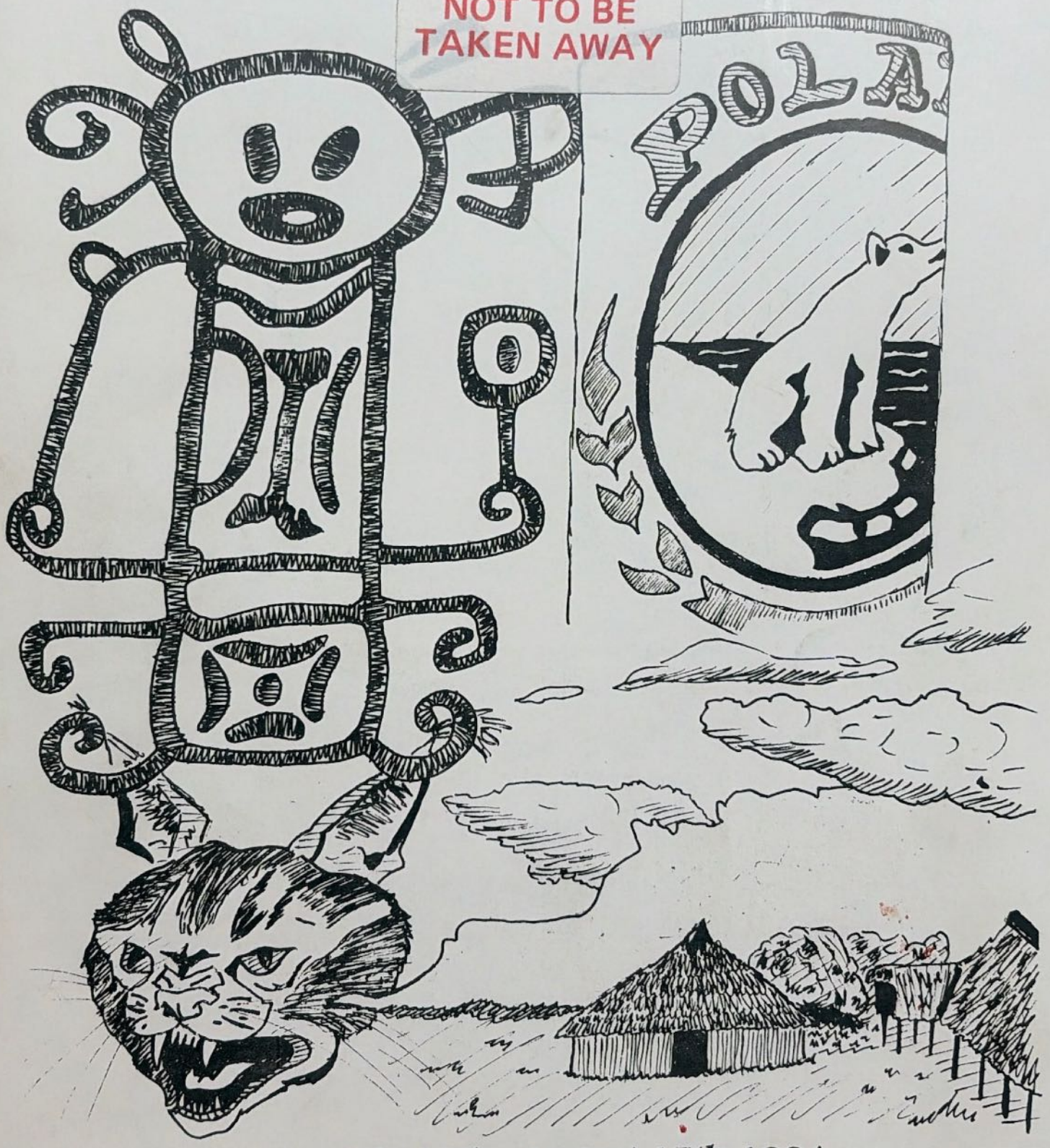
OLD SWINFORD HOSPITAL SCHOOL

Venezuela '94 Expedition

QUEEN MARGARET'S SCHOOL

NOT TO BE
TAKEN AWAY



July 13th - August 15th 1994

EDITOR - Lynfel Owen

COVER ARTWORK - Dermot Grazebrook

PICTURE EDITOR - Stuart Sopp

PROOF READER - C.R.F Potter

This brochure was produced indepentantly by the team members of a *World Challenge* Expedition to Venezuela in the summer of 1994.

WORLD CHALLENGE
Chairman: Lt. Colonel H. R. A. Streather OBE
Education Director: M. W. Vallance MA. Vice Chairman: J. S. Lee MA, Headmaster, Trent College

Old Swinford Hopital School, Stourbridge, DY8 1QX
Queen Margaret's School, York, YO4 6EU

Venezuela '94 Expedition - Post Expedition Report

Contents

INTRODUCTION

by the Editor

EXPEDITION DIARY

Expedition Build-up
Transfer to *Caraccas*
Acclimatization trek -*El Avila* National Park
Conservation Work - *Carupano*
Tranfer & trek preparation -
Luepa & Suidar Bolivar
Jungle Trek - *Kamaratra*
Canoe Trek - *Angel Falls*
Rest & Recuperation - *Margarita Island*

NEWSPAPER REPORTS

Express & Star
Stourbridge News

FEATURES

Pre-Expedition Training
Pre-Expedition Fundraising
Host Country Introduction
Expedition Planner
Map
Accounts breakdown
Character Assasinations!
History of Venezuela
Venezuela - An Overview
Personal Profiles

World Challenge Expeditions Limited
Soane House, 305-315 Latimer Road, London W10 6RA Telephone: 081-964 1331 Fax: 081-964 5298
Registered in England No. 2173751. Registered Office: 25 Lower Belgrave Street, London SW1W 0LS

Introduction

by the Editor

The summer of 1994 was to be one of the best so far for the group you are about to read about, who spent a month as a close working team on their Expedition to Venezuela.

Eighteen months ago the London based *World Challenge Expeditions* company paid visits to Old Swinford Hospital School, in the Midlands and to Queen Margaret's School in Yorkshire. They were seeing if they could generate enthusisam from the members of the schools to participate in an expedition, the chosen country being Venezuela, to leave the following summer and stay in-country for a month. The aims of the expedition would be left up to the members of the group and then World Challenge would build them into a practical format and do the bulk of the groundwork for the actual expedition. Surely enough, enthusiasm was generated in both schools and the outcome some weeks later was 14 pupils and one teacher ready to start planning their own expedition.

