

THE CAMPFIRE

British Exploring Society
Members' Magazine

Winter 2022

"To raise funds, we wrote begging letters,
smashed up old pianos and spent 12 hours
camping in an industrial freezer at minus 20°C."

Gary, Arctic Norway 1984



CONNECTION
CELEBRATION
CONTRIBUTION

Picture credit: Ben Sullivan, Himalaya 2019

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WINTER EDITION

Welcome to the Winter edition of *The Campfire*.

One of the best parts of my role, here at British Exploring Society, is the near daily opportunity to speak with our Members about their time on expedition. To listen to their stories and memories; to see the similarities in experiences, whether their expedition was last year or 50 years ago; and most importantly, to hear first-hand about the long term, positive impact that so many of our Members believe their British Exploring Society expedition(s) has had on their lives.

This month we have published our Impact Report for 2021. The report is filled with uplifting stories of positive change and life-defining experiences from our Young Explorers, Leaders, Members and Staff. It also contains inspirational messages from our President, Marvin Rees, and CEO, Honor Wilson-Fletcher, and provides a comprehensive overview of the work we having been doing in the past year. You can read a copy of the full Impact Report here.

IMPACT REPORT

Meanwhile, inside this edition of *The Campfire*; we are delighted to welcome British Exploring Society's newest Fellow, Belinda Kirk and she reviews *Psychovertical*, an unusually honest and inspiring account of striving to follow ones dreams; young Member, Evan Chick, tells us how he is using his voice to reach and inspire other young people; and from the sweltering heat of Sudan, Graham Campbell remembers

a summer of 'endless fun' on expedition in Arctic Norway. In addition, we explain how British Exploring Society is taking a regional approach, to increase our reach – could you help us with this, or do you know someone who can? Finally, we share a radio broadcast, featuring our Newfoundland 1969 expedition, and links to our Member discounts and previous editions of *The Campfire*.

As always, we would like to thank all our Members who have generously shared their stories and photographs and made this edition possible. If you would like to contribute to a future edition of *The Campfire*, we would love to hear from you – whether you have photos to share, expedition memories, news of a reunion, or would like to tell us about what long term impact your expedition has had on you. Please drop us an email or give us a call, we would love to hear from you.

GET IN TOUCH



BOOK REVIEW: PSYCHOVERTICAL

Belinda Kirk, Fellow, explorer and author of *Adventure Revolution* (the first book to explain why adventure is essential for our wellbeing), reviews *Psychovertical* by Andy Kirkpatrick.

Andy Kirkpatrick is one of Britain's top mountaineers and a specialist in big-wall climbing. He's also a stand-up comedian, so it's not surprising that his first book, *Psychovertical*, is filled with humour, as well as epic, nail-biting ascents. There's dangling from skyhooks over huge voids, even a few hold-your-breath falls, but also stories that make you laugh-out-loud like, for example, when he explodes a 'poo-tube' in a campsite of fellow climbers.

But *Psychovertical* is so much more than a series of tales of adventure, told with wit by a skilled communicator. It is also an unusually honest and truly inspiring account of striving to follow your dreams. I think, society overuses the word 'inspiring' these days but here is a story that's worthy, an account to truly lift anyone's heart and seed hope.

The book charts Andy's life, from his deprived childhood on an inner-city housing estate in Hull, through his first taste of climbing and onto extreme athletic and mental achievements on vertical rock. This autobiographical backstory is woven into his account of a 13-day ascent of Reticent Wall on El Capitan in Yosemite, considered the hardest, big-wall climb ever soloed by a Briton at that time.

His early climbs are fraught with defeat. Even his later, world-class achievements continue to be outnumbered by mistakes,

