

Boys' and Girls' Brigade's Busy Month of May

May was a very busy month for the boys, girls, Officers and helpers in The Boys' and Girls' Brigade.

On the last weekend of April, first weekend of May, 16 boys and girls and 12 Officers and helpers, went to the Boys' Brigade North West District Centre in Kirkham for their Annual Camp. The weekends away are always a brilliant time for the young people to experience new things, make new friends and grow even closer towards God.

This weekend saw a number of first time campers, campers who were a little more experienced (but still cautious) and those who took the whole weekend in their stride. As we played games, shared devotions, climbed the climbing wall, explored the "caves", shot arrows, ate food and laughed until the early hours, it was lovely to see the young new campers getting over their home-sickness and worries to become an integral part of the group and hopefully campers for many years to come. It's difficult to put into words what is gleaned from time away from home life, electronic equipment, television and games consoles, but those of us who've been on many camps know the benefits that the children receive from their time away.

The following Saturday, the 6th, was the Annual Boys' and Girls' Brigade Display which saw the return of the Reverend George Barton and his wife Jennifer. It was lovely to see them both again, they thoroughly enjoyed the evening and it was great to see a good number of the Church members supporting the boys and girls as they demonstrated the things that they have learned over the past year.

What was particularly evident was the way the brigades have altered since Reverend Barton was the Minister at Marshside Road. In the late 1990s both the BB and GB were very strong in terms of numbers, but when a large group left (to go to University or start work, for example), the companies started to struggle. This led to the Company Section of the BB closing for a couple of years until Kalum and Jake were old enough to move up.

Since the early years of the 21st Century, the numbers have steadily increased. Some might say that the reduced numbers is a problem but considering the individual challenges faced by some of our members, the space provided allows them to participate in activities that they may never have got chance to do in years gone by. And despite a very steep learning curve, the space has also allowed the leaders to provide the necessary support, guidance and opportunities for the young people to flourish in a loving, safe and welcoming environment. Something that is very important in this day and age. This was change in approach was epitomised by Danny Mayor and Reece Wells receiving their President's Badges at the display, by Sam

Howard playing a guitar solo for the first time in front of an audience, by the younger boys and girls demonstrating their skills in head and catch, Mrs Brown's shopping basket and devotions or by the older boys performing their drill item so smartly. You can truly feel the work of God in action on a Wednesday night, there's nothing more powerful than a child's smile.

To finish off the busy time, on the 14th of May, Sam Owen was presented with his Queen's Badge at the North West District Queen's Badge Ceremony held at South Chadderton Methodist Church. It was lovely to see so many young people from all over the North West and from very different backgrounds receiving their awards in recognition of the hard work they have put in over the previous 2 years. Sam was also a member of the colour party and the awards were presented by the Lord Lieutenant of Manchester. Following on from achieving their President's Badges, we are hoping Reece and Danny will follow in Sam's footsteps and earn their Queen's Badges over the next couple of years.

The busy month of May has demonstrated once again the commitment, dedication and generosity of the Officers and Leaders who give up their time, energy and skills to ensure that the boys and girls of our BB and GB companies can grow into wonderful young people, be a credit to the brigades, the church, their parents and themselves and grow closer to God.

Thanks,

Kay Owen