



The *Swift Centre*

387 Barking Road
London E13 8AL

Outdoor Pursuits weekend at Plas Y Brenin.
March 2009.
Funded by LBN Youth Opportunities Fund.



L. to R.
Back Row: Julian Lamothe, Tim Bateman, Matthew Crisp, Kevin Kiruthi, Jamaal Anderson.
Mid Row: Amahleke Reid, Kieren Curran, Andan Anderson, Daniel Cox, Hayden Lawrence
Front Row: Munya Chidakwa, Simeon Burnett, ,



Participants

The participants were

Andan Anderson, Jamaal Anderson, Simeon Burnett, Munya Chidakwa, Daniel Cox, Matthew Crisp, Kieren Cullen, Kevin Kiruthi, Julian Lamothe, Hayden Lawrence, Amahleke Reid.

The Team Leader was Tim Bateman supported by Munya and Matthew. The Cooks and Driver were Tyrone Reid and Clive Furness.

Our instructors at Plas Y Brenin were Oli and Louise.

Plas Y Brenin

We arrived at Plas Y Brenin rather later on the Friday than we had planned. This was in part due to traffic jams on the M1 and in part due to listening to the instructions on the sat-nav, which, as we passed Birmingham decided to take us on a 20 mile circular route to bring us back onto the M6 some five miles down the road! Not a good omen for the start of an orienteering weekend.

Plas Y Brenin is the National Mountain Centre and is situated in Snowdonia National Park. We occupied a clean, warm bungalow with four bed rooms and bunk accommodation for 16.

There were two key tasks that we set for the weekend. (1) To learn sufficient orienteering skills to enable participants to set up and run an orienteering challenge and (2) to have fun.

Morning One



In the daylight it was clear that we were in a part of the country that was both beautiful and dramatic. This of itself provoked many discussions about the virtues of town and country living. We were in a stone bungalow set on the edge of woodland across the valley from the

main centre. Between us there were two small lakes and a bridged stream; in the distance we could see Mt Snowdon.



The first morning was spent on orienteering - getting the basics right. Many participants had not used a compass before and were unfamiliar with maps. The initial practice was spent in and around the grounds of Plas Y Brenin; becoming familiar with map and compass reading. After some quick tuition, they could all quickly and accurately find a bearing between any two points on the map.

Afternoon One

This was split into two activities. Firstly a 'low ropes' activity and second on the climbing wall.



The low ropes included some team building exercises that led into an impromptu dance routine by Hayden, Amahleke and six boys on a telegraph pole, much to the amusement and entertainment of everyone else.



The second section involved traversing a low rope circuit which was done once individually and a second time requiring more in the way of team work. The group was split into pairs and some were blindfolded, their partner had to guide, assist and instruct them on the way round. The others had to work together to carry round a hollow barrel and a long pole. This activity allowed some of the natural jokers (you know who you are Andan, Kevin and Simeon) to come to the fore. All of the participants worked well together and were impressive in the support that they gave to each other and in the ways in which they anticipated and helped their partners. Jamaal, Kieren, Munya and Matthew displayed quiet and sometimes largely unnoticed helpfulness to their colleagues.

This moved on through a rope-swing activity to 'blind walk' in which every participant was blindfolded and had to trust and follow the person in front through obstacles which included trees, water hazards, slopes, a tunnel and a muddy crawl under netting. Two very different approaches were exemplified by Hayden and Simeon. The former upon reaching an obstacle would find the most trouble free way around, so if the route led through a tree with several closely stacked trunks, Hayden would gently navigate his way around and keep his team informed of what they were doing and where they were going. Simeon would note that the guide rope went in a certain direction and holler out to his group 'the rope goes straight on, follow me', as indeed they did, regardless of the obstruction.



Following this, team working skills were put to the test on the climbing walls, where participants had to partner up and help each other on the rope-assisted walls. Once again, Julian excelled and made the rest of us look decidedly incompetent in the process.



It was an activity that allowed participants to follow colour coded hand holds according to ability and everyone enjoyed participating. Tyrone showed himself to be an undiscovered 'rock rat' by shooting up the climbing wall.



Morning Two

Despite assurances that the contrary would be true, the participants showed themselves less than energetic in the morning following a 1.30am bedtime. Nonetheless they worked well developing their orienteering skills and completed both a 'classroom' session - done outside - and an orienteering route through the forest during which several participants demonstrated and previously unknown and wholly unnatural desire to become better acquainted with the local sheep. Worryingly, there was an addition of a sheep's skull to the table at the de-briefing session. Apparently Simeon 'found' it.



Several participants showed themselves to be stars in orienteering not least of whom were Jamaal, Matthew, Kieren, Julian and Tim.

Afternoon Two

Following lunch the afternoon activity was dry slope skiing. Again, participants ranged from absolute beginners to several who had skied abroad. A number were kind enough to amuse onlookers by falling over, frequently. Kieren failed in his attempt to break the ski lift, despite trying twice. Daniel, Simeon, Kevin, Mathew and Kieren all showed themselves to have real prowess on skis. The skiing provided a 'high' on which to leave after a very successful weekend.



Report compiled by Clive, Matthew, Munya.

Photos by Matthew, Tim, Amahleke and Clive (on Matthew's camera!).

Full album at

<http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=49757734333#/album.php?aid=72455&id=515318896>

<http://www.facebook.com/photos.php?id=515318896#/album.php?aid=72460&id=515318896>

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