

## *The Goodwin Academy* *Duke of Edinburgh Award*

Kent County Council “Duke of Edinburgh Award” (DofE) asked the Goodwin Academy participants for the “Duke of Edinburgh Award” (DofE), to participate in a national trial to see if “out of season expeditions” are a viable option. The weekend chosen was that of Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> February to Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2018, that being the weekend the “Beast from the East” was descending on our country.

Friday afternoon saw all the participants clamber onto mini-buses and journey to “The Swattenden Centre” near Cranbrook. There they met up with their assessor for the weekend, one Mr Norry Barber, head of the KCC’s DofE provision, who thanked them for participating in a very important trial and that, although their participation was very much appreciated, it did not guarantee a pass, they still had to meet the 20 expedition conditions set out by the DofE. They were then billeted and got themselves prepared for the weekend ahead.

Saturday morning was extremely cold; the ground conditions were muddy and slippery to say the least. The participants soon found, to their horror that footpaths that were clear in summer conditions disappeared during autumn and winter, due to ploughing and vegetation growth. The footpaths that were clear were just mudslides you slipped on or your feet sank into. Despite all this, they still soldiered on and Mr Barber was very impressed with the way they dealt with the extreme conditions. We had one participant who sadly has a recurring injury, who found the going exacerbated the problem and therefore, sadly, had to drop out of the hike. The hike ended with a more than satisfactory conclusion. Then came pitching the tents, although they were not using them for sleeping in overnight, they still had to be able to erect them in case of an emergency during the hike. This was followed by cooking their evening meal on “Trangia’s” outside in the wind and the cold. This all satisfactorily completed they were then allowed back in the accommodation for a good night’s sleep.

Six am Sunday morning and they were all getting up to cook their breakfast, outside on the Trangia’s, and prepare for their next hike. It was freezing, so much so that the mudslides the day before were now like concrete and there was no give or spring in the ground they trod. Joints were going to be put to the test yet again. 8:30 am saw them depart. During this period, one of the participants who is a competition standard gymnast started to suffer with sore knees. She had not asked for ice packs in the morning and their first aid kits did not contain them, so she improvised, she strapped two ice blocks from puddles to her knees with hairbands. (See picture below). This so impressed Mr Barber, who leads Gold expeditions in Finland, to take the photograph to show on his training courses.



The hike being completed, a debrief ended the day where Mr Barber passed them all and highly recommended they furthered their experience by attempting the Silver Award. He praised them highly for their perseverance and ingenuity in adverse conditions and said they should be very proud of their achievements.

I would like to add my thanks to the other two members of staff who assisted with the weekend, namely Mrs Hamilton-Hopkins and Mr Sam Brady. Mr Barber commented on their dedication to the achievements and welfare of the young people and were a credit to the school.

Every single one of them are a credit to themselves, their families and the school. Well done everybody I had high expectations and you exceeded them!