I would like at this point to introduce myself. My name is Lynfel Owen, I am a pupil at Old Swinford Hospital School. I volunteered and was elected as Student Leader of the expedition, soon after the initial get-together of the team. I did not then have a great idea of what I was getting myself into, I was a little daunted when I realized what a mamath task lay ahead of us!

I can certainly say that after all our hard work the rewards were plentiful!

What you are about to read is the proud result of a lot of hard work and perserverence by the team.

We decided that our expedition was going to be based on the lines of **Challenge**, **Participation** and **Environment**. This was then transposed into our Expedition Objectives

The main objectives of the expedition were as follows:

-To contribute towards a locally arranged project including conservation work.

-To conduct an exploratory trek in the Guayana Highlands.

-To complete a river journey from Kamarata to the Angel Falls in local boats.

-To compile an expedition team journal.

The objectives demanded a large physical and mental input. One of the aims of the expedition was to enhance certain qualities in the team members that cannot be gained elsewhere, as well as providing a large physical challenge. Motivation, discipline, participation and leadership skills all played a role in the success of the expedition.

Part of the expedition that was new territory for most of us was the World Challenge policy of producing, via Tony our leader, a *Personal Profile* for each of us. They were designed to be a set of constructive criticisms to help us develop, and to use as possible employment references. There are a few of them included in this report.

I hope this report will allow you to see what can be achieved with dedication and teamwork.

Thank You for supporting our venture.

Taken from *EXPRESS & STAR* - Tuesday, February 22, 1994



Pupils to explore

A team of young explorers from a Stourbridge school are bound for South America.

Oldswinford Hospital School is sending 11 boys, aged 16 to 17, Venezueia for four summer weeks

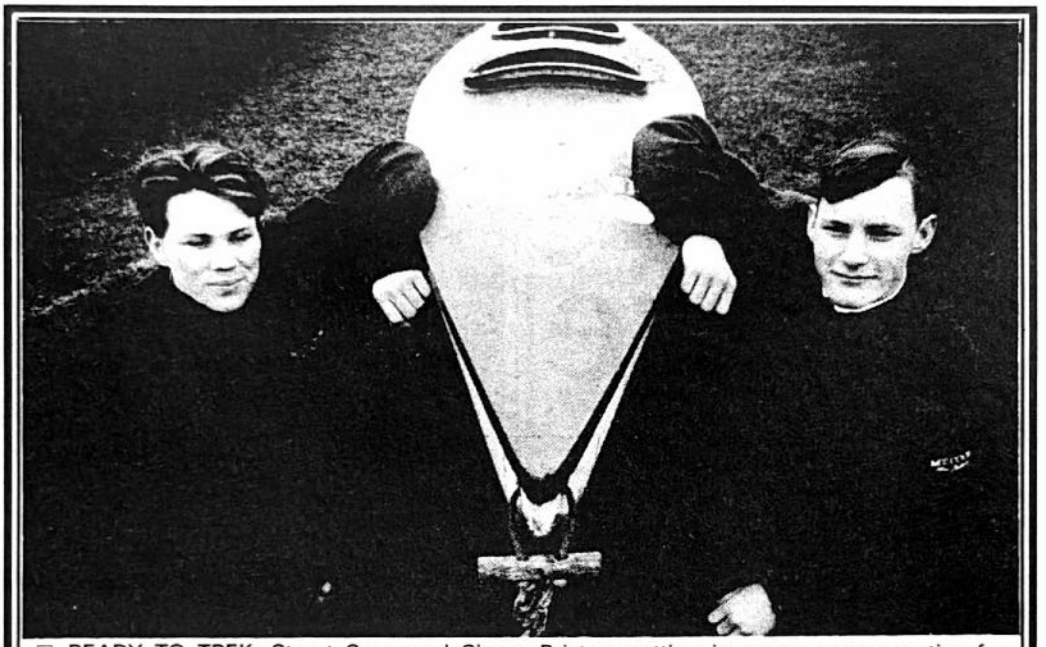
They will be canoeing on a river, trekking through rain forest and taking part in a conservation project.

The coastal project will involve work to prevent soil erosion, well digging and tree planting.

Four of the pupils taking part are picture above, from left: Simon Bristow, Joe Grainger, Will Taylor, and, Lynfel Owen.

The team has been raising money to meet the £10,000 cost of the expedition since November through sponsored car washes, tombolas and an expedition rag mag.

Taken From STOURBRIDGE NEWS - March 3rd, 1994



□ READY TO TREK...Stuart Sopp and Simon Bristow getting in some canoe practice for their trip to in South America. Picture by Stewart Blair.

Pupils prepare for expedition

A wide range of conservation work is in store for a group of 11 pupils at Old Swinford Hospital School when they set out on a month's expedition to Venezuela this summer.

Tasks to be undertaken will be trench-digging, tree planting, well digging and building retaining walls to prevent soil erosion.

The boys aged 16 and 17, are also hoping to take part in a trek in the rain forest, and canoeing along the Churun River.

The youngsters have held car washes, tombolas and numerous other events to help raise the money to pay for the trip.

Although a long way off the total cost, they hope to reach their target of £10,000 by the summer.

Host Country Summary

written by Lynfel Owen

Venezuela occupies a land area of 912,050 square km, and has a population of approximately 18 million. It is the northernmost country in South America and is bordered to the north by the Caribbean Sea, to the east by Guyana, to the south by Brazil, and to the west and southwest by Columbia. Within its borders, Venezuela boasts four distinctly different climatic and geographical zones; the largest of these is the Guayana Highlands, a mixture of Savannah grassland and rainforest-covered tepuis (plateaus) which rise vertically for thousands of feet in many cases. The Venezuelan Highlands form an extension to the Andes, and are in the west, followed heading east by the central plains of the Llanos surrounding the Orinoco, and then the Maracaibo Lowlands in the north which stretch out to the sea. This northern section of the country accounts for approximately ten per cent of the land area, but ninety per cent of the population. The effect of this is that much of the country is free from urban blight, retaining its local color and traditions.

The official language of Venezuela is South American Spanish, although English, French, German and Portuguese is also spoken in some sectors of the community. The aim of the team is to learn the basics of Spanish before the expedition departs, so that some communication is possible when buying food etc.

