

FOSSnews

The Newsletter of the Friends of Strathaven Scouts

An Amazing Year for the Group



Having ascended Colt Hill near Thornhill Explorers enjoy one of Andy Goldsworthy's Striding Arches during the Zambia training weekend.

This year has brought another raft of excellent events within the Group. The Beaver and Cub Sections have had busy and fulfilling years. Highlights have been a night hike for the Cubs, a real adventure for them, and celebrating the Beavers 25th anniversary.

The Scouts have had superb camps to Corehouse and Glen Sax involving fiendish assault courses, hill walking and plenty of skills training cooking and camping. The Scout Troop's numbers have swollen this year, of which more later.

The highlight for the Explorers was their second trip to Zambia. The Unit visited new areas to build a hammer grain mill and carry out other construction work to provide desperately needed facilities for poor rural communities. Some members were able to assist with local health care needs, all working with char-

ity Health Help International.

The Unit raised over £33,000 to support this endeavour, both the cost of the trip and the building materials. This was achieved via a wide range of fundraising activities and generous donations.

Having been involved in the planning and execution of many more traditional foreign expeditions for Scouts and Ventures in the past, I find myself bowled over by this second Zambia trip. This is far from the normal camping, hiking and sightseeing trip. Travelling to rural communities in a developing nation and undertaking voluntary work of the quality and scale achieved clearly offers a once in a lifetime opportunity for the young people involved.

I'd like to express my personal thanks to all those who supported and led the expedition, particularly Iain Park who has

masterminded two expeditions to Zambia in recent years and forged a strong bond between the Group, Strathaven as a community more broadly and HHI. I believe these expeditions are unparalleled in the Group's history.

As ever, leadership issues continued to dominate this year. The Group has been fortunate to find volunteers in Jim Kerr for the Explorers and Alison Moon for the Cubs to keep sections open. In addition many existing leaders have provided years of high quality service to the Group and remain in post to keep their sections thriving and running the wide range of exciting activities Strathaven Scouting is known for.

However, the Scouts are the section that is in desperate need of leaders. As you may know the Thursday Troop shut down some time ago due to lack of leaders. Graham McCall has proved an excellent Friday Scout leader but has recently been forced to stop accepting new members as the Troop's numbers were becoming simply too high to cope with.

This has led to a number of Cubs who were due to progress to the Troop being temporarily refused places. What a disappointment this must be for them, having progressed through Beavers and Cubs, to be unable to progress in Scouting due to lack of leaders.

So to my annual plea, if you can spare any time at all to offer the young people of Strathaven the benefit of your skills and experience, no matter how little, please contact the Executive Committee (see page 10) and offer your services. The community needs you!

Matthew McVeigh

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Cub Sections Continue To Thrive

Cillia McCleary reports on the Thursday Cubs' year, busy and fun filled as ever, while Iain Park brings good news regarding Leadership for the Friday Section

I asked the cubs what the best thing about the past year had been. Apart from the obvious answer, the camp, they came up with quite a few answers that surprised me.

We had a trip to the Science Centre to finish off the Scientist Badge which was amazing and we all enjoyed it, leaders as well. That was very popular with the cubs and we had a hard job getting them home.

Quite a few of the cubs enjoyed the badge work as can be seen when you look at the left arm on their jumper. One or two though are not into badges, possibly because of the amount of work they have to do!

The sixers and seconders also loved the night hike. We met at the hall at 11pm (late for me never mind the boys) and our route took a wander round the Old Roman Road, down to Sandford and back to sleep in the hall with bacon rolls for breakfast. This is an adventure and a half when you're 10 or 11 years old.

Camp fires proved a favourite! We don't have these often but the cubs always seem to enjoy the songs, especially when family and friends are there to swell the singing.

We also had a night where we make popcorn in a popcorn maker. That was great fun trying to guess when it would

start popping and jumping out of the machine.

Obviously the most popular activity was the games we play and although they all enjoy the old favourites, they do play new games (sometimes under duress) and get to like them.

Some of the cubs even seemed to like the leaders! At this point I have to say a big thank you to everyone who has helped with the pack over the year. Calum and Amy have been amazing, coming down every week to help out. Along with them Jan and Duncan came along for the camp and the Science Centre and anything else I ask of them.



The Blue Six enjoy a night of arts and crafts, making a scarecrow!

It is not doom and gloom on the leader front. The Friday Cubs have recently acquired a new leader, Alison Moon, who has taken over the role from Derek Gillespie.

Mother of a current scout, this position is not a result of any coercion, Alison has been a good supporter of the Group in many ways in recent years and has taken up her new role with great enthusiasm. We wish her well and since taking over Poppy Scotland have visited to talk to the Friday Cub Pack who raised a fantastic £60 for them.

Our thanks are due to Derek who has done a fine job for a number of years despite the problems he has had working at a distance from Strathaven. No doubt he will continue to help with both the cubs and Group when he is able.