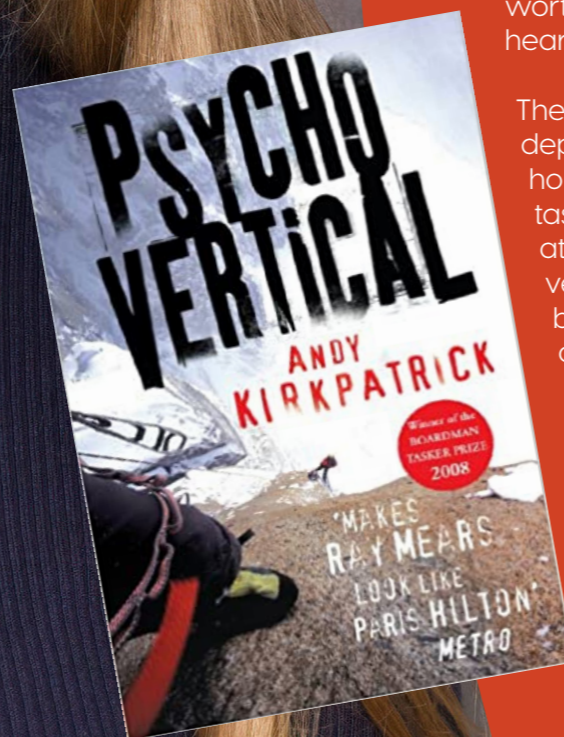
bad luck and frustration. He's a perfect example that magnificent success is rarely achieved without significant, previous failure. Andy doesn't only share the struggles he faced in the mountains. His challenging childhood was exacerbated by undiagnosed dyslexia, which contributed to feelings of doubt, worthlessness and imposter syndrome.

It's through his climbing that Andy surprises himself, with what he can do by overcoming real and perceived obstacles. He admits to it being 'a scary and fraught learning curve' but it is his critical assessment of why he climbs, and his quest to understand his urge to extend his limits, that really makes this such a great read. Life, like climbing, can be complicated and challenging but Andy continues to get up after he falls, and this helps him to discover an elusive sense of meaning.

I'd guess, Andy's younger-self would not have believed he'd forge new ground-breaking routes, become an award-winning author or that his experience might inspire others.

Have you read a book that might inspire our Members? Why not write a short review and send it to us. We would love to include it in a future edition of *The Campfire*.

SUBMIT A REVIEW





HOW TO BE A JUNIOR SURVIVOR

Evan Chick, Hartz Scottish Explorers 2021, joined us on expedition after he discovered British Exploring Society through our online Wildestan adventures. Here, he explains how he is using his project, *Junior Survivor*, to reach and inspire other young people.

Hey there fellow Explorers, I'm Evan, a 16-year-old lad who is an avid adventurer, passionate about the wilderness and the founder of *Junior Survivor*.

A few years ago, I set up *Junior Survivor* as a project to change my own life, but it's turned into something more - one that I'm using to try and be a positive role model to others, inspiring them to become Junior Survivors.

When I was a bit younger, I hit a tough time in life. A time when all my negatives and struggles came to a head. I was constantly battling with myself and with my family. It led me to a very dark place - one I almost didn't come out of. However, I managed to change my life, if not save my life, by finding a way to overcome the negatives and struggles and that's when *Junior Survivor* came about. I soon saw that my life was changing, and I wanted to share my

journey, and hoped it would inspire others to join me.

So, what does becoming a Junior Survivor actually mean? A Junior Survivor is a young person who can survive in the biggest, most dangerous, unforgiving, treacherous adventure, known to man - LIFE. And here's the best or worst bit, depending on how you look at it, you're living that adventure right now.

OK, so what was it that I did, that turned my life around? First, I understood that I was finding life tough and that I needed to do something about it. So, I took my passion for the wilderness, and I'd go out and learn (and practice) new skills used to survive in it. I'd push myself out of my comfort zone and suddenly, I saw that my self-confidence was growing. I started to gain more courage, resilience, determination, and the will to want to overcome.





As a Member, you will have stepped into the unknown on an adventure with British Exploring Society, so you'll know what I mean. You'll definitely have experienced, first-hand, how the wilderness can really change your life. Maybe, like me, you are also a young person who joined in with the online Wildestan adventures, and found that by learning new skills, it gave you a new confidence.

Through using the outdoors, we can equip ourselves with the skills we need to tackle life. By building our skill set or challenging ourselves, it gives us the tools

to build our confidence, which we can then take and apply, to survive and thrive in every aspect of life.

I'm no expert and everything I say is just from my own experiences, and the adventures I've been on, but perhaps you can connect with me, because maybe you've struggled or know someone who does.

I have managed to turn my life around and overcome my struggles, and now I want to share what helped me with other young people.

I make videos that are fun, adventurous and honest, and I hope, inspiring, for my YouTube channel and Instagram (@junior_survivor). I also share the full story of my journey and what is happening on *Junior Survivor* on my blog.