Venezuela's climate varies according to altitude, with hot, wet and humid conditions in the Lowlands and the rainforest, as compared with sub-zero temperatures in the mountains of the Highlands. The expedition will fall in the wet season, which lasts from May to December, when the heavy rain falls, followed by bright sunshine and high temperatures. The temperature in the rain forests at this time ranges from 25-35°C.

Historically, the country was originally inhabited by Arawak and Carib Indians. In 1498 Christopher Columbus claimed Venezuela as a Spanish territory, after which the Spaniards ruled the country under a relatively loose rein, allowing each area of the country to develop independently from Caracas, the capital. This system proved acceptable to the indigenous population until in the early eighteenth century, the foreign rulers attempted to unify the vastly diverse sections of the community. This move proved to be extremely unpopular, and eventually led to the country's independence in 1830, after fierce resistance to the Spanish by Simon Bolivar.

After independence, a series of dictators ruled the country until a constitution was drawn up and put into place in 1961. The legislative system operates under a National Congress, within which sits a Senate and a separate Chamber of Deputies. Both Chambers are predominantly elected and hold five-year terms of office. The country's Head of State is the President, with whom executive authority lies.

In 1989 Carlos Perez was elected President for the second time. The 1990's saw a dramatic fall in his personal popularity, and an attempted coup was

greeted with enthusiasm by many Venezuelans. It was unlike anything in Venezuela's modern history. There was widespread rioting and looting that forced the government to suspend constitutional guarantees and send the army onto the streets to restore order. The centre of the rioting was Caracas: hundreds of people were killed and millions of pounds worth of property was damaged. Live television broadcasts of the looting probably contributed to its spread to other parts of the nation, with disturbances ultimately recorded in cities across the country. Earlier last year saw another attempt to forcibly remove him from office. However, where force failed, the law prevailed and in June 1993 Perez was suspended as President pending trial on corruption charges. Congress chose Ramon J. Valasquez as the interim President until the next national elections were held in December 1993.

Economically, from the first major oil discovery in 1922 to the end of the 1960's Venezuela was transformed from an agricultural society characterized by political chaos to a consumerist, relatively stable democracy. Once known as the 'Saudis of the West' Venezuelans have seen their economic fortunes decline in exact proportion to the general fall in world oil prices. Over the last two decades the government has therefore encouraged other industries such as aluminum and iron ore mining (the next two largest exports), and has also taken positive steps to support the agricultural interests of the country, which in many areas are still very primitive. The country's many problems were hidden from view until relatively recently, when austerity measures heralded the sort of economic crisis so painfully familiar to other Latin American countries. Runaway inflation, currency devaluation's and even food riots have marked this new phase in Venezuelan history, to which the country is still trying to adjust.

EXPEDITION PLANNER

DAY	DATE	EVENT	REMARKS
1	W 13 Jul	Build-up	at O.S.H Foster House
2	T 14 Jul	Build-up	at O.S.H
3	F 15 Jul	Depart UK - Arrive Caracas	Coach depart O.S.H at 02.30 Dept. LHR at 08.30 - arr. Caracas 1540.
4	S 16 Jul	Caracas	Embassy visit. Trek preparations
5	S 17 Jul	El Avila National Park	Acclimatization Trek
6	M 18 Jul	El Avila National Park	Acclimatization Trek
7	T 19 Jul	To Carupano	By overnight bus
8	W 20 Jul	To Guaraunos	Met by Claus Muller. Travel to Hacienda. Commence work
9	T 21 Jul	Conservation Work	Work on Hacienda
10	F 22 Jul	Conservation Work	Stilt houses + hot springs visit
11	S 23 Jul	Conservation Work	Work
12	S 24 Jul	Conservation Work	Work
13	M 25 Jul	To Ciudad Bolivar	6/7 hour bus Journey. Preps for trek.
14	T 26 Jul	S.Bolivar - Luepa	Trek preps. Leave 10.00 overnight bus
15	W 27 Jul	Luepa - Kavanayen	Trek 37 Km
16	T 28 Jul	Luepa - Kavanayen	Trek 30 Km
17	F 29 Jul	Kavanayen Mission	Rest day. Meet guide (Carlos)
18	S 30 Jul	Kavanayen - Kamarata Trek	Walking in Savannah
19	S 31 Jul	Kavanayen - Kamarata Trek	Walking in Jungle
20	M 1 Aug	Kavanayen - Kamarata Trek	Jungle
21	T 2 Aug	Kavanayen - Kamarata Trek	Jungle
22	W 3 Aug	Kavanayen - Kamarata Trek	Jungle
23	T 4 Aug	Kavanayen - Kamarata Trek	Jungle (Total trek distance =270km)
24	F 5 Aug	Kamarata Camp	arr 16.00. Meet guides for River Trek. Rest!
25	S 6 Aug	Kamarata - Canaima	By canoe. Dept.14.00
26	S 7 Aug	Kamarata - Canaima	By canoe
27	M 8 Aug	Kamarata - Canaima	By canoe to Angel Falls. Camp under falls.
28	T 9 Aug	Kamarata - Canaima	By Canoe to Canaima. arr. 18.00
29	W 10 Aug	Canaima	dept. Canaima 15.45 (ish!) to S.Bolivar
30	T 11 Aug	Puerto de la Cruz	arr.20.00.dept' for M' Island 23.30
31	F 12 Aug	Margarita Island	arr. 02.30; BEACH all day!!
32	S 13 Aug	Margarita Island	MORE BEACH!!
33	S 14 Aug	Caracas	De-brief in hotel. Dept' Margarita Island 04.30!
34	M 15 Aug	London	arr. LHR 1245

VENEZUELA


CARIBBEAN SEA
Margarita Is.
Morrocoy
Choroní
Caracas
Mochima
N
Guácharo Cave
Hato Piñero
Morichal Lago
ANDES
Mérida
LLANOS
Orinoco
Ciudad Bolívar
Puerto Ordaz
Rio Grande
GUYANA
Caura
Canaima
Angel Falls
Kavac
Las Claritas
Mt Roraima
COLOMBIA
Puerto Ayacucho
RAINFOREST
Pará Falls
GRAN SABANA
Santa Elena de Uairen
BRAZIL

Expedition Build-up

written by Richard Brown

Wednesday 13th July

The Build-up was arranged to start at six o'clock in the evening at O.S.H. As Mr.Christley was going with us there was no problem with accommodation as we could commandeer Foster House for our use. As people started to arrive we got our first glimpse of the butcher jobs that barbers around the country had done. "To keep us cool in the Jungle" Sue and Susie said as they boasted nearly the two shortest cuts!