There's no escape from Thursday Cubs! Young leader Calum Kerr and a cub enjoying a new game.

Explorers' Activity Packed Year

Iain Park reviews winter climbing, Zambia training and fundraising for the Explorer Unit in 2011.



Clockwise from bottom left: On the wintry summit of Sgairneach Mhor, ascending Ciste Dubh in Kintail, enjoying camp life at the Thornhill training camp in scorching weather, the Zambia team and the retaining wall they'd just built to test their construction skills!

The Explorers' programme for most of the year leading up to their trip to Zambia was largely taken up with the preparations for this event (see pages 6-9).

The Unit was unfortunate to lose the services of Niall Geraghty as Leader at the beginning of the new session in September last year. I carried on as acting leader with the assistance of Colin Simpson who had volunteered his services towards the end of 2010 and had agreed to be one of the leaders for Zambia. I decided to call it a day after Zambia and Colin took over as the Unit Leader. Unfortunately he has not been able to continue as such for very long as he has taken up a teaching appointment in Aberdeen. We are sorry to lose his services and wish him well.

We are fortunate that Jim Kerr has recently agreed to become the new Explorer Scout Leader. This bit of good news will allow the Unit to prosper into the coming year.

The tradition of the annual visit to Bertha's at New Year was maintained but only two Explorers, Harris Douglas and Robert Kerr, were able to attend

The usual high standard of cuisine was maintained but climbing was limited by the poor weather conditions and lack of snow. However an attempt was made along with Jim Murdoch of Ciste Dubh in Kintail. This started rather late in the day because of the bad road conditions and had to be aborted as a result of the poor weather and lack of daylight. Harris, Robert and I had more success in reaching the summit of Sgairneach Mhor in Drumochter on their journey home.

Harris and I were back at Bertha's along with Explorer Neil McCallum just after New Year helping with what is now also an annual tradition, a Bertha's visit for the Patrol Leaders of the Troop. There was still a lack of good snow but a successful climb of Carn na Caim in Drumochter was achieved.

For Zambia an ambitious fundraising target of £27,000 was set and a full programme of fund raising activities was planned from January until July. These included the successful Ragnab scheme, an equally successful 'sell a brick' campaign, table top sales, a coffee morning and a lecture on his ascent of the North Face of the Eiger by inter-

national Mountaineer and Guide Smiler Cuthbertson. All of these led to generous donations from organizations and individuals and the target was eventually bettered reaching the marvelous total of £27,850. Over and above this a total of £5,600 was also raised for the costs of the building and repair works which the Explorers undertook while in Zambia.

In addition to the fund raising a programme of training for the trip was also undertaken including bricklaying practice and two weekend camps. The first of these was held in the Thornhill area on one of the best weekends of the year, giving a taste of the weather which we would enjoy in Zambia. The second at the West Lothian Camp Site at Torpichen gave the Explorers the opportunity of putting their brick learning to good use by building a small retaining wall on the site.

All in all the fund raising and the training activities in the eight months leading up to the Zambia trip were of great benefit in creating the team spirit and improving the skills which helped to make Zambia the memorable success it was.

Activities Provide Scouts' Highlights

Camps have certainly been the highlight of 2011 for the Scouts. Eleven Year old James Kennedy paints a vivid picture of camp life for a first timer while Patrol Leader Euan Cuttings reviews a successful camp to Glen Sax.

Corehouse was my first Scout Camp. It was very exciting and important for me because I was invested there.

The Campsite itself was near Lanark, but to me it felt like the middle of nowhere. It is a large forest/field with a running river. The river was fantastic for the obstacle course which was amazing and gave me a great perspective of Scout Camp!

When we arrived on the Friday we all unloaded our rucsacs from the trailer and walked into the forest where we dumped our things and set up the tents. After our tents were all up we came back to get our stuff and unload the rest of the trailer. We were very hungry after this so headed back to the tents for lunch.

When lunch was over we started to get the fires lit and once we finished we played some games. At about 7pm we sat down to have dinner. We eventually lit the main fire and played wide games. After the games we sat by the fire with home baking and hot chocolate and we sung campfire songs. It was great.

On Saturday morning we woke up and made breakfast over the fire. I'm not quite sure if it was tasty or just edible.

Once we had finished eating we got our daysacks, filled them with lunch and set off for a hike to New Lanark and back. When we got back to the camp site we split into groups, one group built bivvies while the other built a bridge.

I was in the team which was building the bridge. First we built the foundations, then the base and then the handrails. This was a great challenge. Then we went on a river walk.

After the river walk we went back for dinner, played wide games and sat round the fire with home baking and a well earned hot chocolate.

After breakfast on Sunday we all prepared ourselves for the almighty obstacle course. This was my first Scout obstacle course and I wasn't prepared for what was going to happen! After the course we packed the trailer and headed home, and that was Corehouse!



