

V44 MAGAZINE



Edition 89

Venture 44

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



44th Gloucester (STRS) Venture Scout Unit
Sir Thomas Rich's School
Oakleaze Longlevens
Gloucester GL2 0LF
Tel : 01452 338400 Fax : 01452 338401
e-mail : 44vsu@strs.gloucs.sch.uk

Editor : Rachael Brown

Unit Officers

Matthew Key - Chairman
Rachael Brown - Treasurer
Jonathan Ellison - Secretary
Alasdair Burchill - Quartermaster
Phil Brown - VSL
Peter Lloyd - AVSL



The Chairman...

Ventures has changed. The tuck shop has been closed. The lower sixth no longer have a year off. New members aren't inspired by the thoughts of glaciers. And we're not called Ventures. (Apparently)

But its not all bad; our expedition was to Beara Peninsula, Ireland (which some of you may remember from 97). Although shorter than normal due to the foot and mouth troubles, a Gold D of E expedition was completed by three and a Silver and Bronze expedition also accompanied the group. The weather was glorious, the people welcoming, the fish plentiful and the pubs lively; a fantastic trip all around. Many thanks to Phil and Pete for their time and organisational skills! More inside...

It's been a long time since the last magazine, so there's lots to talk about: Cotswold Marathon, Drama, Matt Ward's DJ specials, scuba diving and loads more. Business as usual really.

The Editor...

Yet again V44 is full of news of what the 44th have been getting up to this past year. Activities undertaken in 2001 have included the February half-term trip to Dartmoor, climbing, bowling as well as other, more adventurous activities such as canoeing, scuba-diving and two "Army Days" doing challenging and fun activities including an assault course. The latest event was the annual summer expedition, this year to Ireland - which you can read about later.

Don't forget to keep us informed of where you are and what you are doing - send your articles in to us - addresses are on page 3.

Enjoy the magazine!

Rachael
Matthew

Life after Venture Scouts

Whenever I said that I was going to Vancouver for a gap year, everyone used to say 'Oh, I know someone there', or 'I've got family there'. Now that I've been living here for 3 months I've come to realise that most of the world has contacts here. It is truly a multiracial society with people from all over the world living here.

I suppose one of the reasons that they all flood here is because of the fantastic surroundings. Situated on the edge of the West Coast mountains and the Pacific ocean, British Columbia boasts some very nice countryside, from the lakes and forests of Vancouver Island to the 2nd biggest granite monolith in the world. The cliffs in Squamish are a climbing Mecca and I hope to join the mad fools this spring in hanging on by 2 finger nails above a 200ft drop to big jagged boulders below (Whoops! - don't tell my parents that bit!)

Myself and Nick Wright managed to get jobs on a local ski resort operating the lifts where one of the bonuses is a free ski pass. We both bought snow boards and soon found ourselves hurtling down the hills trying to avoid all the amateurs.

It's funny, but when in Ventures you have those meetings where you sit there while someone practises putting a triangular bandage on you, you never think it will happen for real. Well it does. The other day I found ski patrol putting a triangular bandage on me because I had managed to tear 3 ligaments in my shoulder. Doing what? Yep, snow boarding!

Anyway, this gap year has been fun and I have learnt a lot, but in a strange way I think I will miss the Cotswold Marathon. Never mind, I can always just run 40 miles out here for the hell of it... OR maybe not!

Chris Smith

An Essay on Equipment

Equipment is a very important thing in our lives. We know that it can keep us warm, dry, safe and sound. But never before the Venture expedition Scotland 2000, has the topic been used as a source of argument/chat or discussion.

It began with the realisation that, somehow, the Field and Trek catalogue had found it's way into my voluminous bag and was now joining us on the M5 north bound. From that point onwards it became our refuge and salvation at difficult and challenging times. When faced with danger in the form of nature or Rachael, an image of some Charlet Moser Quasar ice axes, or a Mountain Hardware Trango 3.1, would soon raise the tone.

But we didn't just lose ourselves in the realms of fantasy, no not at all. Often we would argue/chat or discuss technical factors determining the performance of our own personal kit:

Alasdair with his Macpac ascent,

Giles with his Primus stove and Tefal cook set,

Jon, of course, with his cripple sticks and candy striped plaster cast (having stylishly broken his ankle whilst walking over a tuft of grass),

and myself, the proud ex-owner of a 2mm long polarised light bulb that - please don't scorn me - can be seen by searching planes from over a mile away.

I say ex-owner because, sadly, my flasher (as it was affectionately known) became lost one cold and blustery night.

There were also countless discussions over the unit's own, top of the range..... Vango tents:-

It didn't matter that the fly sheets didn't fit,

It didn't matter that the poles were bent

It didn't matter that the guy ropes never stayed taught

It didn't matter the ground sheets were made of sponge

It didn't matter the mozzie net wasn't a midge net

We still loved them dearly

..... Until the rain came.

Urrghhhhhh!

How dry's your tent?

Look what I have to sleep in! Move over, your side's well drier than mine.

Don't touch the si.....! Too late.

..... Until the wind came.

Ahh.

Are you sure we put the tents here?

Nah. Must have been more over there.

Yeah. Um. Definitely. Definitely over there. Not here. No.

..... Until the midges came.

Ouch!

What the hell is that?

That is a joke.

I'm not sleeping in that. It's a black cloud in there.

1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20..... 29056145,
29056146

Yes, things really did get desperate and ugly, but we hobbled, hopped, ran and dragged ourselves along nonetheless.

But our kit wasn't just failures.

The minibus, bearer of many scars, did us proud. It became the "cripple's" bedroom, a general common room, a kitchen, a true friend. More than once Phil has remarked how the minibus has an almost motherly nature. He theorises that, once taken from our civilisation we seek a new protection and comfort figure. He even goes as far as to say that the minibus, in some way, represents our mothers' womb. A comforting thought indeed.

