

KEMPSON ENTERPRISE TRUST

(Charitable Trust formed in 1989)

OUR REPORT

Year 1999-2000

The Trust is now in its eleventh year, its second decade - and a new millennium. Inspired by E G H Kempson's broad interests, from printing to mountaineering, we continue to encourage enterprising activity amongst sixth formers at St John's School and Marlborough College. We believe that to assist young people to pursue challenging interests and to broaden their range of experience is a worthwhile and long-term investment and we hope that those of you who have supported us this far will agree.

Sadly we have to report the death of Dr Dick Maurice this autumn. A respected Marlborough doctor and founder trustee, his enthusiastic support of the Trust was much valued and he will be widely missed.

During the year the Trust made eight grants, six to individuals, two to larger groups. Once again the activities covered five different continents. The schools use the generally excellent reports, which the recipients of grants send us, to encourage and assist future applicants. The following accounts, which show something of the range and diversity of the enterprises, are taken from some of these reports.

Gunjur is a small town of 11,000 people in The Gambia without electricity, piped water or tarred roads. It has had a link with Marlborough for more than 18 years. **Amy Frost** (St J) went out last summer with a group of 20 to live in the village and help in the task of fencing a 16-acre site for a new vegetable garden for the village women. They went prepared for the rains but hit the wettest season in 20 years, with floods, compounds collapsing and vehicles deeply bogged down on muddy roads. Many of the group were ill enough to have to travel two hours to the local medical centre, but Amy remained well, and the group succeeded valiantly in getting in a solid fence in difficult conditions. The site is now cleared and cultivation has started. They enjoyed a chance to travel up the Gambia River to see more of the country. 'The best bit' says Amy 'was the people...I will miss all of them as that was what made my month in The Gambia special'.

Naomi Birkbeck (St J) went out in her gap year to teach in Peru and found herself living in a village in the Cañete valley, relatively lush because of the river but surrounded by coastal desert. She taught at the local fee-paying school, quite well equipped and with pupils, of both primary and secondary age, keen to learn. Her Spanish improved as her teaching developed, and she also taught sports lessons, which were a much-appreciated innovation. The friendly villagers invited her to local festivals, and she took the opportunity to travel widely in a country that has rain forest, mountains, desert, pyramids, lost cities, cathedrals and much more. 'Peru is a beautiful country, and I feel blessed that I was able to make it my home for those six months.'

‘My gap year was an amazing experience that I will never forget’ says **Joanne Thomas** (St J) who made her first visit to Africa in February to teach for five months in Zambia. Her friendly community primary school, in a town two hours outside Lusaka, had 150 children from five to twelve years old, and seven teachers, and she settled in quickly. She taught French to the older children. ‘The first few times were difficult’ she recalls. ‘However once I began to know all the children’s personalities, the lessons became really enjoyable and I always looked forward to them’. She helped with sports and games lessons, and, since this was a boarding school, had to look after a dormitory and read bedtime stories. In her local town she was aware of the widespread poverty in Zambia, the children begging, the poor, makeshift housing, and yet recognised the welcome and hospitality of the people. After her placement, she travelled widely in East Africa, seeing Victoria Falls, riding among buffaloes in Swaziland and visiting Nelson Mandela’s prison in South Africa.

Both **Matt Hyslop** and **Humphrey Taylor** (MC) went to Chile in January with Raleigh International, but, as is the way with Raleigh, they had very different experiences. They were based about 2000 miles south of Santiago, and their 3-month stay was divided into community, environmental and adventure phases.

Matt first took part in a survey of wild black cats, called Kodkods, in a rainforest National Park. After trapping the cats and fitting them with radio-collars, they had to track them day and night in 8-hour shifts, often in heavy rain and with their campsite flooded in the middle of the night. Next they learnt to work with concrete and corrugated iron, building a store for a fruit and vegetable growing co-operative group, together with a playground for children. Finally he set off on a 17-day trek in a remote area, carrying all their food, wading many rivers, and bivouacking at night under ponchos; ‘one of the most mentally and physically challenging things I have ever done’.