On the summit of the hill climb at Glen Sax.



*"I wasn't prepared for what was going to happen!"
Scouts tackling the fiendish Corehouse assault course*

Glen Sax Camp

On Friday 28th of October at 7.30pm the majority of the Scout Troop departed for Glen Sax. When we arrived it was pitch black and cold, good thing we brought head torches.

Most of the troop stayed in the bothy but a few of the older scouts decided they'd pitch tents and sleep outside.

The next day we had an early start, some breakfast, and headed up the hill opposite the bothy. What started off as a clear, relatively mild day soon turned once we were at the top. Some wind and rain wouldn't dampen the scouts' spirit but didn't make the most inviting environment. On our descent, we had lunch and followed a stream down the hill.

Back at the bothy everyone's priority was getting dry, especially the scouts who fell in the river. Once dry we were set the challenge of carving a pumpkin, which would be filled with petrol and set alight. The creators of the best pumpkin would get a whole tin of home baking. At night we lit the pumpkins and then went inside the bothy for sketches, campfire games and, ultimately, home baking.

The next day the older scouts built an assault course - a very cold and wet assault course. Luckily nobody was allergic to eggs as these were involved in the course, but everybody had fun.

After the course we began to clean up the camp site and load everything into the trailer. Once the camp was clean we all left. A weekend well spent.



Scouts braving the icy river at Glen Sax.

Thursday Beavers

Leader Fiona Campbell reviews another busy Beaver year.

We have had a great year at Thursday Beavers in 2011. The Thursday Colonies have been running at full capacity all year and the boys have been involved in badge work, games and having fun.

I have had help from Robert Kerr, Colin Ogilvie and Philip Grady (Explorer Scouts) and Ross Crawford (Scout), Robert and Colin have been helping me for three years and unfortunately for me they are off to University now and have to concentrate on exams. I am hoping to have more boys coming along to help in the coming year.

In April it was the 25th anniversary of the founding of Beavers and the three groups got together to have a fun filled evening of games, more games and food. It is the first time we have had a joint venture and hopefully the start of many

more. Several of the Explorers come along to keep the children in check and join in the games.

The chocolate bar game once again proved to be popular with boys both young and old. The parents came along to help with the food and clearing up afterwards and kept things moving along nicely.

The Beavers would like to say a big thank you to the Executive Committee who very generously paid for the food for the night, and a special thank you to Vicki Clark for providing a fabulous cake for the boys to enjoy.

The year ahead promises to be another one full of making new friends, learning about new things and having fun at the start of the Scouting adventure.



TOP: Beavers celebrate 25 years of the youngest Scouting Section.
BOTTOM: The fantastic cake baked by Vicki Clark to celebrate!





Rory Dean reports on a memorable trip and the trials and tribulations of construction projects, Zambian style.

There was a heightened sense of excitement as the group (consisting of four leaders, three young leaders and nine explorers) met up at the Scout Hall at one o'clock on the 27th of July. Usually meeting at this time would entail some form of yawn-inducing chore that inevitably involved the store. Well this time it was no different.

Although after all our scouting gear had made its way from the store to the bus via human-chain (a mode of transport we were to become very familiar with) we would be heading off to the Southern Hemisphere for 17 days. Of course this was not the first time such a journey had been made, in 2008 the Strathaven Explorer Scouts made their first appearance on Zambian soil, but this time we were back with a more ambitious plan which would see us constructing a hammer mill shelter and shop for the local community of Ntambo. All our fundraising, preparation and training was over, now all we had to contend with was the long and arduous journey to get there.

Once we finally got through Lusaka International Airport's rather lax security the first thing that grabbed our attention was the number of guns that were on show. Guns seem to be in vogue in and around Zambia's airports, but thankfully we weren't to see much more of them. After this startling encounter we piled on to the bus and started to make our way to the Health Help International base in Monzé, starting the journey in typical Zambian fashion, with a breakfast in Spar. The rest of our trip on the bus went fairly smoothly except for a moment of chronic misjudgement from one member of the party which left one side of the bus with a racing stripe of toothpaste, but it's probably best to just skim over that unfortunate incident.

We were met at the HHI base in style with dancing, singing and food, something which was extremely welcome considering our 23 hours of travelling. The rest of our first day was spent playing, and I use this term as loosely as possible, football against a swarm of local children before we went to bed exhausted and ready for an early rise the next morning for prayers and breakfast. This was a routine that we got used to with 7.30a.m. being the latest anyone surfaced over the course of the entire holiday.

