

V44 MAGAZINE



Edition 84

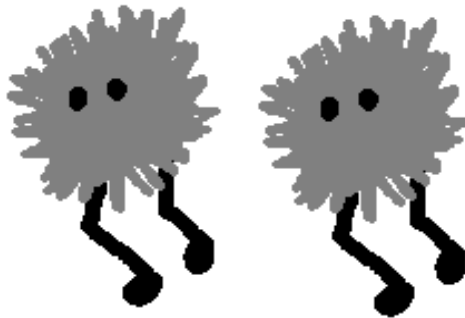
Venture 44

The Official Magazine of the
44th Gloucester (Sir Thomas Rich's)
Venture Scout Unit

Editor : Andrew Norman

Unit Officers

Will Godwin - Chairman
Chris Smith - Treasurer
Dave Clifford - Secretary
Nick Wright - Quartermaster
Perran Spear - Tuck Shop Manager
Phil Brown - VSL
Celia Brown - Helper



*Run for your life McDougal!
It's that wee English beastie
out to get his supper!*

EDITOR'S NOTE

Christmas is over, it's just under a year to the end of the Millennium but more importantly it's time for a new magazine!

This Venture 44 issue centres mainly on the SUMMER EXPEDITION to SCOTLAND but also contains general news about what the unit has been doing for the past year.

The article to look out for is Perran Spear's - as well as being the strangest, it also wins the prize for the longest article, some three sides. It took an eternity to type and seems to take up most of the magazine. However, it is well worth a read!!

Thanks must go to the VSL and his wife Celia for their much needed help in typing and general help on the computers. Special thanks to Rachael (their daughter and frequent sojourner on VSU expeditions) who spiced up the words with some interesting and humourous graphics!!

Also thanks to everybody who wrote an article, even if some of them are a bit late (as I'm writing this there are still four more articles to be handed in).

Another magazine is nearing completion. I hope I have all the articles in by the time you're reading this! I'm sure you will enjoy reading the magazine as much as I have enjoyed making it.

We now start another year of Venture Scouts and with the prospect of a summer expedition to Norway it looks like it's going to be another brilliant year!

*Andrew
Norman*



CHAIRMAN'S NOTE



Welcome to the first issue of V44 for 1999! Within, you will find the majority of articles dedicated to our summer expedition to Scotland and the activities undertaken whilst in the highlands and islands of the West Coast.

Since the publishing of our previous issue, the unit has undergone a large reshuffle including the election of a new Executive Committee. The result of which leaves David Clifford as Secretary, Chris Smith as Treasurer, Nick Wright as Quartermaster, Perran Spear as Tuckshop manager.

We replace a fantastic team led by Andy Clifford who have now made their way to University and beyond! Our thanks to all of them especially Andy who has put immense effort and time into the unit and its activities over his years of membership and chairmanship. The entire unit wishes them best of luck for the future.

Many thanks must also go to Phil, Celia and Rachael Brown in helping so much before and during our expedition, especially Phil whose support as our VSL continues to move the Unit onwards and upwards.

I hope all readers enjoy the magazine as much as we have enjoyed the activities mentioned in it. Until next time - keep on scouting!!

William Godwin

KERRERA

The view from our campsite at Gallanachmore Farm was dominated by the Atlantic channel and the rugged isle of Kerrera. Our nearest link to this tempting island was a small motor boat ferry that crossed the loch and ran hourly depending on numbers of willing passengers. Having waited for a slightly less wet than average day, half of the group made the crossing for what turned out to be a pleasant walk round another beautiful Scottish Island.



Kerrera is sparsely populated with just a few homesteads - mainly farms - set against a backdrop of small but steep hills and interesting wildlife. We spotted wild goats, buzzards, various sea birds not to mention the occasional haggis scampering to safety.

After a slap up lunch consisting of Ryvitas and mackerel we made our way round to the southern end of the island where the remains of Gylen castle are found. Here we admired the spectacular geology and geomorphology responsible for the characteristic scenery. The walking was generally easy with a good path though Will found it within his powers to slip over (one of the many times) and Phil showed us that crossing barbed wire fences was not one of his strong points.

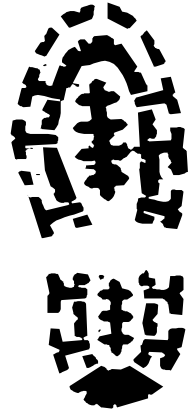
Without further mishap we followed the track round the coast before cutting back across the island to catch the last "ferry" home.