Life is an adventure, whether we like it or not. So, let's live that adventure, overcome the challenges that it throws at us and choose its destiny to be the one that we decide. That's what I'm trying to do. So, if you want to join me, pack your rucksack and head over to *Junior Survivor*. See you there!

[MY BLOG](#)

[MY INSTAGRAM](#)

[MY YOUTUBE](#)

How do you use your voice to reach, inform and inspire others? We would love to hear about it.

[SHARE WITH US](#)



FROM ARCTIC NORWAY TO CENTRAL SUDAN

Gary Campbell, Arctic Norway 1984, reflects on his expedition experiences with British Exploring Society, from his current posting in Sudan.

Today is going to be another swelteringly hot, sunny day. The generator will stay on for a couple more hours, pushing my ceiling fan around at an annoyingly slow pace, creating just enough airflow to keep my computer alive and then me! And yet again, I find myself looking out upon a wonderful vista of dry wadis and mountainous jebels, wondering how on earth I wound up in a place like this.

In the last five years, I have worked on and off with the Norwegian Refugee Council with some amazing communities in Northern Iraq, the southern marshlands of Basra and the semi-arid plains of Puntland, Somalia. I now sit in Al Leri, a fairly non-descript village, hosting large numbers of internally displaced people, refugees and just a few passing pastoralists.

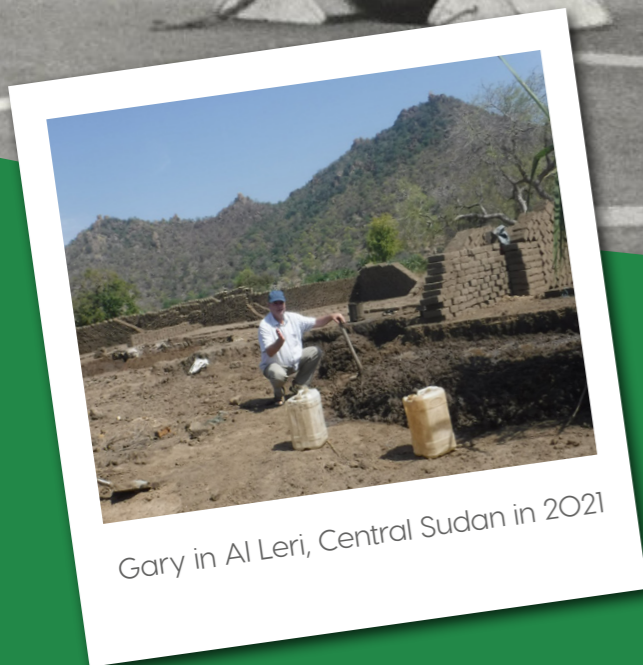
The powers that be, have once again decided my face fits and I am the most likely to survive, the deprivations imposed upon the mind and soul, living in such a remote location. It appears to be an unwritten legacy, or perhaps a curse, imposed upon those who willingly signed up in their youth for an expedition with British Exploring Society.

At the age of 18, I spent a magnificent six weeks in the Lyngen Alps of Arctic Norway, carrying supplies, running simple experiments, digging holes here and there, and being dropped down crevasses in the glaciers for my fellow explorers to simply pull me out again. It all seemed mad then, as it does now, but endless fun. I am a lot more sedate these days and somewhat fragile, but I have learnt what it means to be slower than my younger counterparts and more dependent on one's colleagues for help. In and after Norway my ego reached its heights, I was indestructible, bursting with confidence and ready to take on the world. That is how one should be in their youth and prime of life. Ready to take on every challenge and to question the status quo.

'If there is a leak in your tent in the middle of the night, on top of a snow drift in a raging blizzard, then overcome the desire to just 'let it go'...'

Many lessons were learnt in those days above the Arctic Circle. One of the most seminal of which was the need for 'PMA'. We didn't know who Tom Metcalf was, before he ran at us with





Gary in Al Leri, Central Sudan in 2021

axe in hand - slamming it into the log in front of us. Through his beard, he screamed "PMA...", followed by the words "Positive - Mental - Attitude", frightening the life out of us and forever imprinting the words on our young brains. He then, rather more calmly, sat down with a clutch of Young Explorers, round the embers of a fire and gave us a more conventional lecture on

survival techniques, all predicated on the overriding need for PMA.