Humphrey started with his community phase, building an accommodation block for the elderly and repairing and refurbishing a home for girls aged 4 to 16 from abusive homes. He found this a really rewarding, finding time for a football match with the local firemen. Then he took part in a survey to try to establish the number of Huemels, an endangered red deer that is one Chile’s national symbols. The process involves searching north facing slopes for signs of their existence. ‘The idea of looking for “poo” for three weeks did not sound too appealing’, said Humphrey, but it turned into a great adventure. The first valley they could not get into because of the density of the vegetation and the leeches, so they ended up with an eventful 3-week trek in some of Chile’s most remote areas.

His final phase involved a long sea-kayaking expedition to visit a major glacier at Laguna San Raphael. It took nine days to reach the Laguna, paddling seven or eight hours a day through fjords and archipelagos, often accompanied by dolphins and sea lions, and camping on beaches where there was fresh water. The glacier towered 70 metres above them and often ‘calved’ huge masses of ice with a sound like huge claps of thunder. The last stretch to Puerto Bonito completed a trip of 170 sea miles; there they were welcomed by a solitary fisherman who spontaneously offered them shelter and his own hard earned food.

Both Matt and Humphrey speak well of the Raleigh organisation and their reports are useful for those planning their gap year trips.

Andrew Gillott (MC) called his report ‘A Year in the Bush’. The bush in question was the Kenyan Highlands at a remote village called Churo, ‘the place of frogs’, since

the village centres round a spring which feeds a stream full of frogs. Vervet monkeys swing from the acacia trees to eat the frogs, and there are porcupines, antelope, giraffe, occasional elephants and, of course, snakes. Andrew taught at a new school supported by the Africa Inland Mission, and his class consisted of about thirty boys and his job was 'to teach physics and history, to imbue some tactics into an over-enthusiastic football team and to lead Bible studies and a Christian Union'. The school is still very new and has only one classroom, one dormitory and a makeshift dining shelter. A borehole provided muddy water to three taps.

His pupils and the people of the area came from the Pokot tribe, one of Kenya's largest tribes, mostly pastoralists whose real reverence is reserved for their cattle. Their territory is vast, but so harsh and vulnerable to drought, famine and epidemic that they are forced to be nomadic. Andrew clearly had a remarkable experience in this remote spot and his report gives a wealth of detail about the Pokot tribe and the history of Kenya and the Africa Inland Mission

Jonathan Willcox (MC) sent an interesting account of a month's visit to Mongolia by a group of 18 students from the College. In the capital, Ulan Bator, where quarter of the population live, they were aware of a Buddhist country in transition. After the decades of Russian domination it is moving towards an uncertain democracy, and learning to manage pollution, exposure to the outside world and the temptations of consumerism. Out in the vast, thinly populated countryside there was little sign of modernity. Camping in the Gobi below the huge dunes of Khongorin Els, their tents were blown flat by a storm, but the next morning they climbed to the sandy ridge for a spectacular sunrise. At Kharkhorum, Genghis Khan's ancient capital in the centre of the country, their visit coincided with the great annual festival of Nadaam when the herdsmen gather to compete in wrestling, archery and amazingly skilful riding. They continued on very rough roads in a battered Russian bus and jeep to Lake Hovsgol, amid the mountains and coniferous forests along the northern border with Siberian Russia, before returning by helicopter to the capital and a short stay in Beijing and a visit to the Great Wall of China.

'The traditional nomadic lifestyle that makes this country so unique to the rest of the world today is diminishing rapidly. We feel lucky to have experienced some of the last true ethnic parts of Mongolia'.

We hope that these accounts will give some idea of the type and quality of experience that the Trust has helped to enable. The Trustees would like to thank all those who have supported us so far. We continue to appreciate any donations or suggestions to enable us to extend this very worthwhile work.

Trustees of the Kempson Trust

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