KERRERA - Revisited

It seems that the pull of the nearest island was too much for us as we paid Kerrera a second visit later the same day. This time we all crossed the sound but on a larger boat from Oban. This was one of the few culture visits we made on our trip - a genuine ceileigh/barn dance.

Although the music was rather slow to start and the stone barn was rather small, it wasn't long before Will and I swept the locals off their feet with our dancing skills!

Unfortunately the venue became so popular throughout the evening that there was barely enough room to dance. Phil and Celia managed to keep their square inch of space until the end. The subsidised bar prices ensured that the other visitors did not hesitate to introduce themselves so interesting conversations were had by all.



Andy Clifford



CLIMBING IN SCOTLAND

In the summer of 98 after my GCSE's I decided to reply to an advert asking for people to join a summer mountaineering course for six days at Glenmore Lodge in Aviemore below Inverness. The course was sponsored by Goretex, an outdoor fabric company. The course was set up to get under 18's interested in mountaineering.

Amazingly I was sent a letter telling me that I had obtained a place out of several thousand who had apparently applied from our area.

On the Sunday I travelled up to the lodge - an eight hour journey. I was soon to find out what was in store for me. The countryside and mountains were aesthetic and I longed to be up there in the clouds (little did I know that the wind was 80 mph and temperatures about 0 degrees - and this in summer!).

Day 1. After a short meeting we were split up into groups. In the morning we proceeded with navigation skills and compass courses, practising walking on a bearing. Then we entered the Glenmore Lodge simulated weather testing site and were put on the white-out course with wind and rain; to put it in words that the average person could understand, a black plastic bag over the head!

We were told to walk down a grass slope on a bearing to see how inaccurate it can be in the wrong conditions. The afternoon was spent on the hillside practising map reading skills in 80 mph wind (I found that if I didn't know where we were I could point with my mitts still on my hand and cover half of the map!). Getting back at 5.30pm we were in time for tea and cakes.

Day 2. Setting off for a high altitude camp we packed what we needed. We pitched by a wee locker about three quarters of the height of Mount Cairngorm (highest in the Cairngorm range). The girls stayed at camp while we went to climb Ben McDough in very foggy conditions (good

practice). We saw many reindeer. Unfortunately we saw not the ghost, but we did see the wreckage of Second World War planes. With temperatures about 10 degrees we went to sleep.

Day 3. Leaving camp we climbed Mount Cairngorm and walked back to the lodge via the long long long route!

Day 4. Climbing!!!! Granite slab and Mica schist. All of us have a very good day and I improved a lot of bad habits that I had got into.

Day 5. Sea cliff climbing on Red Sandstone with the sun shining and a temperature of about 20 degrees. I was in my element. There was one overhanging part which was not climbed (E5 grade) and I promised that I would return to climb it. That evening we had a feed back session and a complaint about the water colour (yellow) - we were told however that it was the closest we could get to whisky without distilling it so that night we all filled our water bottles up with it to take home!



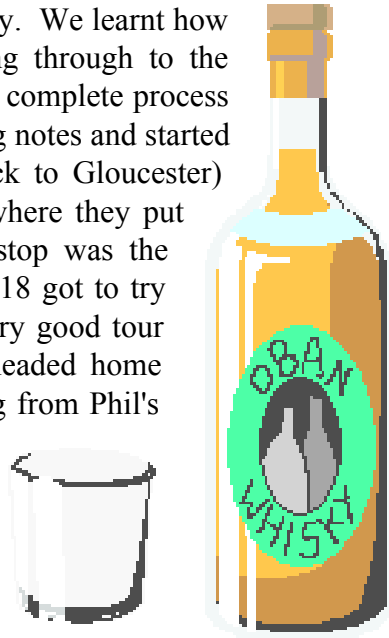
Nick Wright



MY FAVOURITE PLACE - THE DISTILLERY

As soon as we had decided to go to Scotland for the summer expedition one of the first things put on the itinerary was to visit the local distillery. So, in the second week of camp we journeyed into Oban and made our way to the distillery. We started the tour by looking at the history of the distillery. We learnt how the barley is treated before moving through to the working factory. There we saw the complete process of making whisky (I was seen taking notes and started a home brew as soon as I got back to Gloucester) including the stills and the room where they put the whisky into casks. The last stop was the tasting area where only those over 18 got to try a local sample (Doh!!). After a very good tour we passed through the shop and headed home with strange clinking noises coming from Phil's shopping bag. Everyone enjoyed it immensely and I would recommend it to anybody.

