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20 | REFLECTING ON THE 2021 ANNINGTON CHALLENGE

# REFLECTING ON THE 2021 ANNINGTON CHALLENGE

This year's Annington Challenge – Annington's project for military youngsters that runs in partnership with the Outward Bound Trust – has once again proved to be the highlight of the summer for a fortunate and deserving few, including 25 RAF youngsters.



The Annington Challenge provides military youngsters from all over the UK with an opportunity to experience an Outward Bound course and is aimed at those who feel they would benefit from an experience proven to improve self-confidence and self-belief, team working skills and resilience. Recommended by their teachers, our youngsters aged 13-17 spent between 7-19 days experiencing the very best of the Outward Bound's courses at two of their fantastic centres – Aberdovey in North Wales and Ullswater in Cumbria.

Many of this year's RAF participants had secured a place in 2020 but had seen hopes dashed as the Outward Bound closed their centres as the full impact of the Pandemic began to be felt. Re-opening in 2021 required a restriction on numbers and meant smaller groups and no sharing of dormitories – but despite this, fun levels were just as high as in previous years!

The RAF youngsters enjoyed a whole host of outdoor activities that included everything from sailing, abseiling and rock climbing through to wild camping, canoeing and gorge walking. All aspects of the programmes were overseen by the Outward Bound's team of hugely experienced and qualified outdoor instructors - many of whom who have worked with previous Annington Challenge participants. They encouraged our youngsters as they tackled activities designed to take them outside their comfort zones – and beyond.

**Next year the Annington Challenge celebrates its tenth anniversary and applications are now open!**

**ENVOY** WINTER 2021  
| raf-ff.org.uk

"Out of all the activities, I enjoyed the gorge walking the most – it was quite calming after the mountaineering!"

If you think it sounds like fun but need some convincing, maybe 17 year old Alex Mason, whose father is stationed at Brize Norton can persuade you!

Alex is currently studying for his A levels at Thomas Adams 6th Form in Shropshire. Having tackled other outdoor type activities before, Alex was confident that he could handle whatever the five day Annington Challenge threw at him. But he admits that as the start date loomed, he felt a little apprehensive about meeting new people. However, having been to seven schools in 12 years, Alex's military childhood stood him in good stead!



Alex Mason



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Alex tackled a five day course at the Outward Bound Centre in Aberdovey and found the activities more challenging than he had expected and readily admits that support from the others in his group plus instructor Chris made all the difference.

*"The expedition to Cader Idris was quite challenging but the others kept me going. Looking back I am glad I did it - glad I had people pushing me on. I definitely enjoyed the experience. The whole Challenge reminded me of how much I enjoy being outside and not just playing video games."*

**What would Alex say to other RAF youngsters thinking about applying for a place in 2022 but feeling anxious?**

*"Do it! It's fun and exciting. You are constantly supported and have people looking out for you – the other participants as well as the instructors."*

**Interested in applying for 2022?**

Keep an eye out for the Annington Challenge advert in this magazine as it will contain the web link for the next round of applications!

Watch the video of the 2019 Challenge online at:  
<https://vimeo.com/359004535/572433c229>