Throughout the trip this could be actively seen. During our silver practice for example we happened to meet up with the minibus in a village - our primeval callings obviously drawing the bus towards us.

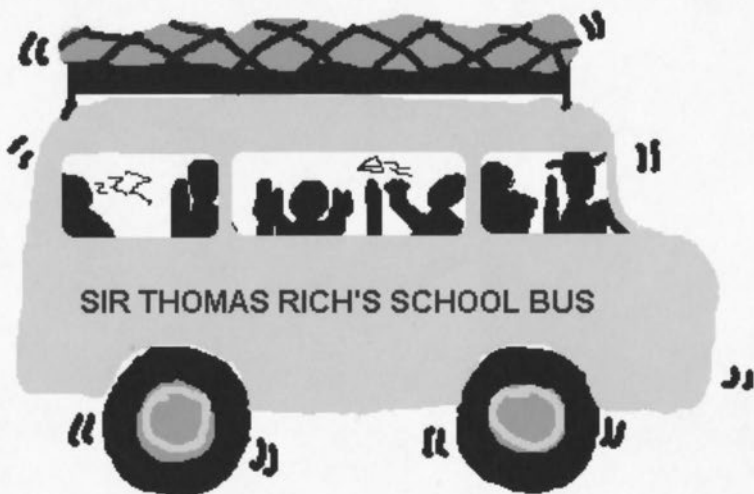
Maybe I've taken the theory too far, but what remains undisputed is the fact the minibus was a vital piece of equipment.

And all of our equipment was vital to the enjoyment, or pain of the trip. From the toilet roll (that most multifunctional of materials) to sleeping mat, washing up liquid to cooking utensils, Vango tent to survival bag (note: these two can be easily mistaken for one another) it was lost, broken, misused or stolen by us all.

The minibus was nearly set alight...
My flasher was lost...
and marmalade disappeared at an alarming rate during the night.

But at least the experience, simultaneously made and destroyed by equipment, was character building.

Matthew Key



Dartmoor - The First Time

The expedition to Dartmoor was my first experience of what goes on at Venture Scouts away from home.

Bizarre. That's one way to describe it. Marmalade eating monsters, dangling from ropes off a cliff and the occasional 'Hell Yeah' all added up to a completely new experience.

When we left home, I thought we would just walk miles and then try to get some sleep in a tent. That happened. And more. Trying to get the image of a cosy bed, barely 10 metres from me in the warm 'Luxury Villa' that is Penrest, out of my head as I slept outside was near impossible.

It was, however, a lot more realistic the next night when we were in the pub drinking 'HOT' hot chocolate and eating like kings (if they were poor) whilst we watched 'Gladiator' on the wide screen TV until we were kicked out.

On to the infamous Dartmoor moors. After barely 15 minutes walking time, we found out that we were headed up the wrong

Tor. Then we met a strange disillusioned man (Phil!) who told us that his friend was hurt and needed our help. Great.

Being 'good citizens' we had to go and help him - there might have been a reward!

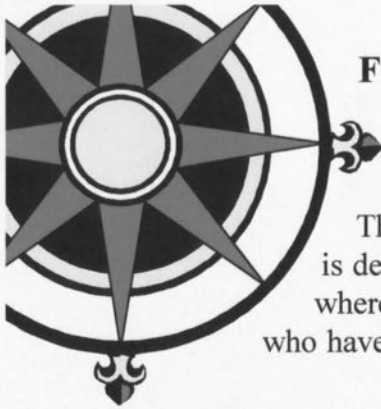
That sorted, back on course and several hours later, having all dodged falling into rivers or sinking into bogs on the moors (except Dexter), we set up camp for the night. Unfortunately, Dex, Geoff and I had to share a tent with the mass murderer Alasdair Burchill. And his knife.

Somehow, we survived the night and set off back to Penrest in the morning for a last night of being close to homely comforts before we set off for home.

Over all, it was an exhilarating few days, full of action, and I would certainly advise people that didn't go this time to go next time, I will certainly be going next time.

If I'm forced! Maybe.

Dan Dales



FROM ALL POINTS

This is the section of the magazine that is devoted to news of past unit members - where are they now?? Thank you to those who have contacted us - keep those letters and e-mails coming!

Hello Everyone! Today is my last day in Bali for 4 weeks as tomorrow I fly to Makassar for the beginning of a 4 week stay in Sulawesi as part of a conservation expedition run by Operation Wallacea.

This week has been really good fun, if a little hectic. We started (and now finish) the week in Kuta which is a very touristy resort very near the airport. Although convenient it is not a particularly pleasant place to stay as it is very busy and is full of Indonesians trying to extort money from you. On Tuesday and Wednesday we were in the northern seaside resort of Lovina having passed through the

mountainous central parts in the tourist shuttle bus (very cheap). Lovina was much quieter and we met some nice people. We paid a fair amount to get up at 6am in the morning to go and see dolphins which were apparently not in evidence while we were there. However on the way back to the shore we had an hour or so snorkelling over spectacular reef - loads of fish and strange shaped coral.

While in Lovina we were invited by one of the locals to a special Hindu ceremony for his family. Danny (friend from uni who I'm travelling with) and I went decked out in newly acquired sarongs

and headgear and were fed loads of different coloured food which all turned out to be rice!

The last couple of days we have been in Bedugul in the central mountains where we went to the famous Botanical Gardens and climbed our first mountain (Gunung Catur 2096m). We are now exhausted and are back in the mayhem of Kuta, though we caught the sunset over the beach, and also managed to bargain for extremely loud shirts for the forthcoming expedition!

Andrew Clifford

Postcard from Canada...