After visiting various places and people over the first few days and losing against a local Zambian football team in a tight 9-2 game, we were ready to go to Ntambo and start building. The foundations were already laid so it was straight to the actual building work, although not before we had transported our supply of bricks from where they had been fired to where the construction site was. Such style and finesse has never before been witnessed in a human chain. It wasn't long before bricks were being thrown like rugby balls, an appropriate simile as they both seem to bounce with similar quality. This brick passing exercise would form the start of each day in Ntambo before moving on to the bricklaying. I could supply a detailed account of the bricklaying process but, in the interests of sanity, I'll leave it out. It's safe to say, however, despite the differing styles of bricklaying displayed

Explorer Zamb



by ourselves and our Zambian counterparts, the building went up quickly and efficiently with very few catastrophes hindering our progress. It was decided towards the end of our stay that the group would be split in two, with the most hard-core and bricklaying-savvy individuals staying in Ntambo to finish the build while the rest would visit Choonga school the next day to present them with gifts.

With the hammer mill shelter and shop complete we returned a few days later for an official opening ceremony which was attended by local commissioner, Mrs Nonda. It's at this point that I should mention the differences between Greenwich Mean Time and Zambian time. Greenwich Mean Time presents the hours of the day by which we can organise and schedule our actions, Zambian time works on a more relaxed basis where days seem to be the smallest unit of time. Mrs Nonda did show up, albeit a tad later than had been hoped but, lateness aside, the opening ceremony was a great occasion and an event that consisted of much singing and questionable dancing on our part as well as a hand-over of tools to the locals that had helped us construct the building.

With the main aim of our trip completed we could focus on the smaller tasks such as the replacing of windows at Choonga School as well as enjoying the touristy parts of Zambia. Lochinvar provided spectacular sunsets as well as close encounters with hippos while Livingstone offered us game drives, elephants and, of course, the natural wonder that is Victoria Falls.

There was a great feeling of achievement as we made our way back to Glasgow. The travelling was a bit more tiresome and our smell considerably worse, but we had done what we set out to do and helped many people along the way. As we finally got back to the Scout Hall and wondered what all this water falling from the sky was, there was hope all round that the Unit would continue to be as ambitious and successful as it had been on our 2011 Zambian trip.

Zambia Expedition



Claire Woodcock experienced a different side to the expedition doing voluntary health care work with HHI.



The children at the Ntambo school were sitting their end of term exams while we were there so lots of them were coming to see us and talk with us. Amy and I and a couple of the others headed back home in the evening as there were too many Explorers for the amount of work left.

The next day we caught up on washing, all with cold water, showers for us and buckets for clothes. It felt good to be clean! On the 5th we packed up camp for the third time and headed to Lochinvar where we spent two nights and woke up to hippos, a 3ft lizard and snakes. It was our first site with no official toilet, which was an experience and a half. We stayed in Lochinvar until the 7th where we did not sleep much due to the noises, and I thought we were going to be trampled by a hippo! We packed up camp again to head back to Monze after trying to find game for the entire day, to much disappointment, but we had fun trekking through swamps. We also tried to find some hot springs, but were again disappointed as they were all dried up.

So back at Monze, we got caught up again on washing and showers and spoke more to the locals. Amy and I left Monze the next morning to head with Metro (the audiologist), Jute (of HHI) and Jonah (our driver) to Choma. After about a 65 mile drive on a scary car journey, we arrived to the warmest welcome. Meanwhile the rest of the party were in Choonga fixing and painting windows and dormitories in the school.

After introductions in Choma we set to work. Metro and I tested about 70 peoples' hearing, fitted hearing aids and treated long untended infections. We helped a 70 year old blind man get his bedding and clothes washed, paid for new clothes to be made for him and bought him some bread. We also met a man who had an awful tumour on his face and was waiting for funding to travel to South Africa to have it removed, meanwhile HHI had set him up with a shop to help him get by day to day.

Amy and I gave out some Scottish tablet and macaroon to the children and soft cuddly toys to the babies. After a much needed opportunity to cuddle babies we set off home again, stopping on the way at a hospital to visit a physio department to see how they were getting on with wheelchairs and other equipment donated by HHI.

The 9th August was a very exciting day; we travelled on the bumpy bus one last time to Ntambo to hand over and unveil the plaque at the grain mill and for speeches to be made. The District Commissioner of Monze led the community and officially handed over the machine handle to the manager of the mill and everyone had great time. The locals were delighted.

Our visit to Livingstone, the Victoria Falls and seeing the animals in the National Park was a fantastic finale to our visit to Zambia and I am very happy to have had the opportunity to take part in the project and be one of the team in Strathaven Explorer Scouts in Zambia. I got such a lot out of this experience and will never forget the people I met and worked with.

We left Strathaven at around 12.50p.m. on an Executive Bus provided by Joe Russell, kindly driven by Mr Gow, for our long journey to Zambia; I sat next to Amy on the flight to Lusaka and we had a poor night's sleep, then on arrival we nearly didn't get through visa control. What a start to our adventure!