Emotional farewells were bid to parents (honestly!) we were on our own now for the next five weeks! That evening Tony shed some light on certain aspects of South America and Venezuela that he deemed to be of particular importance, the latest climate update and travellers news. The itinerary for all to come was also discussed in lengthy detail, taking us late into the evening. A brief appearance was made by Charles Rigby from World Challenge who bid us all good luck (he definitely knew something we did not!) and gave Tony some last minute information and the plane tickets.

The remainder of the night was spent getting to know everyone in the group a bit better and having a preliminary sort-out of all our gear.

Thursday 14th July

Susie's Birthday!

An early start gave everyone the opportunity to sample the dinner ladies gourmet cooking in the dining hall. Members of school were strangely amused to see us all trek down to breakfast intermingled with girls, many people commenting on 'steps in the right direction'!

The days various activities included extensive filling out of paperwork. Next-of-Kin forms proved to worry several people, prompting questions such as "what exactly *are* we doing?", passports all had to be checked, great amusement was aroused at Dermot's Irish passport; some people dared questioning its validity!

Sue had a trip to the Sanytorium in the morning because she twisted her ankle the night before, not a good start! It was agreed that Tim and Emma would be student leaders for the build-up and transfer to Caracas, Joe would be the medical officer and I would be the accountant.

Things were all running smoothly, everyone was doing what must have been the tenth check of their kit when Simon's brand new Karrimor rucksack broke! He made a haisty visit down to the Technology labs to try and find the technician. Some time later he returned with a 'mended' rucksack and a mouthful of insults for Karrimor! This problem with the Karrimor rucksacks, caused by the extensive use of 'modern plastic gizmos' in the construction of the back-system, was to come back and haunt us throughout the expedition.

The final kit check was carried out on the rugby pitch outside Foster House. Suntan lotions came out as the sun rose in the sky and people started to singe! Most people had full rucksacks by this time and were dismayed when they saw the large pile of group equipment from World Challenge we had to carry between us. Most people had to sacrifice a

few items of kit they felt could be done without to make room. We ran through a river crossing, using the rope and various other implements that Tony said would be invaluable at the time of a crossing. It was very hard to imagine what it would really be like as I held people on ropes walking sideways across a rugby field!

After the kit check we all trooped back into Foster for the medical lecture. This turned out to be Tony telling us that we could catch every disease under the sun and that we would also meet lots of parasites, spiders, mosquitoes and snakes in the jungle; something to look forward to eh!

Eventually everyone was ready, rucksacks packed and waiting. The coach was to meet us at 2:00am the next morning to ferry us to Heathrow. Most people tried to get a few hours sleep; some stayed up to wait for the coach. The coach promptly rolled up at 1:45am and the mountain of gear was shifted onto spare seats and into the storage area. We watched school disappear into the early morning darkness as the excitement level among the group began to rise as we now realized that we were actually on our way and there was no turning back!

Transfer from England to Venezuela

Written by William Taylor

And so the longest day of the trip, which also happened to be Susie's birthday, though I think that perhaps it went on a little too long for her.

We got up at two O'clock in the morning - looking our best as usual, had the essential early morning cup of coffee and proceeded to eat everything in sight in Dennis's flat. We then piled into the coach and slept down to Heathrow. Tim and Emma, the leaders at the time went off to find out what we had to do with our stuff. We got rid of our luggage and went off to buy breakfast - we should have saved money and brought a palatial dwelling in Caracas.
Going through customs was fine for everyone except Dermot who must have looked particularly dodgy that day (or ravishing, though, I would say that it was the former), as he was stopped at every check point and frisked. Then came the duty free, and some of us brought copious amounts of cigarettes (for the locals, you understand).
The plane to Lisbon was..... compact. This did not matter to first time flyers like myself though, I was just enjoying the experience and anyway I had not had anything to compare it before so I couldn't really complain.

The little of Lisbon we saw (the runway in fact) was grey and wet, the heavens had opened just for our arrival, so we hurried into the terminal and to the other plane. It was bigger though the food was still, well a lot like club class food, need I say more. The films were both sequels and hardly the most riveting unless you were exceptionally bored (which I was, so I admit I did watch them, sad as they were).
I think that the first thing that I noticed about Venezuela was the heat. Someone had told me that getting off the plane was like having a hot wet towel wrapped around your face, he wasn't far wrong.

I think though that first impressions were summed up by this poem by Sue... well maybe not but it sounds good:

Venezuela you are fab
I'm way too hot in all this flab
Your mountains green, your seas so blue
Your people friendly (and sexy too)
Your cars are c**p, your food is cheap
But Lynfel wishes there were sheep
Your little tribes, in loin cloths clad
That I am here I am so glad
There's no place else I would rather go
Except to Wembley to see skid row.
And so this poem now must end
Bolivars I have to spend.

Saturday 16th

After a hysterical Chinese meal the night before (it has still to be discovered what we were laughing at), We all went to bed and seemed to sleep off the jet lag in one night. The next morning we met Enrike (I have no idea how that is spelt, sorry), who took us to a really nice cafe for breakfast, where, with the help of our limited Spanish (the words for Ham, Cheese and Beer) we managed to order something with ham and cheese in it, (probably arepas, though it does say ham and cheese croissants in the log. But that is beginning to sound a little far fetched). Dennis of course shamed us all by ordering his in good Spanish, the waiter, bless him, promptly replied in absolutely perfect English.

The meal ended and we started too look for postcards to send home. (Postcard hunting was an expedition in itself. I do not think that the Venezuelans are really into ruthlessly exploiting tourists, unlike most western countries). We wandered all morning, going back to the hotel only once, briefly. One group went out to find some food for lunches on the acclimatisation trek, which they finally did, but only after discovering that they had taken nobody with them that could count past three.

I think that the first thing though that really first brought home to me that we were in a third world country was the sight of a partially rotted dead dog lying on the path of a quite major road. It was something I defiantly was not expecting, and it cane as quite a shock.

I realised that maybe these people did not lead the same comfortably life we do, in a world that somebody else is always cleaning up our rubbish and mess after us, but in a world where the did not have the money to provide things as unnecessary and cosmetic as street cleaners, they had more important things to worry about, like being able to buy food.

In the afternoon we all took the metro to Enrike's house. I do not think I have seen anywhere with more locks. Literally, there was a lock on a fence around the building, then one to get into the building, then one to get into hall with the lifts and the stairs, one to get onto the stairway and two on Enrike's front door. There were bars on all of the windows as well.