Hello everyone. Here in Montreal at the mo, although leaving for Toronto tomorrow. Went to the Olympic stadium, which was great, and went all round the Town, even the bits that were still under 12" of snow! Weather is amazing here, sun all day long. Going out to a jazz club tonight thoroughly looking forward to that (Nice!). Saw loads of Canada on the 3 day train journey over, great to see so many other different types of landscapes, from the Rocky Mountains to the (VERY) flat plains in the middle.

Sorry I can't write to you all individually for the next couple of weeks but I am a very busy traveller (yeah, right!).

I'll keep you all posted
Chris Smith



Some of you will remember Jason Stone, well here's what he's been getting up to...

"How do you know when you are getting old? A while ago, in-between living in America, I was back in Gloucester. I was working as a Refuse Collection Technician with Gloucester City Services (a street cleaner!). This gave me the opportunity to get back in touch with Phil and the unit. One night I was driving the minibus, and was fed up of listening to the guys' tapes, so I bunged in one of mine. Some one said "This is quite good, what are they called?" "The Doors", I said. "Who are they?" came the response. Made me feel very ancient!

I really enjoyed having the opportunity to put back something into the unit because I myself got so much from it.

For those of you who are interested, at some point I decided to completely change my career. I decided I liked being outside, working with people and that money really

wasn't important to me. I trained to be an outdoor pursuits instructor. This involved doing a two-year course at Hartpury College. Since then I have lived and worked in the South of France, North Carolina and spent the last two-years in mid-Wales.

There I was working for Outward Bound in Aberdyfi. Outward Bound was started in 1941. Britain was at war, the German U-boats were blockading the Atlantic. British shipping was being sunk so efficiently that at one point Britain was sure to lose the war. Also the loss of life among experienced merchant seamen was horrendous. This meant 16 to 20 year olds from Britain's industrial slums were sent to sea to man the ships. Question: If you have a load of unfit/unhealthy 50 year olds along with a load of reasonably fit 18 year olds and the ship was sunk, who would survive? The obvious answer would be the 18 year olds. When the statistics were analysed the results were quite startling. It was the 50 year olds who were surviving and the younger ones who were dying.

Sir John Holt was the owner of Blue Line Shipping, the largest shipping fleet in the world at the time. Kurt Hahn was a German Jew who had fled Nazi Germany to live in Britain. He had trained as an educationalist. The two got together and set up Outward Bound to train the young merchant seamen before they went to sea. John Holt and Kurt Hahn had realised that the young men lacked certain skills, teamwork, self belief, leadership, communication, self reliance, etc. Also most were not very fit, could not swim, certainly had never sailed before and because of rationing possibly not well fed.

Outward Bound was set up to challenge people, to take them out of their comfort zones, put them through physical and mental adversity. This would allow people to learn what they are capable of along with what others are capable of. This is very basically what personal/professional training and development using outdoor challenges is all about.

Aberdyfi was the first in the world doing this. Outward Bound was kept open after the war ended because it was realised that young people still needed to go through an experience like this to allow them to grow and develop. OB has spread to every continent and has many imitators, some better, some worse, yet none as unique.

OB in the UK still has unique courses. These are the Classic Course, which is a three-week centre based programme, and the Rover Course, which is a three-week fully mobile course i.e. you spend every night for three weeks in Wales under canvas. Both of these courses are fantastic to run because you see a massive change in the participants. You see their confidence and self-belief grow along with their communication skills. The long-term benefits of this are not quantifiable and include such things as helping UCAS and job applications.

The three-week courses cost in the region of £600. Bursaries are available from OB, so if anyone is interested, or just wants more information please contact me.

What is the downside of all this? Minimum wage/EC working hours directive, you must be joking! Average working week is over 70 hours and if you worked out your rate of pay it probably is below £2.00/hour. The personal rewards you gain from this and the lifestyle outweigh the long hours and poor pay.

I am now living in Okehampton Devon. I am working for a charity C-FAR (Centre For Adolescent Rehabilitation). What are our aims? We take young adults aged 18-24 who are in jail or who are being processed through the criminal justice system. We run an eleven week programme to rehabilitate these people, to give them the opportunity and confidence to facilitate changes in their own lives. Hopefully this will allow them to become productive and positive citizens in society.

No one else in the UK is really looking at working with this client group. To say the least this client group is very challenging to work with. Every belief/idea you have about yourself and others constantly gets challenged. This process makes you look at yourself and analyse your own behaviour. 85% of this client group re-offend within two years. They find prison easy; prison is no deterrent and most prisoners do 23 hour bang ups. This means that they spend 23 hours a day in their cells. They undergo no rehabilitation and no training.

On top of personal growth and looking at social/citizenship skills, we offer courses with qualifications in first aid, food hygiene, IT, numeracy and literacy. Also we hope we can place everyone into housing and into a job or training scheme. Ultimately we are looking for 80% of our trainees not to re-offend which would be an amazing achievement. The long-term benefits both socially and financially of this to society are huge and not easily quantifiable.

How long can I continue working with this client group? I do not know because it is exhausting, mentally, physically and emotionally.

If anyone wishes to contact me, either about the bursary at Outward Bound or how to get into the outdoor industry (you must be mad!) please give me a ring. My number is 07769721858.

Jason Stone



Hi! Me and Norm (Andrew Norman) are in Bolivia at the moment and have been in South America for about 5 weeks now. We met up with Will at his Latin Link project on Friday and are going round to have supper with the group on Monday.

We have seen some absolutely spectacular scenery, such as vast salt lakes and coloured mineral rich lakes full of flamingos. We also walked to the base camp of Aconcagua in Argentina which is the highest mountain in the world outside the Himalayas.

The weather has been fantastic and we have only had rain in the last few days.