Chris Smith



IONA AND STAFFA

I had heard many reports of the Isle of Iona and its famous abbey and monastery. However it was the reports of the amazing geology that forms the Isle of Staffa and its famous Fingal's Cave which really intrigued me.

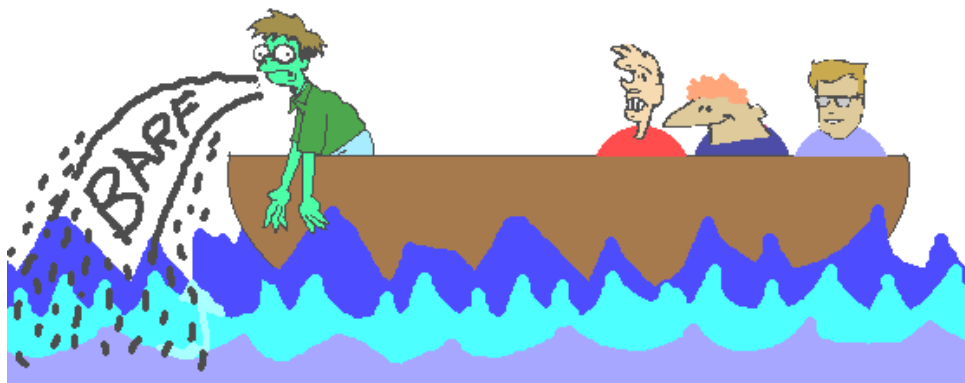
We left for Iona on a landing craft style ferry from Fionnaphort. It swelled its way to Iona where we disembarked. We wandered around

the Abbey and nunnery grounds in the relentless wet weather before receiving the news that the trip to Staffa was still on despite the sea conditions. We hurried to our little boat - the "Iolaire of Iona" and embarked on our choppy voyage to Staffa.

After a journey featuring seals and gannets, Staffa reluctantly emerged from the grey mists which hung close over the grey sea. Our boat moored to a jetty allowing us onto the island to explore. We slithered across the basalt columns towards Fingal's Cave where we took numerous photos before returning to the ferry. We chugged away from a fascinating albeit brief encounter with Staffa. The return journey featured some over-enthusiastic waves and a decidedly green-looking bloke as well as a Puffin. All of which ended a brilliant experience in the Scottish Hebrides.



William Godwin



NEVIS

Having had to get up too early (half an hour later than usual) we drove for an hour until we reached Fort William. There was some nice scenery along the way. However the further we got from the camp site the greyer the sky seemed to get.

Having reached Fort William still in what I would call early morning, we headed for the two large outdoor shops, just as the rain came down.

Luckily it only lasted for about ten minutes. Having driven a few miles and seen some nice river sections on the way, we finally reached the south side of Ben Nevis.

After making sure we had enough equipment for a six week expedition and after I had complained that this took the fun out of the wild activity, we set off.

The sun came out as we slowly pressed on up the donkey path.

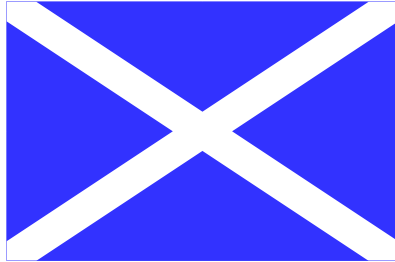
By the time we met the two German girls and had talked with them sufficiently I finally accepted that I was going to catch pneumonia if I attempted to walk any further past cloud base only wearing a T-shirt.

After everyone except me and Andy had got wet crossing a raging torrent of a stream (not true - the VSL kept his toes dry too - Ed.), we pressed on up the zig zags to the summit. After a few minutes the sun came out and we had a great view of the valley below. We took the relevant pictures and looked around the old observatory. We then had a quick dinner of mackerel and about ten different types of sauce and of course, with the old trusty Ryvita.

Having had half an hour's break I decided to run back down to the bus so I did. I overtook about ten fell runners - honest!

When I got back Celia was waiting with a fry-up. Nice one Celia - cheers Phil for being leader and cheers everyone for a nice little stroll.

Matt Ward



SEIL ISLAND, NAKED BAGPIPE GEEZER AND THE RIVER OF GOB

It was on Saturday 8th August, four days into our camp when we decided to ride to Seil Island, a ride that would take a few hours. After setting off it was obvious it would take longer than planned because Matt decided to wheelie most of the way.

After about an hour we arrived at our rendezvous, a salmon farm, only to find it had transformed into "A World of Miniature". We sat about waiting for the bus to arrive with our lunch and wondered how much further Seil Island and its bridge over the Atlantic could be.