We returned to the hotel, stayed there for a while and then went and found a place to have dinner. I crashed out straight away, though other people stayed up all night (mentioning no names, Stu) and regretted it.



Caracas sprawled out in its splendor

The History of Venezuela

Researched by Dermot Grazebrook

Venezuela's history did not start with its discovery by Columbus in 1482, as many would say. There have been people there since the last ice age, a thousand years ago.

Columbus was however the first European to set his eyes on Venezuela's beautiful coastline, it is said that he declared that it must flow from the Garden of Eden.

The native Indians greeted Columbus and he noted that they wore expensive materials such as jewellery of gold and precious stones. The Indians lived in many differing societies with their own languages, myths, traditions and histories of survival. These Indians did not build civilisations like the Incas of Mexico. They kept no written records, only those that were passed on by word of mouth survived, but even many of these legends were wiped out by the European conquerors.

Columbus said that the new land was, "the loveliest in all the world." A flood of explorers followed in the news of the 'New World', but very little material wealth was uncovered. one of the early explorers gave Venezuela its name, Amerigo Vespucci saw the Indians that lived on the stilt houses in Lake Maracaibo and it reminded him of the canals in Venice, Venezuela means Little Venice.

News of a great city called Tenochtittan, boatloads of gold and the fact that Venezuela was the most accessible of the South American Countries spurred a new wave of interest.

The Spanish started up small pearl and sugar cane industries using Indian families as labourers, after simply removing them from their communities.

Diego de Ordas led the first expedition for treasures, but after decease ravaged his men, killing many of them he settled down at a friendly fishing village. After a row, though, he had his men slaughter the entire village, then wandered on to the flat plains of the Venezuelan Llouas where he decided to turn back. A terrified Indian told his party of a vast gold city called Meta. This inspired many expeditions into inhospitable territory. This myth became the latter one of Eldorado, the City of gold.

Many Germans led expeditions into the country only to disappear without trace, leaving only a trail of slaughtered Indian communities. The Spanish Crown eventually put an end to the 'German Conquisitors'. The Spanish gave up the search for Eldorado and tried to secure the Country for the crown, but many tribes of Indians had heard of the explorers brutality and put up a stiff resistance Caracas was founded many times, only to be wiped out by hostile tribes. This lasted for decades until an unexpected European weapon broke the Indians, Small Pox. This wiped out entire Indian communities, leaving a higher death toll than the medieval Bubonic plague (black death). Pirates soon replaced the threat of the Indians, even Sir Francis Drake raided Caracas.

Cattle became the early trade with 'haciendas' (ranches) spreading across the land. Many of the Indians had died out so black slaves were shipped over in boat loads. The slaves were treated badly and revolts were crushed with extreme force. Slavery lasted for longer here then in Europe. In 1840 many travellers were appalled to find that that ever town had its own slave market.

Coaxing women across the Atlantic to the new world was a problem and those that did go found that they had to share their husband with Indian women. This lead to much mixing of races. The white elite often referred to as the 'Grand Cacao' were dedicated to keeping power and were acutely aware of their vulnerability. An early form of apartheid was adopted in Venezuela .

The 18th century was considered Venezuela's 'golden-age', as the Chocolate trade took off and the rich were able to import fine cheeses, olives and champagne, while their slaves sweated in the fields. Many lavish balls and concerts were held in Venezuela.

Wars of independence soon hit Venezuela with such ferocity it pushed the country's progress back 100 years.

Out of the wars a hero emerged, Simon Bolivar, who is now regarded almost as a God. He inspired passionate devotion from his soldiers and spent one of the largest family fortunes to fulfil his dream of liberating and uniting South America. Bolivar succeeded in liberating South America, but not in uniting it .His generals argued and branded Simon Bolivar a traitor, he died in exile poor and penniless. He said, just before his death, "America is ungovernable. Those who serve the revolution plough the sea."

As the 19th century drew to a close, the Presidents of Venezuela could no longer rule by use of the gun and had to develop some political credentials. Venezuela started to build up huge foreign debts which they could not pay.

In 1900 a few small oil companies started refining the oil in Lake Maracaibo, but little interest was taken. The Indians had been using oil to chalk their boats for 400 years. In 1922 a major oil company was formed, who on their first day found that they had about 100 000 barrels of oil spurting out of the ground. It made world news. Venezuela had an oil boom which gave them the highest income per capita in Latin America.

Venezuela was transformed by the 1960's from an agricultural country in political to a consumerist with a relatively stable democracy.

During the oil boom the country was in the clutches of Vincent Gomez, a cruel dictator, who ruled by terror. When he died the army took over with General Jimenez at its head. He was presented with the Legion of Honour by President Eisenhower, yet he was the most feared and hated man in Venezuela. In 1958 the country had had enough and forced General Jimenez to flea to the USA. A steady development in democracy has continued up to the present, but there are still many problems: Poverty being the worst.

The middle class were drunk on oil and everyone else on the thought of it. Few thought of the consequences when the hangover hit, and the oil started to dry up.

Caracas & Acclimatization Trek

Written by Stuart Sopp

Sat 17th July - El Avila

Woke up around 7 o'clock to another noisy Venezuelan morning. Although the novelty had worn off, reality still had not set in yet.

After last minute packing and minor adjustments to our packs we prepared for breakfast. We met Enriquez in the hotel lobby and after brief "hellos" we set off following Enriquez, tourist style.

The short but interesting walk led us through some of Caracas' slightly less desirable areas and after attempting to get served in a couple of cafes we settled for a rather open plan type breakfast bar. We piled our kit inside the cafe after fairly frantic warnings by Enriquez that leaving bags outside was not the best of ideas.

We eventually sat down and were ready to order - we knew what we wanted! That infamous snack that still haunts us today..... the arepa, but not just any arepa, no, several of us ordered ham and cheese, some, the more daring, had no ham. This phenomenon of ordering arepas religiously every morning we were given the chance, was due to the fact that we did not know enough Spanish to order anything nice to eat! So, some forced a couple down while I just fell face down onto the table, asleep (no sympathy was given by anyone - after last night of all things).

After finishing the thimble of coffee we were all wide awake (strong coffee eh?) and ready for anything - except what we saw when we arrived by bus, to the foot of a gigantic, Everest type mountain.