Hope Ventures etc. is going OK. Bye for now,

David Clifford

from e-mail, March 2001

IRELAND 2001

PARTY MEMBERS:

Adam "Guinness is gorgeous" Griffiths

Dan "Girly Trousers" Dales

Jonathan Ellison "Jonny"

Matthew "Where are the girls??" Key

Michael Joyce "Stubby"

Pete "Just feed me SPAM" Lloyd

Phil Brown

Rachael Brown "Stubbina"

Richard Ellison "Sheepy"



Day One - The Departure

Late night casinos, "Stubby" and seasickness - not quite what we'd expected having left the scout hut at 6pm. Three hours later we'd arrived at Swansea, early for our ferry - which was an hour late anyway. En route we had experienced a vast mosaic of what it means to be ventures - and for those new to the unit, an eye-opener. Michael Joyce had been nicknamed "Stubby" and together with his friend "Sheepy" (Richard Ellison) they provided suitable amounts of entertainment and annoyance throughout the bus journey.

The ferry departed at 23:00 hours, with Phil and Mr Lloyd taking a cabin. For those still active, not much happened. The cinema was showing a great film on "The Evil English" and so at 1 a.m. we tried to sleep in a smoky lounge, leaving those who couldn't to amuse themselves (Stubby!)

Jon Ellison



*"Which way to
Ireland??"*

Day Two

The ferry docked in Cork at about 10am but by then we had awoken and had a nice breakfast ready for our day's walking. Phil had to do all of the driving now, as Pete didn't have the appropriate driving licence. We drove to Glengarriff stopping off at Skibbereen for lunch. We finally finished packing our expedition rucksacks and bailed out of the bus to begin our long trek to Adrigole.

Adrigole is basically just a mountain, being over 1000 feet and called "Hungry Hill". On top of here I remembered that there was something on the top which looked vaguely like a caravan hanging off a cliff (ask the old boys of '97!) Thanks to Pete and his binoculars we found out it was a rock painted white with red stripes - the colours of the local football team! We had evening tea - curry, very nice indeed then everyone retired to bed - Phil first! However Matt and I went on our own expedition to the pub next to the campsite for some local Guinness in preparation for the new day ahead: walking to Castletown.

Adam Griffiths



Day Three

We had set off by 10.00am to start the "proper" walking of the Duke of Edinburgh Expedition. Whilst making our way to the hills in the already hot sunshine we met various cyclists. After being confused by meeting several nationalities on bikes we decided the best approach would be to greet every cyclist with several languages at the same time. After a bemused look from a local farmer we, and the Beara Way, left the main road. The map promised an interesting route following the contours of the hills. Having been diverted through an established wood clearly not marked on the map our faith in the 1973 made map, together with the idea of having a pleasant walk, dissipated.

The views in the searing heat were spectacular and the water in the streams refreshing. With the promise of being able to see Castletown "any second now" we carried on up and down the other side of the hill. Energy levels wearing thin we decided to take a direct track, not shown on the map, instead of the incessantly winding Beara Way. All looked well until the path promptly died on us. After some imaginative cross-country walking a bull nearly took the same liberties with us!

Hobbling with speed onto the ferry to Beara Island we were treated to a fantastic panoramic view of Castletown and the associated hills. Next our attention turned to the matter of the camping site and a school playground provided the ideal location. Having dealt with the matter of supper (tonight provided by Field and Trek in foil packets!) we moved over to the pub. A lively room greeted us full mostly of young people the majority far too young to be drinking (due to there being no local police on the tiny island). After deciding by 11.00pm that the bar lady wasn't interested in talking we returned to camp and settled down to sleep. The antics didn't end there though...

Nocturnal Happenings

The night spent camping on Beara Island was eventful to say the least. Our quest to refill our water bottles at the islands only B&B, led us to encounter a mad French woman who had taken over the B&B, making it her home. Having persuaded her to let us have some water, we managed to drag Matt away from the truly "French" posters on the walls, narrowly escaping a vicious attack from her pet Corgi.

The surprisingly large number of Foot & Mouth Warning signs posted on gates and fences, led us to believe that it would not be wise to camp in one of the local fields for fear of encountering the wrath of an Irish farmer with a gun. We instead opted to spend the night behind the local school in a grassy field, which served as their playground - although to some of our group, the possible threat of an enraged school caretaker with a broom seemed far worse.

Soon the tent was pitched, the dehydrated food poked, cooked, probed, tested and eventually eaten. After organising who was going to sleep where and next to whom, the unanimous verdict was that we should take a short walk to the pub - after all, the purpose of our expedition was to assess how Foot & Mouth had affected the area, and naturally this includes local businesses!

Having exerted ourselves on the pool table, sampled the local Guinness (for some!) and watched Matthew's fruitless attempts at chatting up the barmaid, we staggered back to the tent in the dark. It wasn't long before we were all fast asleep.

**"AAAAAAAARRRRRGGH!
AAAAH-AAAAAAAH! GERROFF!
AAARRGGG!"**

The piercing, bloodcurdling scream woke us all from our peaceful slumber - well, all but the one who had screamed: Matthew.

Matthew was squirming and thrashing around in his sleeping bag as we all awoke in panic, prepared to run from that angry caretaker with the broom. When we realised there was no outside threat, we turned to Matt, who by now, was calmly asleep and snoring loudly. Five minutes later Matt awoke and innocently asked: "What's happening?"

A short interrogation produced the conclusion that Adam's foot had brushed past Matt's face while he was dreaming of being tied up (a sordid fantasy involving the barmaid I'm sure!) Consequently, he violently attacked the innocent Dan Dales and screamed waking us all.

When later questioned, Matthew denied all knowledge claiming: "Apparently I screamed and attacked Dan Dales whilst asleep."

After 20 minutes of reflection and hysterical laughter, we once again returned to the Land of Nod. The rest of the night passed uneventfully - well, that's if you ignore "The Great Beara Island Car Chase" at 3 a.m. but that's a different story...