We finally arrived, after a very long crammed bus journey, at Health Help International's office at 12.30 where we were greeted by fourteen Zambian scouts who presented us with an amazing welcome ceremony where they marched. Our group was then given a lovely Zambian lunch of chicken, boiled potatoes and coleslaw. This was followed by sixteen extremely shattered Explorers and leaders setting up tents at the first of many campsites, unknown to us at this time would be home for the visit.

We had our first experience of prayer the next day and did some proper introductions, using various languages. I taught my new friends sign language which was great fun. That day was spent visiting Choonga School and we met all the delightful children there. On our return to the camp we met more children as we walked round the market, who told us, "you are my brother/sisters".

The next day we were on our way to build the grain mill when the tow bar broke off our bus, this set us back about three hours for the day, but once we arrived in Ntambo we managed to start the base of the building. That night in our camp at Monze it was especially windy, and we had an awful night's sleep. We then moved to a campsite at Ntambo to concentrate on the hammer mill building. The journey was about 30 miles though it took us an hour and a half due to the poor road (dust track) conditions. We worked until 5pm completing four full layers all around the foundations. By the afternoon of 3rd August the walls were becoming too high for us girls (Amy and I) even though there was scaffolding (a plank of wood balanced on a few bricks either end).

Recollections of Zambia

After an amazing expedition a variety of Explorers describe the trip and what it meant to them.



ANGUS
WILSON

It was totally life changing and a very fulfilling trip. Being able to help other people who are not as fortunate can really change your point of view, seeing that although the people were so poor they could still be so happy makes you appreciate how fortunate we are.

Zambia is not the easiest trip I have ever been on but definitely one of the most memorable. Building the grain mill for the disabled community of Ntambo was the best part of the trip, but going to see Victoria falls was breathtaking and truly spectacular as well as the deserved rest in Livingstone which I think all of us were grateful for.



GREGOR
ROBERTSON

Zambia was everything I expected and more, when you see the adverts on TV you just don't get the sensation that I think it is safe to say that all who were involved in this trip got. Yes we saw poverty, but we also saw a lot of good and a willingness to get on with life no matter what it throws at them. Hopefully our work there will make all the difference, and from what I have heard, it already has.



HARRIS
DOUGLAS

Zambia was highly enjoyable! We were able to witness a completely different part of the world. The culture, landscapes, traditions and the difficulties which most Zambians face.

We were able to get to parts of Zambia where poverty is at a low. Nothing like it in Scotland: no shops, no decent roads, no communication, no electricity, no clean running water and no near-by medical support. The best part of the trip was being able to help out and do something that will help the community for many years to come.



