



Amidst the trees of Mill Meadows, Friday night started off like any other night. It was a dark and cloud free sky, with a hint of a promise of rain. The trees resting from a day of dawning spring, gently rustling, unable to stay still. Here and there the scurry of a mouse, or the flutter of a bat, the only sounds of life, until from the bottom of the hill you could see the marching army of head torches, accompanied by the sounds of excited Scouts. The woods would not be the same tonight! On this night the 5th Billericay Scouts were in Mill Meadows on a night navigation exercise, practicing the various map and compass skills they have been taught, during the day, at night.

The exercise was simple, there were four teams, each team first had to go to base X' hidden in the woods. Once there each team was given one of four sets of different instructions, ranging from compass bearings and grid references to satellite images marked with an X. Each group then had to find the corresponding base for the instructions we had. Once at the base we then had to do different activities to earn points, returning to base X for our next set of instructions. The twist to all of this was that we only had 15 minutes to get from Base X to the target base and back again. At the end all of the points were added up for each team to determine the winner. My team one, the prize being to write up this article about the night. We thoroughly enjoyed the experience and from the sound of the other Scouts in the hall after we all got back it sounded very much like they did as well. enjoyment, despite the fact that it was cold and muddy; fortunately the leaders had already highlighted the importance of the right clothes, boots & equipment.

If you were to stay in the woods after the scouts had returned to the hall, you could be forgiven for thinking you heard the trees and wildlife sigh in relief at the fact that they could all snuggle up and slumber for a few more days, in peace. Well at least until proper spring, which is just round the corner, arrives in earnest, with chirp here and a blossoming bud there and the rampage of summer outdoor activities for the Scouts.

**Written by Matthew - Fox Patrol Leader**