Rachael Brown

Day Four

Woke extremely early and efficiently packed the camp away to be off by 8.00am. We sauntered down to the ferry to watch a traditional sight - how big a caravan can we fit on a small boat?! The answer unsurprisingly is "a very big one". A JCB was called to pull at one end whilst others pushed on the other end of this humungous tin can. One hour later, the task to the credit of the locals was completed successfully. We embarked all thinking we had just seen something very IRISH.

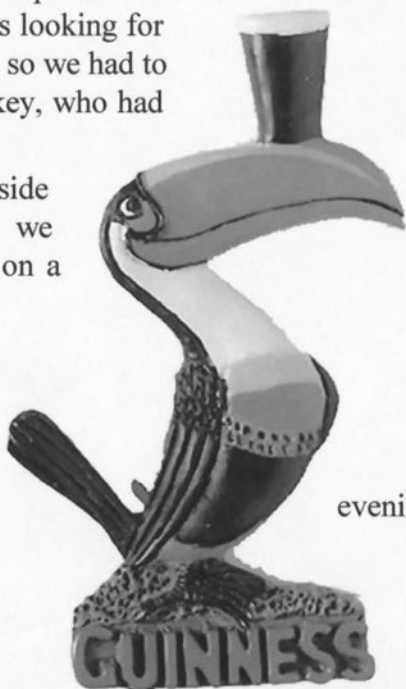
And so in the searing heat the day's walk began. Although fairly short, today's walk involved one big hill something that no one relished too much at this stage. We made good progress though and had lunch on top.

Today we were meant to meet up with our assessor but unfortunately, he was looking for us about an hour behind the pace, so we had to make do with a farmer on a donkey, who had lost his cow.

When we got to the beachside camping place for the night we collapsed briefly and then went on a mission for showers.

After the reunion with Pete and Co (they did the same walk as us and did see the Assessor!) we wandered up the road to Jimmy's for an enjoyable

Matt Key



evening.

Day Five

The previous night's challenge of a 6.00am swim was met by one Mr Philip Brown - Adam claimed the water was too cold. For the slightly more sane ones among us 7.00am was the wake up time in order to set off on our walk by 8.30am. We left for the final leg of our Gold expedition expecting another stinking hot day in more ways than one! It turned out that we got the toughest climb over and done with before the sun got out.

After finally getting away from the ups and downs of hill walking we found ourselves heading for the half way point of Eyeries, the Silver medal winner for the tidiest town, where we had our chocolate bars to see ourselves through to the end of our ever shortening trek.

The second half of today's journey was action packed. Firstly we were informed that a large stretch of the Beara Way was out of bounds (due to Foot and Mouth Disease) so we had to stick to the road. Then a motorbike with a trailer and a loud siren attacked us - the scariest part being the stuffed-toy elephant strapped on the back!

We then said "hello" to the American cyclists in multiple different languages receiving a rather dodgy look back! Also, as we took a



well-earned break by the roadside a car honked at us and I was shocked senseless. (*Actually Dan, you screamed a loud girly scream to match your girly trousers!* - Ed.)

We finally arrived at Ardgroom by 1.30pm and sat down to a celebratory lunch as we had completed the expedition. After relaxing for a while in the bus we headed down to Pallas Harbour to do some crabbing, catching ourselves two prawns at the same time.

A close encounter with a blue minibus on the narrow Irish roads proved tricky enough, not to mention the drive through thick smoke coming from a "planned" fire, were just two of the events as we drove back to the beach at Allihies to spend the night.

Dan Dales

Once again, Matthew shows us how it's done...



*"Er... Lads,
How do I get
down???"*

Stubby's Late Night Fishing Spree: - "A Load of Pollacks!"
(Or: "Mr Brown Nearly Caught a Mackerel")

Having spent 20 minutes attempting to attach a spinner to my fishing line I finally succeeded and I was able to cast out the spinner I had bought that day. Nearly as soon as I had cast it I felt a bite and started to reel in quickly.

When Adam finally unhooked the fish from the line we found out it was a Pollack. Two more followed, in quick succession and I knew I would be in for a busy night.

However, my night and my tackle box would be left in tatters after one fish devastated my dreams of a large catch. (The one that got away - the usual fishy tale!) A struggle with the huge beast left the contents of my tackle box strewn about the quayside. Adam told me that the fish that got away was three times the size of the other fish I had caught (yeah yeah!)

In all the big fish took three of my spinners and very nearly drew my patience out through my ears. In total I caught five and a half (the half is the big one that got away) fish that night and I was still pleased especially as Phil caught nothing which I think left him gutted - just like the Pollack!

Michael Joyce
aka Stubby!





The biggest discovery of today was that despite his girly trousers, Dan could not put a whole packet of skittles in his mouth - although Richard ("Sheepy") can. From this we logically concluded that Sheepy has the bigger mouth - something we had previously hypothesised. Feeling bold from his success, Sheepy later tried it with a packet of Alpen, but this resulted in a coughing fit and clouds of exhaled muesli. Perhaps sheep should stick to grass.