'If there is a leak in your tent in the middle of the night, on top of a snow drift in a raging blizzard, then overcome the desire to just 'let it go', get up immediately and fix it, otherwise it might all be too late in the morning'. So went his premise and it has been a great lesson in life for the last 40 years.

It was my friend and 'best man' Tom who encouraged me to apply for the expedition. He had joined the 1983 East Greenland Expedition. We were fiercely competitive, so I was keen to equal his achievements. To raise funds, we wrote begging letters, smashed up old pianos and spent 12 hours

camping in an industrial freezer at minus 20°C. Training included a 65-mile, 26-hour hike, up and down the A38, Plymouth to Exeter. Precisely why we chose the hard shoulder of a dual carriageway, as we bypassed Dartmoor to the north of us, is still a mystery!

With Tom, I am ever mindful, of the distinction between physical and mental trials. We went our separate ways after our respective expeditions, but I was always aware of his desire to climb higher, endure for longer and generally push his body to the limits. Whereas, I went down the cultural route. I have always been fascinated with cultural diversity, seeing things afresh and learning new ideas. After Lyngen 1984, and university, I served for

a year as a technical volunteer in Sudan. Forty years on, I work for the Norwegians back in Sudan!

May I suggest if you are recently returned from an expedition, you keep exploring places, people and your internal limits or if, like me, you are getting on a little, remember then, with similar affection your own expedition, feel once more the fire within, never stop exploring and remember always Tennyson's words;

"Some work of noble note, may yet be done, not unbecoming men that strove with Gods"

SHARE YOUR STORY



LORD, THE FLIES!

Chris Thorp, Newfoundland 1969, explains how his expedition came to be featured in a recent Canadian radio documentary.

After the successful reunion for our Newfoundland 1969 expedition (in June 2019), a journalist from the Canadian Broadcasting Company in Newfoundland picked up on the story in 2020.

The journalist, Adam Walsh, was actually researching the 50th anniversary of the Avalon shopping mall in St John's at the time. All he found was Richard Gates' short video of our expedition, which he thought was "really neat". His enquiry to the British Exploring Society office was passed on to me, and this resulted in a series of interviews with several members of the expedition who had been at the reunion.

The interviewees included myself, Chris Grace, Chris Timmis, Bruce McLeod, Andy Cook, Joe Coady (our Canadian colleague), and Martin Brendell, leader of the Natural History Fire.

Several hours' worth of chat was eventually distilled into a 25-minute radio broadcast that finally went out in November 2021.

Adam was really enthralled hearing about our experiences, especially the curse of the Newfoundland flies, and was impressed by the strong sense of camaraderie, friendship and mutual respect for one another that has endured for over 50 years.

To listen to the broadcast, view a short article and see further images from the expedition, follow the link below.

LISTEN



INCREASING OUR REACH

Kate Suart, Head of Community and Impact at British Exploring Society, explains how we are taking a regional approach to increase our reach.

When we started the Dangoor Next Generation programme, 11 years ago, the aim was to work with young people who were least likely to have access to an outdoor experience and by taking part, would benefit most from an expedition in a wild location. We learnt a huge amount from this programme – how to support young people who had very different starting points to many of our other Young Explorers, and how to adapt our training for Leaders and young people to ensure they created a safe space with positive role models. We also worked closely with our partner organisation, Catch22, to provide ongoing support to these young people.

Our programmes have come a long way and we now work with young people, from different backgrounds and who need varying degrees of support, across all our expeditions. Our partners are key in helping us to engage with the hardest to reach young people – young people who would not naturally venture into the outdoors. These partnerships also help us to support their young

people in joining us and create a relationship of trust. It's through these partnerships that we increase our capacity to deliver positive outcomes for young people.

We cannot manage endless numbers of partnerships, or partnerships in every community in the UK, and need to focus our efforts by some means. Whilst we would love to target every group or community of under-represented young people in the UK, we do not yet have the capacity to do so. Since moving to a fully charitable-funded model for all our programmes, our need to raise money to support our work has grown. There are many potential sources of regional and national funding, and by combining our regional partnership working and fundraising efforts we hope to maximise on these opportunities.