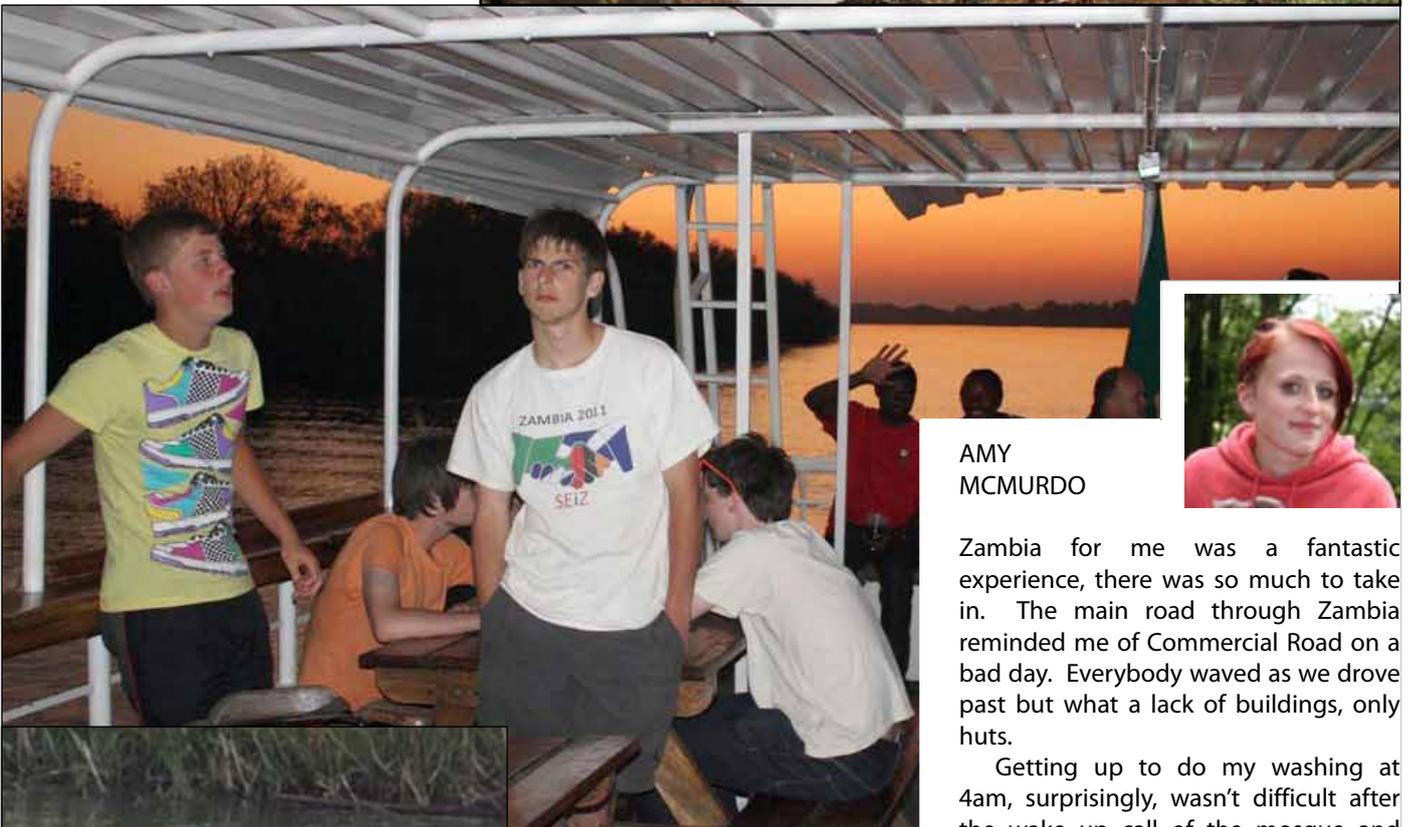


SCOTT
POSTLETHWAITE

The first thing that strikes you about Zambia is how friendly the people out there are. Back home we're so locked up in smart phones and the internet, amenities that many Zambians do not have, that we forget to talk to each other.

You soon come to realise that many of the Many Zambians are surprisingly happy with what little they have got, but HHI is doing a great job out there for those who are still in need and I was very grateful that they allowed us to go out there and help.

Seeing the town of Ntambo, helping build the grain mill and receiving their thanks afterwards are sure to be experiences I'll never forget. I would like to extend my thanks to everyone in the Scouts, HHI and the community that helped us get to this amazing place.



AMY
MCMURDO

Zambia for me was a fantastic experience, there was so much to take in. The main road through Zambia reminded me of Commercial Road on a bad day. Everybody waved as we drove past but what a lack of buildings, only huts.

Getting up to do my washing at 4am, surprisingly, wasn't difficult after the wake up call of the mosque and the regular passing train, but I hope my parents don't get any ideas. No one told us we would be eating breakfast with a hippo for company.

Building the hammer mill was tough, but the reactions of the locals put the whole trip into perspective. Even though all the Explorers were ready and willing, we needed the long life experience of Iain, Mike and Alastair to bring it all together.



CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT:

Mike and the Explorers meet District Commissioner Joyce Nondo

Explorers with their local supporters at the football match

Hard at work building the mill

The spectacular Victoria Falls

Enjoying a relaxing sunset boat tour at Livingstone after all the hard work

Hippos on the Zambezi River

FOSS Reunion in Glen Feshie

John Miller reports on another enjoyable FOSS reunion weekend, returning to the Highlands for 2011.

Well, this year I had another wonderful experience being away with FOSS. We visited the Highlands of Scotland and billeted in the "Ladies Scottish Climbing Club" cottage at the entrance to Glen Feshie.

We were twelve in total ranging from the very old to the not so old (me) who helped make up our group of interesting characters. Scouting is full of these interesting characters and the older they get the more interesting they become.

Who are they? Well along with my good wife Bibby and me you've got King of Mystery Jim Murdoch. Then there is that converted Englishman (by his own admission) Graham Naismith. There are experts like Graham Stewart, Stewart Graham, John Schofield, Robert Manby and daughter Laura and the redoubtable Miles Hutchinson, a FOSS (in its literal sense) for a very long while. Any one of them you could feel extremely safe with on the hardest of climbs and the worst of Scottish weather.

Of course we had organiser in Chief, Iain Park, without whom it all may not happen. Finally this year David Court was accompanied by his wife Christine who brought an air of calm and serenity to an otherwise noisy weekend.

The group arrived in bits and pieces over Friday afternoon and surveyed our digs for the weekend ahead. They were good, comfortable (plenty of loos) and cosy big beds. The beds in the men's dorm were superb, a big long black comfortable mattress which slept about 15 in a row. The lounge, dining room and kitchen were all one but that really made it. We had a cracking big warm fire, a super table for us all and a well equipped kitchen for the cooks amongst us.

Friday's dinner was provided by Bibby and taken in the bothy and enjoyed by everyone. The night was spent getting to know each other again and catching up with each others news finishing in a relatively early bed.