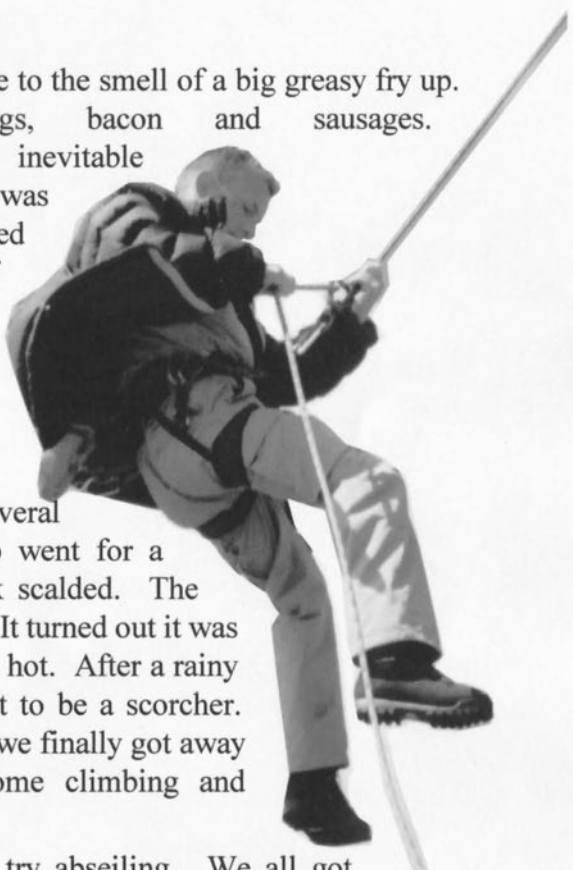
Day Six

This morning we awoke to the smell of a big greasy fry up. This included eggs, bacon and sausages. Unfortunately, the inevitable happened. As the egg was frying the yolk slipped into the white of Rachael's egg - if only Phil had been quicker this tragic accident could have been avoided.

After breakfast, several members of the group went for a shower and came back scalded. The water had been too hot. It turned out it was not the only thing to be hot. After a rainy start the day turned out to be a scorcher. After an eventful start, we finally got away to the hills to do some climbing and abseiling.

Firstly, we decided to try abseiling. We all got through it quite smoothly until it got to Stubby who had trouble getting into the harness. Then of course, there was Pete who wanted to abseil SAS style. After several bets on who could climb the wall Stubby was in serious debt and we decided to go home. That evening, whilst up at the pub sampling the local culture (and not just Guinness but a live musical performance too!) a group of us younger ones went up the town where Dan was mobbed by locals shouting and making fun of his "Girly Trousers"...

Matt Key



...He took refuge amongst the merry throng of grown-ups listening to the foot-tapping music in O'Sullivans. During a short lull in the music Dan was suddenly found quivering and trying to look inconspicuous under a bar stool.

The reason for his cowering demeanour stood, arms akimbo, framed in the doorway - a young, feisty yet pretty looking local colleen with a wicked glint in her eye. Ignoring Dan completely she strode purposefully over to Matthew, embraced him fiercely and planted a full-mouthed smacker of a kiss firmly on his lips. With a pop sounding like the de-corking of a rare vintage bottle of vin ordinaire, which even silenced the noisy hubbub of the crowded Family Bar, she whispered something Gaelic in Matthew's ear, turned smartly on her heel and swiftly departed into the dark street outside, leaving a totally bemused, glasses all fogged and toes curled up Chairman of the Unit swaying gently in her wake in the middle of the bar room floor. All remained hushed and still for a moment then the background banter gradually returned as the musicians struck up a lively jig.

*"YUCK! Girly
slobber!"*



Matthew's body was lowered gently back into his seat, his glasses removed carefully to reveal two equally fogged up eyes and cool libations administered to recall his senses from whence they had flown. Meanwhile Dan crept out from his refuge and the evening once more returned to normality.

Day Seven

Almost over now. Today was fairly remarkable in the sense that no walking or other exertion was required. Following a night of local music in O'Sullivan's the unit gradually emerged from their tents following a brief deluge. A short while later, the minibus departed under more heavy downpours, stopping at the local store for provisions.

We had lunch at the Dursey Island Cable Car, sadly missing the last car before their one hour lunch break so we went to Castletownbere to view an art exhibition instead. Having sampled local art culture, we visited shops and a funfair, having a good "bash" at the dodgems.



That evening, we returned to the luxury of the Hungry Hill Lodge and variations on a theme of the traditional chicken supreme dinner, before watching Irish television, listening to bugs frying and visiting a conveniently located pub on the Hungry Hill Lodge driveway.

Jon Ellison

Day Eight - The Day of Democracy.

Awoke exceedingly late and lazed around before finally summoning enough courage to drive out of the campsite. Originally, everyone was planning to conquer the notorious Hungry Hill but steadily, I am in pain to say, people dropped out to partake in fishing instead. In the end, Pete, Adam and myself took on the challenge whilst Phil and Dan went as far as the waterfall but a recent dearth of rain meant it wasn't all that spectacular.

The advance party was given a time of three hours - then we set off and up and up and up! It was a beautifully clear day and from halfway up, Pete's binoculars provided the perfect Big Brother experience. Shortly, we hit our first target - a lake hidden from view from the bottom. How could anyone miss out on a sight like that?

After about one hour 30 minutes climbing we had reached the top but the clouds had got there before us. Having talked with other groups of walkers on the way back down we decided to press on. Then down down down we went on more of a scree slope than a path.

A thoughtful person had spray painted rocks every five metres or so, perfect for the foggy conditions we encountered. Once out of the clouds Pete returned to Big Brother mode spotting the unmistakable minibus and a fisherman or two. Spurred on by the thought, "we're here, you're not" we reached the bottom of the mountain where the clouds promptly dropped their load and the minibus on cue, picked us up. Altogether an enjoyable - if somewhat soggy time.

