

OUTWARD BOUND AT ABERDOVEY

Seeing and reading recent articles on the website regarding cadets spending nights under canvas, (especially Geraint Phillips and Dylan Thomas, whom I shared lodgings with in Carmarthen) took me back to my time as a Cadet. Most Dyfed-Powys Cadets went to Elan Valley, but as I joined at 18 and would be going to DPTC Bridgend in the June, I drew the short straw and went to the Outward-Bound Centre at Aberdovey instead.

In April 1972, I remember being driven by Warren Leyshon (Lash) who was then a constable in the Training Dept. at HQ in a Morris Minor police van to meet David 'Doc' Thomas, Aberystwyth Traffic, somewhere near Ffostrasol, who then drove me to the centre in Aberdovey. (I recently met David in France. I couldn't have made much of an impression on him that day as he didn't remember the journey!)

The students were from all walks of life - apprentices from big companies in the Midlands, to an apprentice trawlerman from Whitby who was nicknamed Tugboat, and another Police Cadet from Welwyn Garden City. Our civilian instructors were skilled in outdoor pursuits, some of them being accomplished adventurers.

Our accommodation consisted of barrack type huts, and I was introduced to the "biscuit" making of bed rolls which stood me in good stead later for Bridgend. We were woken at 6am every morning for what was called "plod and plunge". This entailed running about a mile in our swimming trunks (thank God they weren't the old-fashioned knitted type) and then a two-length swim in the outdoor pool. I may add that it wasn't of Olympic standard - also bear in mind this was early April.

During the day we were taught map reading, knot tying, and various other outdoor skills. We took to the water at Aberdovey, where we were taught to sail a Wayfarer boat, and man the centre's skiff. Taking it out to the estuary. On Sundays we were tasked with being lifeguards on the nearby beach. I may add it was not a bit like Bay Watch as Aberdovey and California don't really compare! Mind you saying that 'Hoff' is married to a good ole' Welsh girl and has made his home here.

We hiked in the nearby woods and mountains, often building bivouacs as night accommodation. One of these excursions was to Cader Idris where we spent a rather uncomfortable night. (Just try sleeping with rock and stone as a mattress). Another excursion was to Birds Rock where we were 'encouraged' to climb and then abseil down the precipice. They called it a rock - it looked more like K2 to me.

This adventure lasted a month and from being a Labrador on arrival I left as a greyhound.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time at Aberdovey - it was one of the highlights of being a Cadet.