Next morning the smell of bacon, sausages, mushrooms, eggs, the lot, was most welcoming. The cooks had been up since dawn preparing what was a feast of a breakfast and they helped me make light work of the best cooked breakfast we had all had for a long while.

The day ahead was going to be a little grey since the weather forecast was



The mountaineering team on their ascent of Sgor Gaoith on the edge of the Cairngorm plateau.

not great. The group split into two with a small group doing a walk round Loch Insh and the others going out to bag a Munro or two. The first to be climbed was Sgor Gaoith at 3,658ft, then the group split and this second split saw the real climbers go off and climb Mullach Clach a' Bhclair at 3,312ft. The conditions were tough with some snow still on the higher plain, that made it more than just a walk.

Sitting having lunch huddled behind a pile of rocks out of the wind might not be everyone's cup of tea, but with this group you don't notice since the banter continues. These are times we all enjoy talking about afterwards.

It was a good day and everyone was satisfied with the results of their efforts. We dined at the Station Hotel in Kingussie, which was a pleasure - good food and no slaving over the stove for anyone one in the group. The rest of the evening was spent back at the bothy enjoying discussions on current affairs, sport, Scouting, walking and almost every other subject under the sun. This lasted well into the night.

Next morning, later than expected, everyone assembled for breakfast and it was as good as the day before. After cleaning the cottage everyone slowly collected their bits and pieces and packed for the journey ahead. Goodbyes were made, each with the promise that we would all meet up next year.

If you haven't yet enjoyed the camaraderie of a FOSS weekend then you should seriously consider it, The friendship of our reunion weekends away is great.

EXEC. COMMITTEE REPORT

The Scout Executive Committee have had a successful year fundraising which enabled us to give a contribution of £4000 for the Explorer's trip to Zambia.

Fundraising activities planned for next year are a Ceilidh on the 25th February and the Scout Auction 24th March. Help is needed for this massive annual event!

We have organised a backpack at Sainsbury's on 24th December this year. The Cubs and Scouts will be helping the people of Strathaven with their last minute shopping for Christmas, please come along and support us. In addition a Christmas hamper will be raffled before Christmas, tickets will be on sale soon.

We are always in need of new committee members and helpers. We are all on the committee for the benefit of the Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers. The more fundraising we do, the more the boys and the hall will benefit.

Please call Jenny Abou-zeid (01357 523007) or Julie MacAulay (01357 521583) if you can help on the committee or with any activities and do come along and support our fundraising events!

Tenth Round Stra'ven 50 in 2011

FOREWORD BY IAIN PARK

The following report on this year's RS50 is by Graeme Small, one of our cycling experts on the FOSS Round Stra'ven 50 subcommittee. In his usual inimitable manner he has caught the mood of the day and illustrated its success very well.

As Graeme has mentioned this was the 10th RS50. As one of the main activities promoted and organized by Friends of Strathaven Scouting we can be proud of our achievement in creating such a successful annual community event and one which has raised so much money for the various charities as well as the Strathaven Scouts and Guides.

The Asha Kiram Ashram Childrens' Home in India, and the N'tambo hammer mill in Zambia are providing ongoing and significant benefits to their local communities as a result of the monies donated to them from RS50.

Our thanks are due to the members of FOSS and many other supporters in Strathaven who help each year with the organization and control of the RS50 event.

Roads were dry and conditions kind when, at 10am, local MSP Aileen Campbell set the riders off with some well-chosen words of encouragement.

The 50-mile route headed west on rolling back roads towards Loudoun Hill, before cutting back towards Sandford with a tail wind for the first cake stop of the day. Once again, Bibby Miller and her team of volunteers produced a splendid array of sandwiches, home baking and drinks to gee up the riders for the challenges that lay ahead.

The tough climb up past the old viaduct at Stonehouse was one such challenge, swiftly followed by the knee-breaking ascent of Millheugh on the outskirts of Larkhall. There was time for another well-earned cake stop at the village hall in Glassford before the last section of the course was tackled, through the narrow roads around Auldhouse and back over Ardochrigg.

Riders were cheered on their way by the many volunteer marshalls who



ABOVE: Riders setting off from the George Allan Park for the gruelling fifty mile route.

BELOW: Three young 50 milers - Andrew Lamb, Oran McConville and Calum Garrow.



turned out from Strathaven Rotary Club and other local organisations to make sure all the major road crossings were tackled safely. The highlight of this roadside encouragement was provided by two enterprising young fans in Chapelton, who set up a road side banner bearing the words "GO! GO! GO! YOU CAN DO IT!" With 15 miles still to go at that point, this was just the tonic that weary riders needed.

Thanks to the largest-ever field in the 50 mile event and the impressive number of family groups that tackled the 15 mile ride, the RS50 raised over £4000. This brings the total for the ride's

first decade to more than £40,000. Half of this years proceeds go to Strathaven Scouts and Guides and half to pay for a hammer mill in a village in Zambia which the Strathaven Explorers have helped to construct.