We naturally laughed it off and looked around for the hill we were really going to climb. No such luck; Enriquez with all his Venezuelan enthusiasm, and no heavy pack, led us to the beginning of this 'mountain'. The path was a concrete road with guttering either side and was incredibly steep. Determinedly, we started the ascent with at least some motivation, about half an hour into the walk Emma seemed to be having difficulty with her rucksack and had minor back pains. A few pain killers later and with Enriquez lumbering her rucksack we continued upwards.

At what we thought was halfway we stopped at a conveniently placed tap and, surprisingly, drank a lot of cold water while others began the dying habit of taking photographs (it seem that taking pictures was inversely proportional to tiredness).

After Enriquez left us, we decided to look at the map given to us, it was representational if nothing else, so having no idea how far or how long it was to the campsite we set off again.

The path seemed to get steeper and steeper and at one point we had to scramble up it! Patience slowly wore down and this was not helped by the ever so polite Venezuelans coming down the road, repeating the only English they knew,
"It's a long way to the top!" .

After 5 - 6 hours of constant up hill hiking we reached our very first campsite. We all sat on our rucksacks - dazed. No one person was dry (except for Charlie Brown!) the amount of sweating that everyone had done was almost unreal. One by one

we began to get cold and we got up and started to assemble our tents. Channels needed to be dug around the tents as well, so Dennis and Tony started the digging, setting good examples. A loo pit was needed next (S**t pit- to use correct expedition lingo!) - this was when Lynfel and myself volunteered to dig it; it was to be the first of many, probably the best made of them all (Dimensions of 3-3-2 feet and was shielded nicely by foliage but close enough to the campsite for emergencies.)

While everybody collected wood, using wire saws and brute force, I dug a channeling system for the tap, which was threatening to flood certain tents.

Everyone was in full swing of things, and had quite recovered from the days trek. We made a lunch / tea of pasta and tomato puree, which was strange, but better than nothing, even arepas.

Additions to the tents were made, such as poncho dining areas and washing lines tied between most tents, like an intricate spiders web. We managed to 'clothes-line' most people!

Then as night drove on the campfire was lit and everyone huddled around making cups of tea and coffee. Of course at this most relaxing point it poured with torrential rain with lightning streaking across the sky with claps of thunder following close behind. This lasted only for about 15 minutes, but was enough to nearly put out the fire.

All determined, we huddled around again and a stick insect fell out of a tree onto Tony. Seeing a 'wild' stick insect was certainly a surprise to most.

It was then that many gun-shot like sounds broke the silence, we all jumped up hastily and tried to see Caracas through the trees. Rumors had gone around the group about political instability and certain street riots, but gun-fire was something different. It only took a few minutes for us to remember that it was the night of the world cup final and that Brazil had won - what we were hearing were celebrations!

Some of us stayed around the campfire while others went to their tents (?) taking the opportunity of an early night, or telling jokes (or not as the case may be).

Sunday 18th July

We all got up around 7 am, and breakfast was made with some enthusiasm (*?, at 7am! I think not - Ed)*. Tents were taken down and the loo pit had to be filled in, much to my dismay! Some backs were rubbed and the rucksacks were reluctantly pulled on.

The path for today led us deep into the National Park; walking through this 'jungle' was not as hard as the last days walk in the open. This was our first experience of proper rain forest. We made good time and after much ducking under vines and fallen trees we came to a fork in the path, a choice between the short and the long route. We obviously opted for the wrong, sorry I mean long route (the sun was getting to us I think), which did not turn out to be as bad as the map portrayed it.

We passed a huge 'bamboo' tree where many pictures were taken. Then after about ten minutes we arrived at the campsite.

Walked up to a small plateau where we found our campsite invaded by foreigners - well some local children playing a ball game. We seemed to be the centre of attraction for at least a little while and then they departed to leave us to our own devices.

Since only half the day was gone, Tony offered to take anyone willing to go for another small walk, to my surprise about half went, while the rest of us had the arduous job of writing postcards and sunbathing.

This later backfired when sun tan lotion was forgotten (I don't think that I have ever seen someone go quite the shade of red that Simon went that day). The sun was at its hottest and because this was the highest camp on the whole expedition (at nearly 8,000ft!) the actual air was very thin and the humidity was at its least that we were to experience all summer, the result being that people did not realize the incredible strength of the sun and stayed out for rather an intense roasting session!

When they arrived back, tea time was upon us and Chicken Supreme was on the menu. Not many complaints were aired but a McDonalds may have been a little better, though a *British* cheese and pickle sandwich would have been perfect!

Then Tony called a team talk because he had observed that not all of us had been pulling our weight and we needed to work harder if we were to get through this expeditio, this took about an hour. Consequently everyone helped out doing the washing and generally mucked in from then on.

After some nifty swapping of sleeping arrangements, we all went to bed, to sleep!

Monday 19th July

The next day most of us got up to find soaking wet clothing lying around the campsite. I don't think that we had quite got the hang of things yet. We all visited the local cafeteria for a surprise ham and cheese arepa, and we met a local Donkey.

The day's walking was the back-tracking of the previous two days; therefore we all concluded that we might have to walk a little faster.

Walking down the concreted 'Everest' was a nightmare but certain tactics such as zigzagging proved useful.

We eventually got down and back to our hotel where we rented 2 rooms for showering and cleaning up. While a small group went with Enriquez to get our bags we had left. However they were a few hours late due to Enriquez' trick of the day which was locking his keys in the car.

What could the rest of us do but eat pizza?(*Drink Beer? - Ed)*

We then later after our reunion went to Caracas bus station where we nearly had a rucksack stolen. Fortunately we had an 18 stone bodybuilder acting as a bodyguard and he dealt out the appropriate right-handed punishment to the would-be thief.