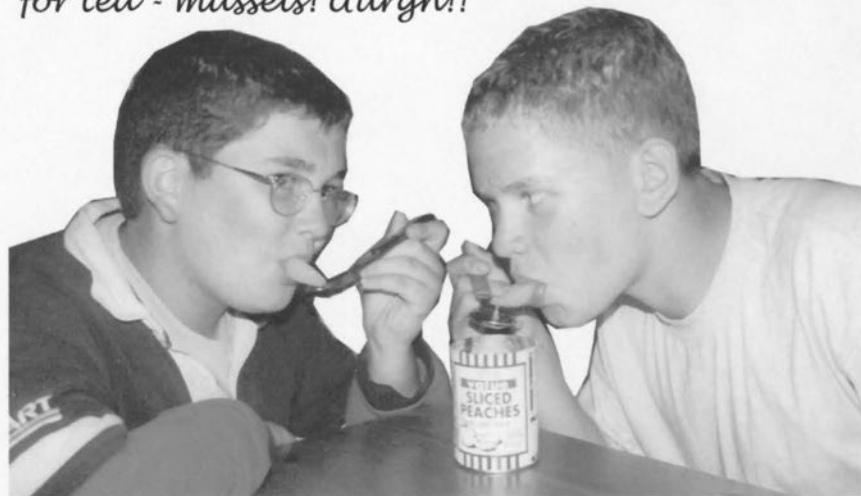


Matt Key

Whilst the three hard core dudes were attempting to scale Hungry Hill, everyone else was fishing. Today wasn't Stubby's day - two spinners lost and zero fish caught.

On the other hand, Phil reeled in a large cod and a similar sized mackerel. Dan was pressured into killing the fish with a rock - eventually flattening the head of the mackerel - oops, never mind. It was later made into ten very tasty fishcakes.

Rachael and Sheepy also caught something "fishy" for tea - mussels! Uurgh!!



IRELAND - "A Newcomer's Perspective"

The memories of my first Venture Scout trip abroad are still crystal clear. I had accumulated enough "DIY good behaviour points" at home to be released by my wife and my two sons to go on the trip with their blessing. Subsequently, with kit ready I boarded the minibus on a beautiful Sunday afternoon and set off for Swansea. I wondered if this was to be the last bit of good weather I would experience for the next ten days, but this thought was to be proved totally wrong. As usual, Phil and Matt had quietly and methodically got everything organised, with the bus fully loaded with enough kit and supplies to tackle any foreign excursion. The mood of the group was positive, lively and relaxed.

We reached Swansea and the ferry port. Joining the queue, I could not help but marvel at the luxurious and wonderful facilities that this port had to offer all travellers as they arrived or exited this ferry terminal. However, we soon were on board and for some reason the entire group appeared to check to see if I was well as the ferry cruised out of port. Somehow, they had caught wind that my sea legs were not the best in the world and were obviously waiting in great anticipation of me throwing up! I was determined that this would not be the case, despite the fact that most of the people on the ferry were stuffing themselves with food and were consuming large quantities of drink.

The ten-hour crossing flew past and before long I was waking up and taking my first glimpses of Ireland and more precisely, that of the city of Cork. The crossing had given Phil and I thumping headaches and this was not due to any alcohol consumption, but the fact that our cabin had appeared to be located right over one of the main engines! Once again, numerous members of the group recommended that I try the breakfast menu, but I declined their kind invitations. We were welcomed in Ireland by the customs officers all dressed in green wellies and boiler suits, ready to hose

us all down and eliminate all traces of any diseases that we had obtained in our native Gloucestershire. Soon we were heading out of the port and on our way West. Most of the crew took the opportunity to obtain some more sleep and appeared to look dazed after what had apparently been an eventful night crossing.

Eventually, we hit the drop-off point for our intrepid gold adventurers and with tears in our eyes we waved goodbye to them as the sun beat down, wondering if we would ever see them again. With these sad thoughts, we hit the campsite, had a high tea and chilled out! With the Hungry Hill as our campsite backdrop, the weather glorious and everything set up for the next day, it appeared that things were too good to be true!

The following day was again bathed in glorious sunshine and it was decided that we would hit the bikes and tour the area. For some



reason, with limited resources I was lumbered with the one remaining ladies bike, much to the amusement of the lads. However, by the end of the day, after touring various places, like Castletown and reaching new peaks, it was me who was smiling, as this bike appeared to have the best gears! The scenery was breath-taking, idyllic and this combined with the good weather to make a perfect first day - despite the hills!

With Phil having checked up on the “Goldies” and all of us remaining folk suffering from saddle soreness, it was decided that we would undertake a practice bronze trek from Castletown. The lads, Stumpy and Sheepy, as they had been affectionately labelled from day one, jumped up and down with joy at the thought of this navigational extravaganza. With supplies to last a year, compass in hand and that frontier spirit, we set off on our adventure into the dark, unknown wilds of Western Ireland. Would we survive? How would the natives react to us? What dangers would we encounter? About five hours later we were greeted by Phil and the minibus and wry smiles.

The weather continued to be good for the rest of the trip and after meeting up with the gold crew, the group undertook various activities, with the highlight for me, being the rock climbing, expertly led by Adam. Group spirits were high, good banter exchanged and Phil’s evening culinary delights each evening



ensured that we were well fed, although for some reason, he tried to tempt us frequently with some of his SPAM recipes! Evening meals were subsidised by the exploits of various expert fishermen within the group and one of the local camp site owners, who didn't just talk about the big one that got away but delivered the goods!

More walks were completed, fishing undertaken and general exploring of the area. Adam, Matt and myself, being the intrepid, "go for it!" types that we are decided to climb the Hungry Hill, only to find three hours later that after a bright, sunny start, the weather at the top had closed in and we could hardly see anything.

Before I knew it, my first Venture Scout expedition with the 44th had finished. I looked forward with relish at another ten-hour ferry trip, with the group stuffing their faces with food in front of me and ironically, on the return trip the weather had closed in on us.

However, I have only positive memories of the trip - wonderful weather, great scenery, a good bunch of people and great outdoor activities, plus a few drops of the black stuff! Next year is Norway and I have already started on the home DIY to ensure my place on the trip!

Pete Lloyd



*Annual Report of 44th Gloucester (STRS) Venture Scout Unit
September 2000 to August 2001*

This year has been a very eventful one for the unit with several high points but also a few low ones as well. Freshest memories of a truly brilliant summer expedition to the Beara peninsula in Eire serve to remind me of all the good things about the unit and its unique role bridging school and scouting. More of that later!

