

Essex Army Cadets sail the west coast of Scotland.

In September 7 Army Cadets from Essex successfully carried out a Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award sailing expedition around the West coast of Scotland. The expedition was the culmination of 6 months planning and training, during which they learned all aspects of sailing including navigation, weather forecasting, rope work and boat handling,



The cadets learned a great deal about themselves as a crew during the week and by the end of the expedition they even managed to gain full Royal Yachting Association (RYA) qualifications as either Day Skipper or qualified Competent Crew.

The week saw continuous severe weather with 5 metre high seas and 45 mile per hour winds for most days during their expedition. Days on the high seas were spent pounding through waves and as the first days of seasickness passed, they soon reveled in the adventure, thanks to an excellent boat and crew. The long hard days sailing were rewarded with some beautiful evenings at anchorage where they enjoyed home made evening meals while listening to the next horrendous weather forecast and planning the forthcoming days passage.





During the trip, L/Cpl Alex “the regular sailor” Ellis made a great catering officer, making sure the food was of top standard every day while Sgt Steven “The Fish” Fisher stood up to the plate in the worst of the weather and helmed the yacht like a seasoned sea dog. Just don’t ask “The Fish” to wash up – it ends up over the side in 20m of water. Cpl Nick Sava and Sgt Craig Carter were masters of the chart and compass and together made sure that the navigation was spot on – no small task when there are hundreds of un-marked rocks to hit at any time. Sgt Jordan Parr took hundreds of photos during the expedition and will be publishing the results once she can sit still without it feeling like she’s still on a boat and Sgt Mjr Adam Smith is now saving hard so he can buy his own boat and invite MTV to check out his crib!

The cadets finally returned to base at the end of the week in good spirits but in need of a hot shower having not washed or been ashore all week. The crew only had 300 litres of water for everything including cooking, drinking, washing up and cleaning the boat, so wet wipes were the order of the day for personal washing and every drop of water was monitored on a water meter while CA Chalmers made sure nobody pressed the red reset button on the water meter!



The expedition was monitored by Essex ACF skipper – Mark Disney who allowed the cadets to run the boat on their own but was there to make sure they didn’t get themselves or the yacht into any difficulty. He said “I’m really glad we broke new ground and tried this and I’m really impressed with the result. The cadets have all said it was an excellent expedition, that it was harder than they thought it would be and more demanding than the traditional walking expedition.”