When Phil arrived he was not a happy man - it turned out that last night's three hour rave in the van had drained the battery - oops!

After feasting on bread and tango (actually it was cold meat, cheese, bread, coleslaw, bananas and Tango Perran - Ed.) we continued on to the bridge over the Atlantic which was nice. We then rode to Easdale, a town on the far side of the island. When we arrived, the sight of a

fenced off-scrree slope tempted Will and I up the crag. It took a bit of bouldering skills but we made it to the top in relative safety, blissfully unaware how we could get down. It was while we sat on top of the crag in the all too unfamiliar sun, Will said "Hey Pez, can you hear something"? "Wot" I said, coming out of my daydream. "I dunno, if I didn't know better I'd call them bagpipes" said Will getting to his feet. We stood up and followed our ears until I saw a naked bloke!

"Holy cow Will, it's a naked geezer" I shouted. With that he looked up, then continued staring at Mull. Now I don't know what came over him but Will strolled over to the naked bloke (OK he had shorts on) and started engaging in conversation. Will, a keen trumpet player and all, asked him about his bagpipes and the conversation then focused on how to breathe properly and the scenery; at the same time.

Eventually, I dragged Will away from the now famous naked bagpipe player and then tried to plan how the hell we were going to get down. One side was sheer cliff face, the other damp slippery grass at a ratio of 4:1; you fall 4 feet down and 1 foot out with every step!

Our rather rough around the edges descent led through thistles, bogs, streams and over a couple of rabbit warrens, home to the most fierce looking bunnies I'd ever seen.



Near the base we splashed through a stream and the ginger freak (Will he loves being called that really) landed face first in a rather damp, boggy stream. Ha Ha Ha! After controlling my hysteria I comforted Will by letting him name the stream of his downfall. He spat out some grass and we both looked at each other. It had to be the River of Gob. We followed the river down the hill (Will managed to fall over again) and eventually found the van.

We drove back to Oban, never to forget the Naked Bagpiper and The River of Gob.

Perran Spear

VIEWS ON VENTURES **- FROM A NEW MEMBER**

Recently I had been hearing a lot about the Ventures, whether it was because I was starting to listen or something I didn't know but what I did know was that being a Venture Scout sounded interesting, challenging and probably above all a good chance to meet new people and have a good laugh. So naturally, hearing about the Venture Scouts new recruitment I had to investigate.

I turned up for the first meeting and I felt a bit nervous - well who was I going to meet and what was I to say? Thankfully, as I entered the hut a few other new comers had already settled in and so I was able to learn a little from them. Just as I was starting to feel secure some Venture Scout appeared from nowhere and started to introduce himself. He introduced himself as Will the Chairman of the Ventures - from then on it was easy - we were all sat down and got to know a little bit about each other.

I have been with the Ventures for about a month now and have had a great time. First the Five Valleys Walk, then the Dragon Boat Racing and then Year Seven Activities week, giving me my first real camping

excursion - great fun!

It has been easy getting to know everyone and really good fun, but still my burning question is, will they accept me as the Venture Scout I would like to be?

OUR MAN IN COSTA RICA

Finally, after a two-year build up and preparation period, a group of 15 Richians were on the plane to Costa Rica. The nine-hour flight to Miami and the 2 hour flight to Costa Rica went very slowly as we were all looking forward to arriving in the host country. When we finally touched down (in a thunderstorm) we immediately noticed the high temperature and humidity. In the dark the buildings looked like in England - the first sign we saw was the big yellow "M" of Macdonalds!

Later on in the trip, by the end of the first week, we had noticed the change in culture and society. We had just arrived at a small village in the rainforest and the buildings were wooden shacks, the roads were dirt tracks and the people all gathered around and stared at our heaps of kit. Some of them carried enormous machetes which looked rather threatening.

While on the trip we saw many beautiful areas such as white sandy beaches with palm trees and clear blue water. We also saw scarlet macaws, snakes, banana spider, howler monkeys and sloths.

The major aim of the expedition was to ascend the second highest mountain in Central America, Cerro Chirripo that was 3819m high. Luckily the whole group completed climbing the mountain. Although there was no actual rock climbing the walking and scrambling we did was very tiring. For some members of the group, altitude sickness also hindered their progress. The whole group felt a tremendous sense of achievement when we reached the summit. The whole expedition seemed complete after we had made the ascent.

All too soon came the time of packing our bags and catching the plane back to England. I'm sure the trip made several people want to go travelling about the world again. I would certainly like to return to the region but maybe next time to South America.

