



BHA Explorers Ugandan Experience (Project Africa) - Summer 2011

Project Africa - a Berkshire Scouts community project to support two schools in Uganda.

Just under 100 Scouts aged 14 years and over, together with about 20 adult leaders had the opportunity to work on the two main community projects in Uganda.

Berkshire Scouts are grateful to Berkshire Scout Enterprise Ltd (BSEL) for supporting Project Africa. BSEL has been supporting projects and communities in Uganda since 1988. Projects with the Uganda Scout Association led to the formation of the UK-Uganda Network from which many other Scouting-based community projects have followed – including Building Brighter Futures.

Building Brighter Futures is a registered independent charity (formed by Scouts from the UK working in Uganda) and supports two special schools in Uganda: **the Kavule School for the Deaf** which is situated just outside Mbale in Eastern Uganda; and the **Bukeka Children's Centre** which is a short drive from Mityana in central Uganda. Berkshire Scouts have supported on-going work at these two schools.

The charity's objectives are to provide practical support and sponsorship which will fund and provide educational support of deaf, disabled, disadvantaged and deprived children in Uganda, in order that these children can integrate constructively, educationally, and socially with their local communities.

The project took place during 6 weeks from mid-July to the end of August. Participants could opt for the first or second 3-week period or the full 6-week period. It cost between £1,600 - £1,700 for a 3-week period and an additional £350 for 6-week period. It was £100 to take part in the Mount Elgon Trek. Our three Scorpion Explorers, Calum, Paul and Sam opted for the latter, three weeks 8th – 28th August 2011. Participants in this group came from Twyford, Bracknell, Newbury, Maidenhead and Woodley. The leaders in their Group were Ray Tucker from Maidenhead, Mark and Ann-Marie Elliott from Woodley, Phil Hayes from Twyford and Steve Dellow. Individuals had to fund their own equipment costing between £300 - £1,000. They were invited to attend training weekend camps – 5 in total - which cost approximately £25.00 each. During the period April 2010 and May 2011 weekend camps were held locally in Reading, Ascot and Cambridge where they learned skills for

their trip and team building. An additional training camp was held in the Brecon Beacons, Wales on the weekend of 18th-20th February for the group opting to go on the 5 day Mount Elgon expedition this cost £50.

Of course, everyone had to have vaccinations ranging from, yellow fever, hepatitis A & B, typhoid, meningitis ACW & Y, cholera and rabies plus take malaria tablets.

At 9.15pm on Monday 8th August the group flew out of Heathrow Airport to start their 8 hour flight to Entebbe, Uganda. They were all provided with a team T- shirt and scarf.

On arrival in Uganda, the group were collected from the airport and taken to the Lweza Training and Conference Centre where they spent their first night. The following morning they set off to Mbalen and the Kavule School for the Deaf to commence the first their projects.

In between the two school projects in Uganda the Scouts were given the option of white water rafting and other activities at the Buwenda Scout Camp site at Jinja which is located by the source of the River Nile (this camp site was developed by Avon County Scouts previously) or to trek in Mount Elgon National Park which is close to the school project in Mbale. Sam, Paul and Calum chose the 5 day trek in Mount Elgon National Park. The whole Group met up afterward their options to move on to the second project at Mityana.

The conditions the Explorers had to work in were variable as their visit was during the rainy season. Uganda doesn't have seasons as we know it – just a dry or rainy season. There were limited supplies and resources and had to rely on the expertise of local craftsmen and volunteers. A craftsman's wage is equivalent to £2.50 per day (1 GBP = 4402.1791 Ugandan Pounds). A few of the lads in the group decided to have Mohican haircuts during the trip – it cost them 50p each! Ugandans now think this is a typical haircut of the UK!!!

At Kavule School for the Deaf the Scouts helped build a washroom for the teachers and at Bukeka Children's Centre they assisted with the building of a toilet block.

They arrived back in the UK on Sunday 28th August around 6pm.

Follows is Paul Hutchinson's diary of his three week's experience in Uganda.

Uganda Diary

Day 1: 9th August 2011

- Arrived at Uganda at 7.45am.
- Drove to the LTCC (The Lweza Training and Conference Centre)
- We did a lot of waiting and then had break-tea.
- We did more waiting and then saw the monkeys.
- We did some waiting (3 hours) and in that time visited the shop down the road, we then had a boring meeting.
- We now, after some waiting had a very nice dinner comprising of roast potatoes, rice, chicken and lot's more.
- We then wrote in are diaries and talked by candle light.

