



Our Vision: Girls' lives transformed; God's world enriched



Duke of Edinburgh Stories

The following articles are stories from Girls' Brigade members, about their Duke of Edinburgh journey's. The Duke of Edinburgh is a International Award, that girls can achieve in Girls' Brigade.



My Duke of Edinburgh Experience

My journey with the Duke of Edinburgh Award (D of E) began in 2009, when I joined the girls from my company at Sans Souci Girls Brigade and together we began our D of E journey. During my Bronze award (in year 9) I learnt a lot about myself. I learnt I could walk 26km over two days, I could carry 12kg on my back for two days and most importantly I could navigate through bushland and not get lost!



During each award I had to involve myself in 3 different community based activities including a physical activity, developing a skill and serving people. Added to this was either an adventurous journey or the dreaded hikes. As I am already involved in and passionate about many of these activities I continued much of what I was already involved in, in order to complete each level of my D of E. This was a great benefit for someone like me who has a busy life! These included netball and personal fitness, party planning, photography and being a young leader in Girls Brigade.

Before my first Duke of Edinburgh Hike

I gained my bronze and silver D of E awards whilst still at school and then in 2013 I began my journey to complete the final level - gold. Added benefits to doing the award included building back my fitness after sustaining an injury whilst playing netball.

For Gold I chose exploration instead of expedition and avoided any more dreaded hikes! Turns out there was still a fair bit of walking BUT it allowed me to stay in an actual bed over the 4 day 3 night trip! I also got to explore and look at the differences between coastal and mountain environments.

Completing my gold Duke of Edinburgh proved a longer experience then I first thought. My procrastination in completing the paper work meant I did not receive my gold D of E until November of 2016. It was an honour receiving my award from the Governor of NSW, Mr David Hurley.

Whilst there have been aspects of my Duke of Edinburgh Award that have been challenging and did challenge me, the over all experience was positive and I have gained many important skills, made great friends and learnt that once I put my mind to something I can achieve it.



Being presented with my Gold Duke

by Amelia Beattie - Girls' Brigade San Souci

Duke of Edinburgh Award and its impact on my life

My introduction to the Duke of Edinburgh Award was not something I would have contemplated if it wasn't for a misunderstanding in the requirements for the Queens Award. I wasn't at all a very outdoorsy type of person (I hate spiders and bugs etc.), but when the idea and challenge was put towards me I thought "Why Not!". Little did I know that, 8 years and 3 awards later, it would still have an impact on my life.

Although the D of E is not solely about 'hiking', my most treasured and challenging experiences came from my expedition and explorations, which are as follows:

Bronze (1987) – My first introduction to expedition, hiking and camping. Our purpose was to "Explore the natural Fauna and Flora". My two hikes were Oxford to Bundeena and Waterfall to Bundeena. As a child, I would visit my nan in Hornsby Heights whose property backed onto the Galston Gorge. We would often go bushwalking along the fire trail. The beauty of the bush has always given me a sense of peace and calm, but when you have a purpose to explore God's beautiful creation one can tend to see it in a different light – through God's eyes and how He intended it to be.

Silver (1989) – As I did expedition for Bronze I wanted to try Exploration and compare the two styles. For this award our purpose was "Crossing the Blue Mountains". And like Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson, we explored our crossing around the same time of year that they did there's. I still have no idea what was going through Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson's mind to attempt this in the middle of winter – the Blue Mountains are freezing at this time of year.

Gold (1991) – My Gold award was by far the most enjoyable and memorable. It too was expedition and the purpose for this exploration was "the discovery of Gold". I fell in love with a sleepy little town called Sofala, near Bathurst, with its historical buildings and beautiful weeping willows beside the Turon river. It is one thing to study Australian history in school, but a completely different feeling to experience and see the location first hand.

I have some great memories from my hikes: from the fear of seeing a red belly black snake frozen on the trail more scared of us than we were of it; amazement at the beauty of a diamond python curled up high in a fork of a tree; or the shock when we discovered that one girl had gotten lost for 4 hours because she turned down the wrong path during Bronze hike. To the excitement of seeing snow for the first time; the fun of panning for gold, and the pain of blisters and backaches from sleeping on the ground. Experiences I will treasure for a life time.

The Duke of Edinburgh award had a huge impact on my life. It gave me strength to explore and challenge myself in things I never thought I could do. I went places and met wonderful people I wouldn't have done if not for this scheme. I did go on to also do my Queen's Award but am so grateful that The Girl's Brigade gave me the opportunity to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh award. Although it was confronting and hard at times I believe it allowed me to change and grow for the better. It has been 30 years since I started my D of E journey (I'm sure it has changed a little since then) however I believe the initial purpose of the Duke of Edinburgh Award is still prominent today: explore, discover, grow; but above all challenge yourself and be courageous.

By Tammy Bartlett - Leader at Girls' Brigade Blacktown

These photos are of me and other girls achieving the Duke of Edinburgh award from Bronze, Silver and Gold levels.



My Duke of Edinburgh Story

I started D of E in 2012, a 15 year old high achiever wanting a set of nice shiny badges like so many of the older girls and Leaders had. Little did I realise that the badge and certificate are the least important part of D of E. Granted, it's pretty nice to add the pin to your sash, but when you



receive it, that pin reminds you of the adventure that you undertook. Bronze, Silver, or Gold, D of E is about getting out of your comfort zone and getting to know yourself.



When I look at my Bronze badge, I remember how accomplished I felt planning my first explorations in the Penrith area and Sydney with the Glenbrook girls. I remember picking up "Trevor" my free native plant from an exhibit at Penrith City Council (and later realising that gardening is not my forte) and waiting on the platform at Central station late at night because we missed our train home and the next one was an hour later. I achieved my Bronze Award in fencing (by half a mark, which I thought was impressive!) and completed my Grade 1 in Piano.

When I see my Silver badge I remember going to a gym for the first time. A few months in, I fell off the treadmill trying to change a song on my phone, but got back up again, slightly limping, trying to assure everyone that I was okay and awkwardly laughing it off. I remember doing my exploration in America on a dance trip with my sister's studio and getting chased by a squirrel who was eyeing off my granola bar.

I'm doing my Gold at the moment and so far have learnt how few steps I do each day now that I work in an office, and how much I struggle to keep a straight face in photos.



When you're going through D of E and when you look back on it, you will remember the hard times also. I remember how anxious I felt in the beginning stages of my explorations and how often times I'd get half way through a component and wish it was over (*cough* gym contract *cough*). I remember late night/early morning packing for explorations, long hot days exploring with everyone getting on each other's nerves and going to piano lessons when I didn't feel like it. But I think that



the difficult times teach you the discipline to get along with people who you wouldn't normally choose for friends and to follow through on commitments you make which is a hugely important life skill.



D of E isn't easy, and it's not an award that is given away. You have to earn it. It can be hard and frustrating at times. It requires endurance and discipline. But that said, the sky is your limit! (although, if you can afford to go on a space exploration, I'd probably say that space is your limit. The same goes for time travel...) You can honestly take the award anywhere you can dream of and use it to help you achieve something you've always (or just recently) wanted to! Have you ever wanted to ballroom dance, sing, learn a language, take up floristry, learn to yodel, run a marathon, volunteer at a local animal shelter, direct your own movies, become a photographer, pass a music exam or a martial arts grading, do craft with children, serve tea to seniors, paint a masterpiece or hula in Hawaii? D of E might just be the opportunity for you to do that...

By Chloe Steward, Penrith Company

