

NETWORK RUSSIA SCOUT FELLOWSHIP
11TH OCTOBER 2003
HUSHWOODS, TAUNTON, SOMERSET

1. FLAG BREAK AND INTRODUCTIONS

Prayers were given for Claire Griffin who was in hospital after having a hip operation, Steph and her family after losing her dad Keith and Walter, Jo Finlays Dad who had just been diagnosed with Cancer.

Anne the deputy site manager welcomed all to the site. Anne was presented with a Russian Network plaque for the site.

2. REPORTS ON VISITS / STUDY VISITS AND EXPEDITIONS

• **STUDY VISIT TO WESTERN SIBERIA**

Barry Dale and Dorothy and reported on the visit (8 participants) to meet initially with Mr Sirotkin in Moscow before flying internally to Omsk (3 hours duration). They had to wait at arrivals to scramble for their luggage. They spent the first night in a hotel and then were looked after very well in home hospitality. Barry stayed with Victor (Constantin Iseanko's father) a complete alcoholic and brilliant architect. At 6am one morning Barry was served with breakfast 3 glasses of vodka and then had a nice day.

Dorothy (with Claire) went on a 22 hour train journey on the Trans-Siberian railway to Kemerova before another two hour train journey to a town called Mezhdurechensk (Pearl of Siberia) wonderful trees ,scenery and were treated by royalty. The flat she was staying in looked grim from the outside, but was beautiful inside. Mother, Father and Daughter (aged25) couldn't speak English. The daughter was a teacher and scout leader. They were entertained by a lot of girls who were both scouts and guides. One night they went to a dacha in the countryside and were all invited to take part in enjoying a Banya. Dorothy reported that they were taken in a government car to have dinner with a government official before then being taken on a chair lift up the mountain. Bill reported on his visit to Tomsk with Robin & Lesley, 17 hours by train from Omsk, and felt his trip was in a way disappointing, as he didn't see any scouts in Tomsk itself but they did visit two ORYR scout Groups outside Tomsk. Bill felt that the leader was money orientated and therefore scouting was not progressing there for the right reasons. Tomsk is a wealthy place, famed for minerals, and it is not cheap to eat and travel there. Omsk was cheaper.

Barry was to go to Kazahkstan with Iain but his visa was not available before he left. The scouts therefore travelled to visit them 4 and a half hours away on the road. They met Leaders from Kazahkstan, Elanya and Ludmilla, who wanted us to make representations to the world bureau for them to be a recognised organisation . Barry saw the detail of their constitution, programme planning, and thought overall that they are very organised and financially secure. They then went on to a very disorganised region in Semorava, they have the skills but need help in organisation. It was a very old town, the children were used to assist on the family's small holdings and didn't have much time to themselves.

• **SUMMER EXPEDITION TO ST PETERSBURG**

Paul Findlay reported that they took 4 scouts on an expedition with Scouts from St. Petersburg which included a three day rowing trip - it was lovely because it gave the opportunity to go back to basics. They went to the ballet and later went on a coach for a tour of the bridges that were all open along the river in St Petersburg.

- **SUMMER EXPEDITION TO PERM**

Chris reported that a contingent of 10 went to Perm, the region is the size of the UK and the area is contrasting. They were caught up in an airport delay, the flight was cancelled, and they ended up in BP house and had 2 days before their flights could be rearranged. On the second attempt they went out and met up with scouts in St Petersburg before going on to Losovo campsite They went for a day trip to an old fortified town, and a church before going to play Laptor (skittles with a stick instead of a ball). The campsite was flat with trees and a lake and was perfect, with a diving platform and was very safe. They then went to St Petersburg for one night doing tourist things, before then going on a train to Perm. They had home hospitality, a tour of the city, visited a factory, a Monastery that was stunning and an excursion to an ice cave (5km of caves) called Kungur. They then went to see the scouts they were linked with in Beresneky and went to a salt mine with them before a party and a tour of the town. They then started a raft camp (45 people in total), camping by the side of the river, boiling water from the river. They stopped three times and could swim in the river - the mosquitoes weren't too bad. They had a look in caves as they passed and visited an 80ft deep pool. The raft camp is recommended but can be hard work paddling. Two people didn't go to the raft camp, and they visited friends and did a three day tour of the area. They all then went on to Moscow.

- **EXPEDITION TO UK BY OMSK SCOUTS**

17 Siberian scouts came from Omsk flying into Gatwick before being billeted into home hospitality. The next day they were given a tour of Much Hadham in Hertfordshire which included the Henry Moore foundation. There was a Russian Day for the Much Hadham children, a trip to Duxford air show, punting in Cambridge, two days in London, Parliament, number 10, the London eye, Buckingham Palace, the Ware outdoor lido and shopping in Bishops' Stortford. In the middle of their stay they were taken to camp at Tolmers in Hertfordshire for an Activity camp.

- **MICHAEL DURNAN EXPEDITION**

A group of 15 scouts and leaders from St. Petersburg spent 5 days at Phasels Wood Activity Centre before going to Coetmor Mill in North Wales, for hill walking and sightseeing. Then they went to London staying at the Docklands Scout project for 4 days. This is now an annual event in memory of Michael Durnan. A visit to Cambridge with Michael's mother Eileen Creak was a feature of the expedition this year.

CAMP STAFF PROGRAMME FOR YOUNG RUSSIAN LEADERS

8 young people came this, sadly 8 people didn't take up the offer. They were housed at Torbay, Hesley wood, Gradbach in Derbyshire and Phasels Wood. They all then came back to stay at the Docklands Scout project for two nights and gave a talk about their experiences.

- **VISIT TO ETKATERINBURG**

John Thorpe and Irina visited and will report back at some other time as they were unable to attend.

- **GILWELL REUNION**

Thanks were given to everyone who took part, and it was noted that there was much interest in the winter expedition.

3. GUEST SPEAKER; MARGERY PRYCE-JONES RUSSIAN STREET CHILDREN

Margery has a history of working for the United Nations for the last 17 years and has visited many war zones. Approximately 3 years ago she became increasingly aware of there being a large number of street children living in Russia and obtained 5 years leave from working with the United Nations to work with these children. Margery explained that Russian street children are abandoned by their parents, have drug, alcohol and prostitution related problems and many sleep in the sewers around Moscow and in other cities. There are 3 million street children in Russia and the problem is increasing. 1000 children are held in the prison system or are rounded up and deposited at orphanages.

Margery went through 6 months bureaucracy before then being given a five-year licence with reviews. The Multi International Aid project was formed and had to rely on having to work with whatever buildings were provided by the government to house the children.

The project now supports children in the prisons, and 4 orphanages. The orphanages have been supplied by the government in a terrible state and are an ongoing repair project.

4. DISCUSSION BASES

The objective of the discussion bases was to prepare content for a booklet or booklets as part of the drive to give practical ideas to UK Explorers, Scouts, Cubs and Beavers on Russia culture etc.

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- **Study visit Easter 2005 to Irkusk , central Siberia**

this trip is in the early stages and many in the network are expressing interest.

6. ADMINISTRATION MATTERS

Eric has indicated that he will not be providing the equipment and catering for the next Gilwell so people attending will have to consider alternative arrangements.

7. THANKS/ NEXT MEETING/ FLAG DOWN

The next meeting will be on the 13th March 2004 at John's Lee Wood Scout Campsite , Markfield Lane, Markfield, Leicester.