Dinner: Very nice, mentioned above

Day 2: 10th August 2011

- Had breakfast then got ready to leave.
- Left on buses for Mbale. The journey took 5 hours including a stop at a shop/petrol station, and having to stop because the driver had not got any insurance.
- Got Mbale and had to shake everybody's hand and then got are tents and had some lunch.
- Cleared some rubble and then had some dinner.
- Sat up and talked and then went to bed.

Dinner: Not nice at all, burnt rice and a horrible vegetable curry.

Day 3: 11th August 2011

- Had breakfast at 7.30am but the porridge was not ready!
- Stated making ladders in till break at 10.00am.
- Had the porridge that was meant to be for breakfast!
- Stated painting the wood where the guttering will be put up (using are newly made ladders).
- Finished the first coat of paint for where the guttering will go and continued to paint inside until and after lunch.
- Also in my painting time I went back outside and did the second coat for the guttering.
- Had dinner and a shower/strip down wash and talked in till bed.

Dinner: Good, mild curry with sweet potatoes and flatbreads.

Day 4: 12th August 2011

- Had breakfast at 7.30am and then went to mix cement.
- Mixed cement until and after brunch.
- After lunch we mixed concrete (very hard work!!!) and added the hard-core for the floor of the washroom.
- Finished work a 6.15pm.
- Had dinner and then a shower/strip down wash.
- Talked and then went to bed.

Dinner: Passable, mushy pasta with unskinned tomatoes and some vegetable concoction.

Day 5: 13th August 2011

- Woke up at 6.30 to do catering crew.
- Made breakfast and sorted the bugs and beasts from the lentils.
- Chop millions of fruit + vegetables for every meal of the day.
- Cooked soup and kept stirring.
- Cooked peanut sauce with Carol the cook.
- Watch the dance and presentation by the Ugandan Scouts from the school and then watch our football match (we lost). It rained very badly and one of the teachers said it was the worst rain for 10 years.
- Went to bed a 7.40pm because of rain.

Dinner: Edible, tomato soup nice but peanut sauce not eaten, rice edible.

Day 6: 14th August 2011

- Got up at 7.30am and had breakfast.
- Stated mixing cement until I went for the visit to the market.
- The drive to the market was bumpy and I got to see Mt. Elgon closer than I had seen before and it looked massive, and that was only a small bit of it.
- At the market it was very busy and you don't have much time to think, as soon as the car stopped we were descended on by the porters, wanting out business and money.
- Once in the market there are people everywhere and produce everywhere too. We got all the stuff in the market and got back into the truck for the short drive up the road to BAM the supermarket.
- In BAM it is just like a smaller TESCO, we got all the things we needed group food wise and then had some time to get any personal items. I got some Pringles and some Top Deck chocolate, but you could buy pirated DVD's if you wanted.
- We then brought our items and then got back into the truck and drove back to mix more cement and have some lunch.
- After lunch I continued to mix cement for the rest of the day.
- We had dinner and stated to pack for Mt. Elgon and did a bit of clothes washing.
- We now had a campfire with the school scouts and then after a long time went to bed.

Dinner: Edible, rock hard potatoes with a nice vegetable stew.

Day 7: 15th August 2011

- Got up and got the rest of my things together for the Mt. Elgon bag.
- We had breakfast and then put the different bags going to different places in different piles.
- The Jinga and Mityana people got onto one bus and left and we at 9.30am in the deathly taxi.
- Got to Mbale Hotel and sat by the pool with a few cokes and had a swim.
- Had a fantastic burger and chips for lunch by the poolside.
- Had a **HOT** shower and then we had a ride to Rosa's Last Chance Hotel in the deathly taxi once more!
- Got to the hotel and put our stuff in the bunk house and then went for a walk around the town (without any leaders) that was great!!!
- Had dinner and then talked until bed at around 9.00pm

Dinner: Edible, beef stew with nice roast potatoes with horrible japatties.

Day 8: 16th August 2011

- Had breakfast (eggy bread).
- Got back in that deathly taxi (had to be pushed up the hill).
- Got out the taxi and walked the last little bit to pick up the porters and guides and stated walking for the Sasa camp, from 9.00am -2.00pm.
- Got to the camp and put up the tents (all wet and smelly)
- Played cards until mushroom soup at 5.30pm.
- Had dinner at 6.00pm.
- Talked around the fire then went to bed.

Dinner: Very good, red sausages, carrots and onion with very good mash potatoes.