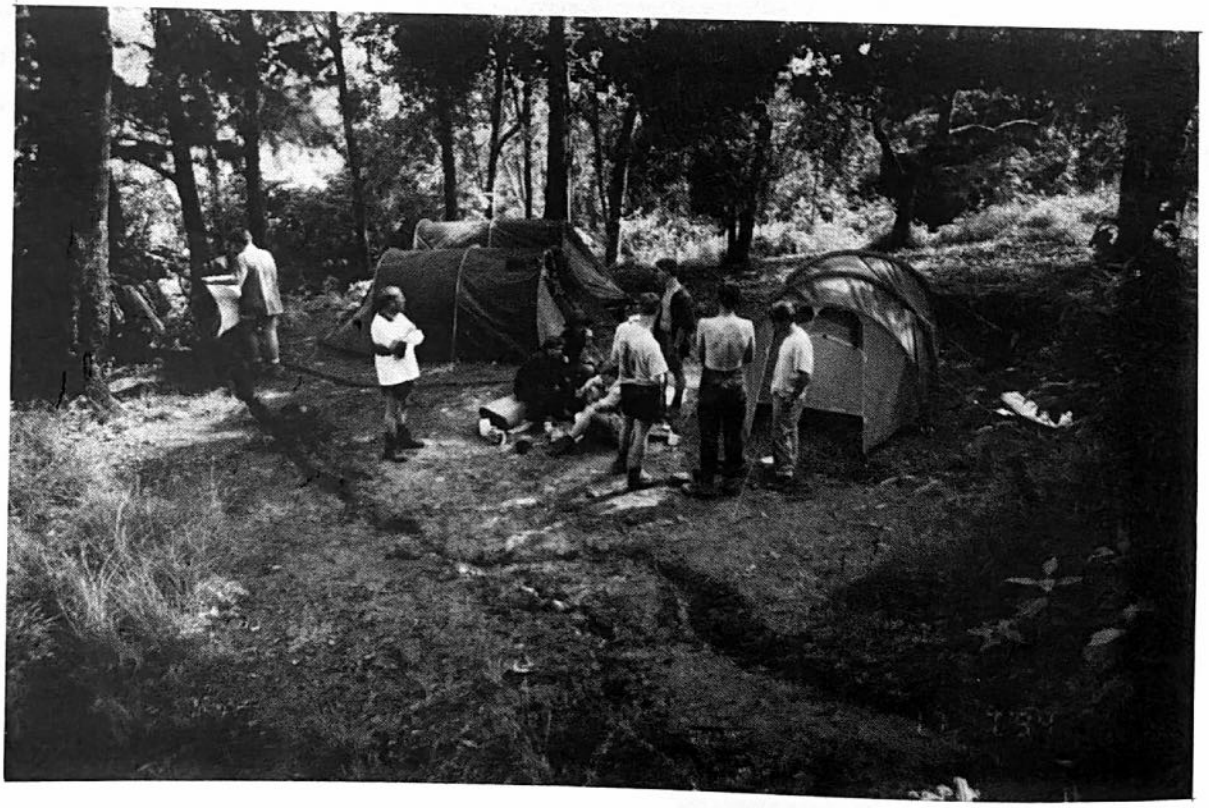
After a few more lectures by Tony on security, we got on the bus, only to brake down about ten miles down the road, when we stopped to clear up the vomit from our bags - which some kind passenger left for us!

After the team quickly push-started the coach we were back on the road and winding along into the night.

It was not actually possible to sleep on many forms of Venezuelan transport, largely due to the roads (remove all western ideas about nice *flat* tarmac roads and replace with a motor-cross circuit type surface!) not being very good, this combined with a coach driver who was undoubtedly a Sterling Moss fan and couldn't read road signs and a bit of tropical climate thrown in, made for a rather uncomfortable 15 hour journey!

Climbing the *concrete Everest* - The photo just does not show how steep it was.





First camp in the National Park - at 8000ft

Character Assassinations - Meet the group!

by Dennis Christley



Tony - our W C Leader -a.k.a. Indiana
Famed for his Lancashire sayings such as "He's as much use as an ashtray on a motor bike" and "He's fit as a butcher's dog."



Sue - "God, I hate my mother". Life and soul of the party but prone to insect bites in the jungle and a snake-bite on the R and R.



Charlotte - a.k.a Armo. Patron saint of taxi drivers and dry cleaners. What she lacks in leg length she makes up for in other areas.



Lynfel -The Welsh stud. Found his way through the Jungle but not so good at navigating between bedrooms.



Stu - Superhuman. Carried a pack the pack the weight of a Hippo and terrified the creatures of the jungle with his voice.



Adam -a.k.a. Igor. Our very own Rambo. Managed to go for a week without using the loo pit then took a laxative. The bottom dropped out of his world and the world dropped out of his .....



Will - Give him a river crossing and he'd fall in. Left his mark on Venezuela by leaving his boxer shorts complete with name tape at the bottom of Angel Falls



Dermot - a.k.a. Bograt. Have flannel will travel. He must be the cleanest person ever to trek through the rainforest.



Richard - a.k.a. Charlie. A born leader -,he always wanted to be at the front and with his 7lb handbag instead of a rucksack he was certainly quick off the mark.



Simon - a.k.a. Eric. Mr Motivator himself. His motto was "Why walk up a slope when you can run."



Joe -a.k.a Little Chef. The Great Yellow Banana carrier. He fell in love with the coffee and did good works by donating rucksacks to the local population.



Chris. Can't make the training weekend - got to go skiing. Managed to cut his head on the last day in the jungle, but still talked rubbish.



Tim - a.k.a. Fat Bloke. Mr Cool the ultimate in tourists. Liked to rip the sleeves off his shirts and going native.



Susie -a.k.a Lovely (remember that philladelphia advert?!) I *really* think we should have gone to Jamaica you know!



(Hey guys has anybody got .....) Emma's philosophy in life is " Why bother looking for it if you can borrow one !"



And Finally....(By the Editor!)

Dennis -a.k.a Sir! The man with turn-ups on his underpants. He fought his way through the long grass with his machete - and that was on the school field during the build-up.

Conservation Project

Written by Chris Adams

Wednesday 20th July - 24th July

After a whole night's travelling and only having to push start the coach once we arrived in the town of Carupano. Soon we were greeted by Klaus`s oldest son accompanied by a large truck. We boarded it quickly and we were led to breakfast. This particular morning on the menu was fish, whole, head and tail. Some of us did not care and brushing our western inhibitions aside, tucked in with much gusto.

Danielle arrived back again, shortly after we had finished our meal. Dermot had refused to eat his because he said the eye was looking at him. The journey continued and we were soon on our way.

We were greeted at Klaus`s with open arms, good food and excellent accommodation. In the afternoon we were taken to some hot springs just a few miles from the hacienda. The springs were most relaxing and just what we all needed. On the return journey to Klaus`s Venezuela listened to a rousing chorus of Bohemian Rhapsody and various other songs learned on coaches returning from rugby matches.

The next day we were escorted to the buffalo farm about a forty minute drive. Danielle drove like a madman as usual slowing down only to avoid pot holes and oncoming chickens. When we arrived four of our tents were pitched so that eight of us could sleep on stilt houses in the middle of the lake while the rest slept in tents. Before lunch we were taught how to make bowls from a gourd type of fruit called a Tortuma. As soon as we had eaten out conservation work was to begin. Our first task was to transfer a large amount of fish into large water filled barrels. This had to be done because the fish were too big for the pond they were in.

