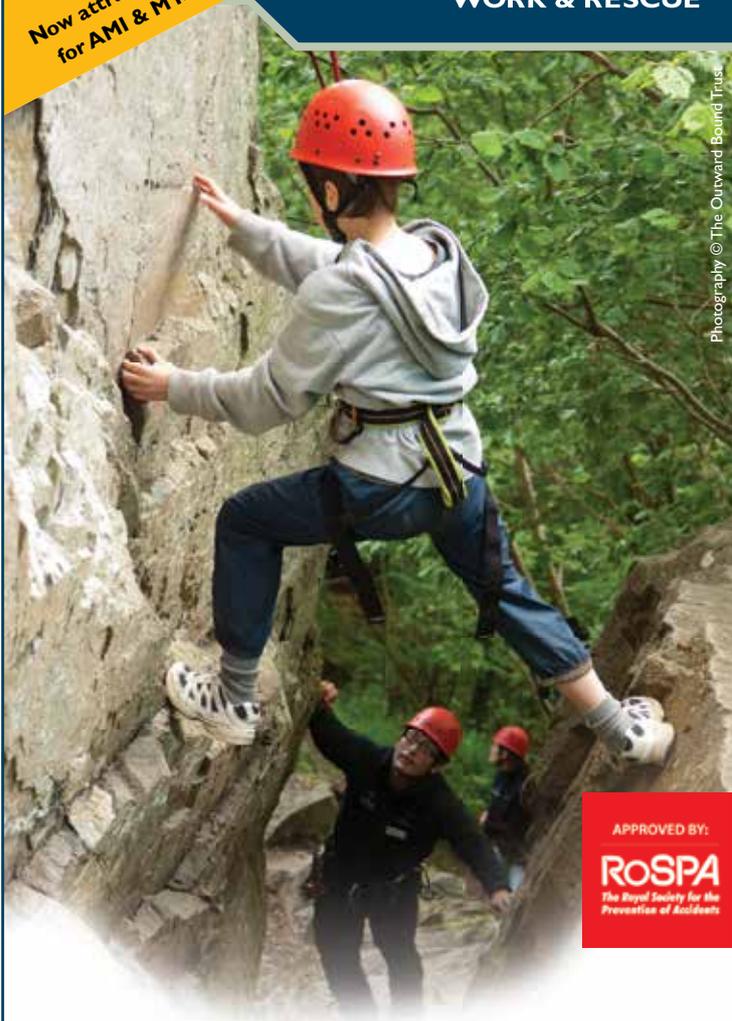
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