Day 9: 17th August 2011

- Woke up at 5.45am and packed most of my stuff.
- Had breakfast and then put down tent and had fun getting all the stuff in the bag.
- Started walking for 4 hours.
- Got to Mude cave camp and set up tent.
- Started an optional 2 hour walk to and from the waterfall.
- Had a tiny amount of chicken soup at 5.30pm.
- Had dinner at 6.00pm. Talked and played the Tesco game.
- Went to bed at 8.00pm.

Dinner: Excellent, pasta and tomatoes sauce with vegetables.

Day 10: 18th August 2011

- Woke up early and had breakfast at 6.30pm. What a treat baked beans!!!!
- Started summit walk at 7.00am.
- Got to the summit after a hard walk at 11.40am (good views).
- Had brunch at 12.10 and then walked back to the camp.
- Got to the campsite at 3.00pm.
- Sat in the tent because of the rain and wrote in diary.
- Had soup at 5.30pm and dinner at 6.00pm.
- Talked and then went to bed.

Dinner: Very good, corn beef hash with mash potato.

Day 11: 19th August 2011

- Got up around 6.30am and started packing rucksack.
- Had breakfast about 7.00am and then finished packing tent and kit.
- Started walking and collected water at the first stream and then continued walking. Very hard day suffered from altitude more than the last day.
- Got to the midway camp for lunch and a cup of tea.
- Started walking once more and we were supposed to be going down but just kept going up!!!
- In the end got to the bat cave and set up tents and John the cook made us some soup and the dinner at just after 6.00pm.
- At 6.45pm got ready to see the bats and tried to take pictures and some videos, great fun!
- Sat between Calum and my tent and Sam's and Alex's tent talking in till bed.

Dinner: Excellent, rice with the same tomato sauce we had with the pasta two days ago.

Day 12: 20th August 2011

- Got up early and saw the remaining bats returning home. Started packing rucksack.
- Had breakfast and finished packing bag and tent.
- Left the camp and started walking for the last time!
- Got to the park boundary and brought a sticker and signed out of the Elgon National Park.
- Kept walking and got to the point where we could see are finely destination Sipi Lodge.
- Walked down the stream/path next to the 810 metre waterfall.
- Go to the lodge and had a burger (no chips) and started waiting for the coach.
- Was informed the coach was in the wrong place and would be an hour late. I didn't mind because we got whatever we wanted from the menu with the leftover money, so I had a cheese roll, very good.
- The coach finally arrived and we left knowing that soon it would be dark.
- Had a scary drive on the coach in the dark and arrived at Jinga in one piece JUST!
- Had dinner and talked then went to bed.

Dinner: Good, rice, potatoes and noodles with bone and fat (I mean meat) and fruit.

Day 13: 21st August 2011

- Got up early and had a cold shower and then got on clean clothes.
- Had breakfast about 45 mins later and then helped with washing up.
- Sorted kit back into my bag and cleaned tent out.
- Looked at Nile and saw monkeys from about 10 metres away very close. Great!
- Had lunch and then got a coach to Mityana for hours still scary.
- Got a welcome by Livy the School Director and Gertrude the Head Teacher and then Mark and Ray Tucker showed as around the site.
- Got a tent and sorted kit.
- Had dinner and talked and went to bed.

Dinner: ?

Day 14: 22nd August 2011

- Woke up around 6.45am and had breakfast at around 7.30am.
- Me and Calum added two more courses of brick onto the top of the staff washroom over the whole day with a couple of breaks and lunch in-between and finish the bricking at 5.00pm and then did some overtime with Mark as a chippy doing the roof trusses.
- Finished about 6.15 – 6.30pm and had a quick look around the trading post at Bolera.
- Had dinner at 7.00pm and then talked and went to bed.

Dinner: ?

Day 15: 23rd August 2011

- Woke up around 6.45am and had breakfast at around 7.30am.
- Started building the toilets at 8.00am with Ray Tucker and Phil and continued all day with a couple of breaks and lunch in-between.
- Finished at about 6.15 – 6.30pm.
- Had dinner at 7.00pm played cards and talked.
- Went to bed quite late.

Day 16: 24th August 2011

- Woke up around 6.45am and had breakfast at around 7.30am.
- Continued building the toilets and kept going until the end of the day like yesterday.
- Finished work at 6.00 – 6.15pm.
- Went down to the market and I got mum's present there and the hoes.
- Talked played card and went to bed quite late.

Dinner:?