In 2020, the British Red Cross undertook a UK-wide, freely available, and respected survey of vulnerability and deprivation during COVID, which covered all areas of the UK.





Using the data from this comprehensive survey, we identified five critical areas of highest deprivation that we aim to focus on in 2022. These are:

- South, East, and Central Scotland
- Far Northeast England
- Northwest and Greater Manchester
- Midlands
- East London and Southeast Coast

You, our Members, are located across the UK. We wanted to reach out to you, to find out whether you had any connections for regional funding or partnerships in the regions listed above. Holly and Kate, from our Engagement Team, recently delivered an Expedition Workshop in Whitehaven, Cumbria (Northwest), to a school that is connected to one of our Chief Leaders and Trustee, Soo Redshaw. We would not have been able to engage with the young people in Whitehaven, if it had not been through this connection – the majority of young

people in this area struggle to shape positive aspirations for their future and come from significant disadvantage.

It often takes time to develop a relationship, with a supporter or partner, because of the nature of what we do. We are also the best kept secret – many schools, organisations and regional funders do not know who we are or what we do. When someone is introduced to us, by a member of our community, the relationship is starting from a positive position.

We need your help to spread the word, about what we do, with the people that you know, in our key focus areas.

Please get in touch with Kate Suart or Rebecca Mahallati if you have a regional funder or partner in mind or would like to have a conversation about how you can help.

CONTACT US



CONNECT, CELEBRATE AND CONTRIBUTE



WIN A CUPPA

Are you still in touch with any of your fellow Explorers? Or, do you keep thinking it would be nice to track a few down and maybe organise a reunion?

2022 is our 90th anniversary year and we would love to see more of our Members reconnecting with each other and with British Exploring Society.

To encourage you, we would like to offer a 'cuppa on us'. If you can reconnect us with two Members who have lost touch with British Exploring Society over the years, we will send you one of our branded enamel mugs - perfect for that outdoor brew.

To qualify, please ask your reconnecting friends to email us and make sure they mention your name as their 'reconnecting Member'.

Don't forget to let us know about any celebrations that you organise, be they large or small, virtual or in-person. We would love to feature them here in *The Campfire*.

CONTACT US



Brian's diary from Finnish Lapland 1957

MEMBER VISIT

We recently enjoyed a visit from Brian Edney, Finnish Lapland 1957, and his wife, at our offices in the attics at the Royal Geographical Society.

Brian now lives in Tucson, Arizona, where he continues to enjoy hiking at altitude.

It was lovely to talk to Brian and hear about his memories of his time on expedition. In addition, he kindly gave us a copy of his expedition diary, which has been typed up, beautifully bound and includes reproductions of photographs and maps. It is a wonderful addition to our archive.

Thank you, Brian!



Brian in the Catalina Mountains, Arizona, USA





MEMBER DISCOUNTS

This is a reminder that, as a Member of British Exploring Society, you are entitled to discounts with our select partners. There are eight brands that offer varying discounts, please click below to find out more.

[DISCOUNTS](#)

CONNECT

Please help us to keep up-to-date with the information we hold for you and let us know of any changes to your details. You can also pass this link on to any other Members you are still in contact with.

We will use the information to keep you informed of activities and events which may be of interest to you, provide opportunities for you to get involved in the work of the charity, contact you on behalf of other Members that might like to get back in touch, and to send future editions of *The Campfire*.

[UPDATE MY DETAILS](#)

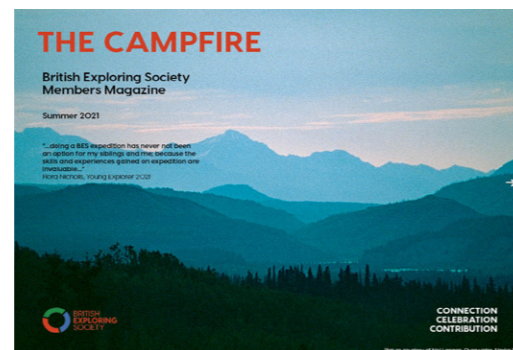
FOLLOW US

Remember to follow us, like and share on social media. Please click the following links.



HAVE YOU MISSED AN EDITION OF THE CAMPFIRE?

Click the images below, to take a look at past editions of *The Campfire*.



NEXT ISSUE SPRING 2022

FIND YOUR FIRE