Harking back to last September, new plans for a faster, 'winning' raft were shelved with the cancellation of the annual River Wye raft race due to excessive rain and flooding. Much time though was still spent in the hut cutting and banging as we fitted and tacked down the hardboard underlay for our new carpet. The Exec considered it about time we invested in some proper floor covering instead of making do with other people's cast-off carpets and having finally fixed all the perennial leaks a brand new hard-wearing carpet was laid at the end of September. Although a sombre brown colour it is proving a sound investment.

The Five Valleys walk was enjoyed by 7 of the unit raising money for the Meningitis Trust and this was followed by a sunny autumnal Sunday at South Cerney Dragon Boat races in which several of the unit combined with other Venture Scouts to paddle the district boat to victory in the Junior section.

A Silver Duke of Edinburgh expedition to the Forest of Dean was staged during the October half term with the purpose of investigating the forest's industrial heritage and present day economy. Activities were fairly low-key during the whirl-wind of Christmas festivities although in between the carol services and the school production of Oliver (in which our chairman Matt Key gave a wonderful performance as Fagin and several other unit members took important roles) we managed to run a very popular lower school disco to raise funds for the unit, as well as running the raffle and Tuck Shop for the PA Quiz Night.

The new year programme focused on the Cotswold Marathon - extremely arduous conditions resulted in very few teams completing the course intact. Pete Lloyd, Adam Griffiths and Dan Wright actually posted the fastest time but missing their fourth team member Will Godwin at the end of the gruelling trek round were no longer eligible for the team trophies. Success did come to Matt Key, Rich Holland, Giles Moorhead & Geoff Coombs who were one of the few Venture teams to finish intact and they won the Senior section trophy. Generous sponsorship of all those who took part yielded around £300 for the Cobalt Appeal.

February half term took us to Dartmoor again where Jason Stone and Lee Rounce once more came up trumps and provided for us not only the usual high standard of wilderness expedition training but also organised a highly successful climbing session. Congratulations to Lee and his wife Michelle on their first born - Joshua.

At this point of the year the unit's moral was severely dented by two events. Firstly we were informed that the catering company who ran the school canteen had finally agreed the terms for improving the dining area and their taking over of the Tuck Shop area (which had been threatened for over a year) was now set to happen at the end of the summer term. Initial thoughts about relocating the Tuck shop were dealt a blow when the head decided that the Tuck Shop should close. Secondly as we looked more closely into the Scout Movement's revision plans for Scouting in the new millennium, it dawned on us that it was not just the name "Venture Scout" that was being changed but that our very existence as a Unit was going to be terminated and it would be the District Scout Council that would decide if we were to continue and in what form. (See footnote)

With the advent of yet more examinations (AS levels) activities during Easter and the summer term were likely to be low key - the foot and mouth outbreak saw to it that they almost stopped altogether! We did manage to run another successful lower school disco (proceeds this

time split between charity and the summer expedition fund), we ran a successful bar at the Old Richians annual dinner and a not so successful one at the end of year staff leaving 'do', we were pleasantly surprised by the number of prospective members from year 9 who turned up at our meetings in July and right at the end of term we held a canoe training session in the school pool from which we hope to rekindle the unit's involvement in canoeing.

The foot and mouth crisis left us contemplating no summer trip at all right up until the end of May. However The Irish authorities seemed to get their act together far more quickly and effectively than the UK government agencies and having kept the disease away by stringent disinfectant procedures at all their ports and border entry points, were welcoming the tourists back to their green and pleasant land with "business as usual". So a short 8 day trip was hastily organised, Duke of Edinburgh expeditions authorised, last minute ferry bookings made and off we went.

The party represented the full age range of the unit from new members "Stubby" & "Sheepy" through to "old boy" Adam Griffiths. We even had two leaders on a summer trip for the first time since 1992 - AVSL Pete Lloyd managed to obtain a pass-out from his good lady wife Ann and thoroughly enjoyed his first expedition away with the 44th - the first of many more to come we hope!!! We were blessed with superb weather, the fishing was good, Matt Key, Rachael Brown, Dan Dales, Jon Ellison and Adam Griffiths all completed 4 day expeditions (counting towards Queen's Scout and Duke of Edinburgh awards), the Healy pass and Hungry Hill were conquered, local hospitality shared, new friends made and a wealth of happy memories brought back.

With unit numbers slightly down from the previous year and the prospect of Venture Scouting ceasing altogether by the end of 2003, it did cross my mind that this year was perhaps the beginning of the end for the 44th VSU as we had known and loved it. By the time August 2001 had come round though it was abundantly clear that demand for

our own unique brand of Venture Scouting is still high as more than a dozen prospective new members from year 9 clamoured to join the unit. This encouraging rush of new blood helped us move on from some disappointing moments experienced earlier in the year and determines one to ensure that in some way or other the 44th Gloucester (STRS) will continue to provide the life enriching challenges and rewards it has always done for the members of Sir Thomas Rich's school.

Phil Brown
VSL



Footnote

As part of its "new vision" for the new millennium, the Scout Movement is redefining several areas of Scouting - new "modern and more functional" uniforms for all sections, completely revised activity programmes (called "programmes zones"), etc - but more directly threatening to us is the abolishment of the Venture Scout section. Beavers, Cubs and Scouts will continue and be the only three sections of existing Scout Groups. The upper age limit for Scouts is reduced to 14. Two new sections will be introduced - Explorer Scouts for 14 to 18 year olds and Scout Networks for 18 to 25 year olds. Neither of these sections will be allowed to be part of a local Scout group - the Explorer Scout section is to be run by the District and the Scout Network by the county. As we are a Venture Scout Unit registered as a separate group at headquarters we must be de-registered by 31st December 2003.

In other words from 1st January 2004 the 44th Gloucester (STRS) Venture Scout Unit will cease to exist