Day 17: 25th August 2011

- Got up at around 6.30am and started a fire from the embers of the night before and then me and Calum started frying the eggs on an industrial scale on the massive baking tray. Everybody had had a fried egg sandwich by 7.50am.
- Did washing up and filled shower bags and placed in the sun.
- Got the other fires going and throughout the day chopped veg and fruit filtered water and kept the fires going.
- After all that chopping it was lunch with the whole school up at the top of the school ground so quickly got lunch and brought it back because me and Calum had to look after the fire and the lentils.
- Chopped more veg and added to a massive pan on the fire and help Davies with the flatbreads.
- Went down to the trading post with Davies, the school cook and we brought the maize flour and kidney beans.
- Helped serve dinner to everybody and then ate myself.
- Helped wash up and then talked and played cards.

Dinner: Amazing, vegetable curry in flatbreads (I didn't eat the lentils after seeing the bugs and bits in them).

Day 18: 26th August 2011

- Woke up around 6.45am and had breakfast at around 7.30am.
- The people yesterday had finished the brickwork on the toilets, so Calum, me, Ray and Phil put the roof on and then made some door and a shelf and toilet roll holder.
- Filled in the gaps in the brickwork with mortar and then cleaned the floor in the cubicles.
- Finished at about 5.40pm and then went down the trading post and got our pangas.
- Went back and got ready for the party.
- Went to the front of the school ready for the party dinner.
- Had dinner and then a bit of Mark and Ray's cake and shortbread and flapjack.
- Listened to the music and then went to the tent and talked.
- Went to sleep about 11.30pm.

Dinner: Edible, rice, fat and bone (meat!), kidney beans and other stuff.

Day 19: 27th August 2011

- Woke up around 7.00am and had breakfast at around 7.30am.
- Pick up from the people yesterday, digging the footings for the dining room with Nathan the builder (he seemed to like me) and finished by 11.30am.
- Started packing my rucksack and then went to watch the pig being weighed.
- Had lunch and got kit onto the grocery truck thing.
- Said are goodbyes and left on the coach for the LTCC.
- Got to the LTCC and got our rooms (I was on my own for the first time in 3 weeks) and then went down to the shop down the road.
- Got some bit in the shop and then went back.
- Watched the news on the TV what a strange feeling watching the TV.
- Had dinner and then talked with Stuart about the past 3 weeks.
- Talked and then went to bed.

Dinner: Good, rice, fat and bone (meat!), kidney beans and noodles.

Day 20: 28th August 2011

- Woke up at 5.00am.
- Packed the last few bits in my rucksack and went to the coach for the last time!
- Got onto the coach for the 30-40min drive to the airport.
- Got our stuff and got it X-rayed and then officially got stamped out of Uganda.
- Brought some bits in the shop and then had breakfast with the 10000 Ugandan Shillings given to each of us, but I put another 8000 to it to buy omelette and chips with toast.
- Had more security to clear and then finally got in the bus to the plane.
- The bus did not move for 10mins and then when it did get to the plane we had to wait for another 10mins to get onto the plane.
- Waited on the plane for ages and then got told they could not take off because of rain, there was a mechanical fault with the plane and we could not be served with any cold food because somebody didn't turn on the fridge.
- We had lift off about a 1 hour late and got back to England after watching lots of films.
- After we landed the Captain gave a big announcement about the Project Africa participants over the microphone. (That was nice)
- Cleared British security with a panga machete in my bag and then was reunited with mum and dad.
- Finally after a great 3 week I was HOME!

Dinner: Roast chicken with roast potatoes beans, carrots, sausage meat and stuffing. (GREAT).



Departure at Heathrow in uniform



Bus with hole in floor!



Dormitory at Kavule School



Dining area at Kavule School



Paul & colleague mixing cement



Moses (local craftsman) & Calum working on wash-house



Football match against pupils



Kavule School kitchen & store



Example of ladder used!



Budding 'bricky' - Calum



The group at Kavule



The camp oven!



Terrain en route to Mt Elgon



Natives en route to Mt Elgon



Last pub before Elgon National Park!



En route to Elgon National Park



A pensive Sam en route



Hired Porters at work



Paul & Calum en route



Trail to Elgon National Park



Sasa River camp



Camp fire



Mude Cave camp



Bunk house at Mude Cave



Paul taking a break



Waterfall



Jacobs Pool



Bat cave



Views en route



Farewell to hired porters



Camp at Bukeka Children's Centre



Group outside chicken house



Constructing toilet block



Addition of toilet



Typical British haircut !



Phil Hayes testing new door



Classrooms at Bukeka Centre



Performance by Bukeka school



Party at Bukeka Centre

When asked if they would take part in a similar project again the answer was a resounding **YES**

BHA Scout Group is very proud and full of admiration for the three of you

WELL DONE SAM, CALUM & PAUL