

Breaking Barriers

- a journey of inclusion



by Lawrence Chapman



In the Autumn of 2010 I was invited to the EOE conference in Slovenia. This was an exciting opportunity in itself and I presented some thoughts on the future of Outdoor Centres and how they communicated their work with school leaders, some of this work was published in Horizons (Spring 2011 Issue 53).

On the flight home from Slovenia I sat next to Professor Barbara Humberstone from Buckinghamshire University. She asked me to write an article on some of our school work for a European Newsletter. Some while later I was contact by Jochen Riehl from Nuremberg, Germany to discuss an exchange project for disabled learns to work in the outdoors. Jochen had been involved with a project started in 2003 at Church Town Farm. At the time the farm was an adventure for all centre specialising in working with people with disabilities.

The Ashley School is a Special School for pupils with Moderate learning difficulties and complex needs. Suffolk only has about 2% of its population in special schools, which is quite low, and so we only work with those learners in most need of help.

As part of our outdoor programme we take a coach of pupils to Wales every May. In 2011 Jochen Rhiel brought a group of his students to the centre at the same time as us. This was the start of the project for us. A few weeks later I visited Nuremberg and the special School "Witchernhaus" in Altdorf as well as spending some time at the mill in the countryside.

Millcraft (MuhlenKaft) have a site on the banks of the river Pegnitz with an old water mill. They are renovating and rebuilding the site to offer adventure for all for German students. I returned just a few weeks later with a group of 16 students for a week's German adventure.



In June 2012 we host a group from Germany on the school grounds, in total there were 50 of us camping. We chose to take the Duke of Edinburgh's Award as a structure to the week, as Muhlenkraft are interested to develop this within their work. It's called the International Award outside the UK.

We developed a programme looking at the four areas of the Award, as well as some time to take in some of the cultural aspects of the UK and Lowestoft area.



<< This is the Breaking Barriers programme that we used....

DAY	AM	PM	EVE
Friday	Travel from Altdorf to Lowestoft	Arrive, welcome and setup Group at Lowestoft to spend the afternoon setting up camp for the arrival. Welcome party and BBQ at the school	
Saturday	Shared goal setting Objective to set the aims and aspirations of the week	Southwold - 4 activities. Crabbing, off shore boat tour, beach walk and tour of the Pier. Objective to view a different area of Suffolk. Photograph 3	Fish & Chips at Southwold Pier
Sunday	Developing accessibility access at the centre Objective to put things in place to make the centre and the activities accessible as possible	European discussions through social time. Activities include making a big EU map. Objective to explore the understanding of the EU with the participants	Objective to spend social time with new friends and to see some of the history of the Norfolk Broads
Monday	Sailing with the support of Sailabilty - sailing charity. Objective to get as many sailing as wish to. To experience the thrill of sailing and handling the craft. Photograph 4.		Expedition planning, planning the route with maps, planning what equipment to take, planning the food. Objective to prepare for the expedition, getting to know new friends even better.
Tuesday	Duke of Edinburgh style Canoe expedition on the Broads and River Waveney with a Wild camp on land used by the DofE club. Objective to undertake a journey in the outdoor using their own power where possible. To work with new friends in a challenging place, learning further about how they work. Photographs 5, 6 and 7		Wild camp, using a field that the Ashley use every year. It is not far from Lowestoft but feel as if it's right out in the country. Objective to give a positive experience of wild camping and to support Mühlenkraft with being able to wild camp in the future.
Wednesday	Expedition returns, clean/dry equipment and put away. Objective to work as new teams showing responsibility.	Use of public transport to the maritime museum and a chance to see the history of Lowestoft Objective to learn some of the history of Lowestoft and place in the context of the EU.	Objective to spend social time with new friends Photograph 8
Thursday	Join staff of the school in lining the streets of Lowestoft to see the Olympic flame go through Lowestoft.	Review of aims and personal growth. Objective to review each individual's progress and achievements during the week and celebrate these.	Leaving ceremony/ disco Objective social time to say good bye to new friends and make arrangements to stay in touch.
Friday	Travel home, via London, with 3 hours in London for German Students.		Time with Families



Reflections of the Process

A significant amount of work for adults planning and leading. This comes from the planning and bid writing, then to thinking about the accommodation, borrowing equipment, tents etc, to dealing with the inevitable changes and working collaborative with other customs, cultural issues, accessibility issues and a few language barriers.

Successes depend on your outlook and expectations. For me personally to have 50 people take part in an expedition afloat and wild camping was truly amazing. We managed to provide ways for the whole group to be included in the journeying and camping, including having the group working in small teams to cook an evening meal on camp stoves. We are grateful to a local landowner for his kind permission to land and camp.

Outcomes for pupils were many and have included:

- Developing self-esteem and team building through outdoor challenge and residential experiences.
- Challenging us all about language and communication. None of the English adults involved spoke German, most of the German adults did speak English. The young people all found ways to communicate so that language was not a barrier.
- Challenging stereotypes of disability. Some of the UK learners with learning disabilities were feeling that they were very disabled. They learnt that there are many people with much more challenging disabilities and that none of these disabilities need to be a barrier to adventure and achievement.
- Challenging ideas of cultural and ethnic norms. North Suffolk and Lowestoft especially, is not very culturally or ethnically diverse. Working with new youngsters and adults with different cultures, with different customs and traditions was important in making pupils more tolerant and rounded citizens.
- Developing ideas of EU citizenship and Broadening horizons.



Many of the UK students have never travelled abroad or met people from a different country. To spend time living with different people with a different language and different culture we hope will broaden the outlook for some to look more to travel. By contrast, most of the German students have some experience of travelling to other European countries and this appears easier as it can just be a case of driving across borders.

Next steps

2013 will be 10 years of Breaking barriers, although we have only been involved for the last two years we will be bidding again to host an event in the UK to mark this celebration. We are currently working with the Calvert Trust to host and event in the Lakes or Northumberland. ■

Notes:

Funded largely by the EU Youth in action, youth exchange programme
The video from this programme is available to view at <http://www.ashleyschool.co.uk/index.php/projects/39-breaking-barriers>

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<http://www.muehlenkraft.de/>
<http://www.ashleyschool.co.uk>

Author Notes

Lawrence

Chapman is Deputy Head at The Ashley School Academy Trust in Lowestoft where he is also the Unit co-ordinator for the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Lawrence is LPIOL and chair of the IOL East Region executive. Lawrence is working on using existing qualifications for employability and personal development in the outdoors. In his spare time he paddles and was one of those paddling on the Thames for the Pageant earlier in the year and will be swimming in the sea at Lowestoft on Christmas Day.

Photographs: all from the author