Last but not least, a new record was set this year for the age of the youngest ever riders to complete the full fifty miles. Andrew Lamb and Calum Garrow are both just nine years old but both managed to go the full distance, accompanied by a 'veteran' of the 15-mile ride, ten-year-old Oran McConville. The white jersey for the youngest rider in the Tour de Stra'ven was awarded to Calum.

News and Events Round Up

FOSS AGM

The FOSS AGM will be held on Wednesday 7 December 2011 in the Scout and Guide Centre at 7.30 pm. The business part of the evening will be brief. Refreshments will be served following the meeting and there will be a short slide presentation of the Scout and FOSS activities over the past year. Please come along and support your committee and take the opportunity of meeting up with your fellow members of FOSS and our other supporters.

Reunion Weekend 2012

Next year's FOSS Reunion will be held over the weekend 18th to 20th May 2012.

It is almost certainly going to be based in Pitlochry where we have the opportunity of using a private house. A possible alternative would be the recently refurbished climbing cottage in Crianlarich belonging to the Ochils Mountaineering Club. Either location offers good opportunities for walking and climbing and both have excellent eating places nearby.

John Miller's report of this year's reunion illustrates very well the flavour of these annual weekends.

Come along for the social gathering even if you don't wish to join in the hill climb or walk on the Saturday.

FOSS Commercials

The RS50 guide booklets continue to sell but we have still plenty in stock priced £5.

Please consider buying one, even if you are not a cyclist. The booklet contains interesting information about Strathaven and the surrounding countryside through which the RS50 route passes. Why not give someone a copy for Christmas?

We still a number of copies of the Centenary DVD, now reduced to £5. Give a copy at Christmas to a present or former Scout.

RS50 2012

The date for next year's RS50 (the 11th) is to be Sunday 19th August 2012. The event grows bigger and more successful every year and we welcome all support.

Keep the date free, get on your bike and into training for this annual personal challenge and well established local community event. More importantly help us to raise even more money for our selected charity and to help the Strathaven Scouts and Guides

FOSS Website

This is our annual reminder for you to have a look from time to time at our website. This is kept up to date with reports, dates of events and entry forms for the RS50. We try to keep it up to date.

We are grateful for the support of Angus Miller who acts as our webmaster and provides hosting for the site. Find us online at:

www.friendsofstrathavenscouts.org.uk

If you are on line and Iain doesn't have your e-mail address, or you have changed it, please send it to him. It would help with future communications. Just let Iain know via iain_park@btinternet.com

FOSS ADVENTURE SECTION

This year has been relatively quiet for FOSSAS. We have enjoyed day activities at the climbing wall but no weekend activities have run.

This is primarily due to the fact that many of the more active members have been abroad for a significant part of the year. Of these, notable are Duncan Campbell and Mike Shorter's six month trip to America to travel around and take on a variety of very hard rock climbs. Climbing The Nose on El Capitan is no mean feat!

Donald Inch also spent many months out of the country in Kenya. He managed to bag Mount Kenya whilst he was away, but the primary aim of his trip was to work in rural parts of the country while undertaking an internship for his masters.

Plans are, however, already afoot for a winter weekend away in early 2012. This is likely to take place in the Highlands and, snow conditions being suitable, will allow us to enjoy some winter munro bagging and climbing, skiing and maybe even a little snowboarding.

As ever, if you are interested in joining us look us up on Facebook or contact matt.mcv@virgin.net.

THE SCOUT 100 YEARS BOOK

The long awaited and much forecast book which will tell the story of the first 100 years of the Strathaven Scouts is finally taking shape and will be published early in 2012. This is a final request and last opportunity for FOSS members to contribute.

We already have the facts and plenty of statistics relating to events and dates, people and places. What we'd like to have more of are personal reminiscences from you about your times in the movement, whether as Cub, Scout, Venture/Explorer Scout or Leader. Tell us about incidents which were memorable for you for whatever reason or about the people you knew, your fellow Scouts or your Leaders. We'd prefer hearing about the things which you enjoyed or which were good about your Scouting but we have a section in the book entitled Epics and Near Disasters which you might be able to add to as well!

We do want the book to have lots of personal interest and not to be one of dry facts and boring history so please let us have your contribution before the end of the year, even just a few lines of a paragraph or two. Contact Iain at the e-mail address above.

FOSSnews is the official newsletter of the Friends of Strathaven Scouts, who exist to support Scouting in Strathaven. It is published by them at the Strathaven Scout and Guide Centre. Copy editing and desk top publishing by Matthew McVeigh, to whom comments can be forwarded. Proof reading by former FOSSnews editor Tom Milne who provides valuable support and guidance. Printing by Bill Sturrock, Print Matters, 16 - 18 Swan Street, Brechin, DD96EF whose price represents a very generous contribution to FOSS.