Dave Clifford

A WORD OR THREE FROM THE VSL

Two and a bit years have now elapsed since Frank Henderson's untimely death and there are many many people who still miss his being around, his support and his friendship. Yet his enthusiasm and commitment is still clearly reflected in and by the unit members themselves whose high achievements and loyalty ensure that Frank's spirit remains as constant an influence as ever in the daily life of the 44th VSU.

It is as much a tribute to Frank's guidance as it is to their own achievements that five members of the unit were presented with their Queen's Scout Award at a ceremony in Gloucester Council Chamber at Shire Hall last Easter. Special congratulations to Tim Andrews, Jody Ballard, Andy Clifford, Mark Gilmore and Phil Reid.

On a personal note I still feel uneasy taking on the mantle of VSL - yet the support and effort of the unit members themselves is excellent and in true 44th tradition we all have shared some memorable experiences and continue to grow in confidence and friendship.

So what of other things done by 44th members since the last edition of Venture 44? Dan Wright has returned from his groundbreaking 9 months sojourn in Nepal, spent living with a Nepalese family, teaching in their local school and (inevitably!) setting out on mountainous adventures into the Himalayas. Olly Scarff has recently followed in Dan's footsteps, taking a year out with 3 others from the school to live and work in Nepal and build on the links Dan has forged.

An "old face" ('86 vintage) returned - viz one Jason Stone - to train some of the younger members on the finer points of compass work and help develop their map reading and navigation skills. He and Lee Rounce (another 44th "old-timer") led them onto the wilds of Dartmoor and Bodmin Moor in February, braving some of the worst winter weather for ages (for those of you who recall, temperatures were up in the 70's and the sun blazed down from an azure sky - shorts were de rigour and several members were seen swimming in the sea and playing beach footie in between the hiking trips!!)

Special congratulations are due to Lee and his fiancée Michelle who tied the matrimonial knot at the end of last August. We wish Lee and Michelle every future happiness!

Another high point was staging the lecture given by survival expert Ray Mears who held his audience spell bound and intrigued as he recounted his experiences while living with peoples whose daily battles with nature have changed little for generations. Special thanks go to Mr Steve Wright of Radio Gloucester's "Country Matters" for initiating the project and to Field and Trek for their sponsorship of the evening.

We followed this up just before Christmas (thanks to Dan Wright's contacts) with an equally intriguing lecture given by Ginette Harrison, the first lady to ascend Kanchenjunga the world's 3rd highest mountain.

Work on the Scout Hut continues - I think we've just about found and plugged all the irritating holes where the rain gets in! Unfortunately we still seem to attract the unwanted attention of local thieves and vandals so additional work is planned to make our premises even more secure.

Plans for this summer's expedition are being formulated - destination Norway.

PJB

Well Done!

Unit members figured well in last year's 'A' level and GCSE results. Andy Clifford deserves special mention for achieving the highest mark throughout the country in the Geology examinations. Andy is now studying at Worcester College Oxford. We wish him and all other 44th Venturers at college every success. Have fun (but don't forget to work hard too!!). And don't forget to write!!!



Five Valleys Walk - September 98

Again several members of the unit took part in this sponsored event, raising funds for the National Meningitis Trust. A special well done to those new members to the unit who slithered and slipped through all consistencies of mud to complete the 25 mile route and raise money for the Trust Appeal.

River Wye Raft Race - September 98

After several years of trying to better the runners-up positions, the unit finally managed to lift the main trophy. Hurrah!! Well done to crew Will Godwin, John Glendenning, Nick Wright and Dave Clifford. Congratulations also to our second crew who "scrambled" (hidden reference to broken eggs!) in a close overall third and won the all male crew section trophy. Our cockle "shell" heroes whose talent "floured"

so well were - Piers Camp, Perran Spear, Ben Panting & Adam Griffiths.

Dragon Boat Racing - October 98

The unit combined with its "next door" neighbours the 38th - many of whom attend Rich's - to compete in an exciting series of Dragon Boat races. Yes - Hong Kong truly came to South Cerney for a day! And ah so - we roared into Junior Victory Position streaks ahead of any competition. We even finished in fourth position against the senior teams - an excellent effort seeing as most of the crew had not tried this sport before!

E-mails

Although the school is not officially on-line yet, we have an interim ISP and e-mail server at Freeserve. You can e-mail the unit on:
pbrown@strs.freeserve.co.uk

Maybe some of you 44th "old-timers" could e-mail us a line or two for the next magazine? Or just to let us know what you're up to?