This job was completed with the aid of a petrol driven pump, on to the next task. We were soon applied to the next job. We were engaged in making a compost using water hyacinths. This was to help the soil to become more fertile so that palm trees could be grown. The 'real men' of the expedition were then press ganged into digging a trench to the stilt house. This was necessary because poor rains meant that the canoe ran aground often.

Muddy, but happy with our days work we re-joined the others. We were taken to a river so that we could wash our clothes. Many of us found that the easiest way to wash your clothes is by wearing them.

Working near one of the Slit-houses clearing the canoe trenches





Paddling out to work in the torrential rain.

people thought that he was too heavy, Andreas the guide included.

As we made our way through the canoe channels the heavens opened upon us, soaking us to the bone within minuites. Stu had the bright idea of saying ' well at least it can't get any harder.' Whithin seconds it did. At this point the occupant of my canoe realised that there was no bailer in this craft. Up the creek without a bailer? After about half an hour there was six inches of water in the boat. The finishing touch was a large spider walking down the length of the canoe. Several of us found that we were suddenly arachnaphobic. Needless to say that the boat sank. As the other canoe passed Andreas had the presence of mind to steal the bailer from Armo. She was not happy and shouted some most un-ladylike things.

At the end of another half an hour, not to be outdone by us, the other canoe sank. Soon after we arrived at the place where we were to begin our work, a large mud bank. We started to reduce its size by cutting away at it. This was to enable larger canoes to travel down the channel. Klaus wanted to make a kind of Safari trip for tourists. Just as soon as we felt that is was time to leave and go and get some lunch. Andreas decided it was time to go and burn some wasps nests down. This was a spectacular sight, a wonderful display of Venezualan pyrotechnics. The race for the canoes were on. I managed to avoid the worst craft. Dennis, Tim, and Tony managed to get lumbered with that one.

After the journey back we devoured our lunch hungrily and set about washing our clothes. Klaus suggested that we should go back to the river where we had washed in the first time. We agreed. When we arrived we found that the heavy rain had muddied the waters. There was little point in going in to wash. He took us back to the hacienda to get cleaned up.

There we set about washing our clothes in the the two concrete sinks provided for the purpose. So much mud and dirt came out of our clothes that we blocked the U bend of the sink numerous times. The cards came out again and we played whist until the generator cut out and we were plunged into darkness. At this point we decided it would be a good move to go to bed. This we did by the light of the head torch.

As night fell some of us prepared to move out to the stilt houses. I was fortunate enough to be able to go out to one, along with Emma, Lynfel and Sue. After sampling some of Klaus`s excellent ginger tea we went to bed, tired after a day's hard exertion.

We were awoken the next morning by a herd of buffalo sloshing about in the water below us. Soon we re-joined the others and had a very good breakfast cooked by Klaus himself. He told us that the other World Challenge group wanted to do some conservation for the day. Since we needed to leave the ranch Klaus forced us to go to the beach. What a hardship!

The beach at Medina was wonderful. A calm bay, plenty of clean golden sands, palm trees and sun. There was much swimming and sunbathing. We even managed to find a shop that sold chocolate! After the best of the sun had passed it was time for lunch. The little restaurant on the beach had been asked to cook for all of us, not an easy task. They produced an excellent meal of fresh fish, again complete with the head and tail with a variety of salad.

The vegetarians in the group cursed the person that had told them that it was better to be vegetarian. This was because everywhere we went they managed to end up with the same meal minus the fish or meat.

Enrique organised a sprint race for then 'real' men over about two hundred metres. It was for real men so Stu asserted his muscle coming in first, narrowly beating me. Igor came in third with Lynfel and Will in tow. Soon it was time for us to hit the showers before we returned back to the buffalo ranch. Dermott was there first. He let out a cry of dismay. The sign told him that the showers were broken. Just on cue a huge rain cloud rolled into view and obliged us with a brief torrential rain storm in which we could wash the salt from our bodies.

We returned wearily more tired than we had been the day before. Back at Klaus's a meal was waiting for us, cooked by Klaus's helper Andreas. I stayed at the camp sharing a tent with Will. As the other group trudged off into the darkness we sat down to play cards by the light of our head torches. Will managed to have the biggest winning streak in the whole of history which quite upset Tony our resident cards expert. As the night wore on Tony decided to test his culinary skills by making a cup of tea. He surprised us all by his finished result. After drinking the marvellous concoction we retired to bed.

I awoke early to the sound of the water Bufallo in the distance. Breakfast was made for us as we emerged from our tents. The others were not yet back from the stilt houses. When they did return we set out for the next phase of our conservation work. We all loaded into three small canoes. Tim was passed around each boat because some

Transporting the group around in the ex-German army Unimog





Lynfel and Stuart showing their relief at getting to the beach

Claus Mullers to Kavanayen - Luepa Trek

Written by Simon Bristow

Monday 25th July.

Oh my God, it's 5.30am. The bus is leaving in half an hour!

There was frantic packing from those who did not bother to pack the previous night. A breakfast of bread, cheese and that lovely strong coffee was provided. At 6.15am, Daniel 'Meatloaf' Muller arrived with the truck, and we all athletically dived in, (if that is possible at that time in the morning). The journey was as usual, at Warp Factor 5, and we arrived at Carupano Bus Station with half an hour to spare, stopping only once to pick up a wrinkly old man who wanted a lift.

After the waist strap had been ripped from Chris' rucksack, we piled into the Coach, and were on our way to Cuidad Bolivar. On stopping during the first journey, we piled into the shop, and the chocaholics amongst us (Susie?!) dived into the shop and bought most of their supplies. We also bought loads of packets of cheese balls, to the extent that they were all coming out of our ears!

Shortly after we left, Armo announced that she needed the toilet. Two hours later, we arrived at the Orinoco. A few people found the toilets, and Dermot had a quick wash. After a brief ferry ride over the river, we arrived at San Felix Bus Station, in Cuidad Guyana, where we hired a small coach all to ourselves, to take us on to Cuidad Bolivar.

Two hours later, we arrived there, and the very nice driver even found us a hotel. How were we supposed to live in such conditions? The Hotel Valentina was air-conditioned, it had real beds and showers, served good food, and sold Mars Bars. I thought we were supposed to be toughened expeditioners!

We unpacked, and as Dennis had assured us that there was a Pizza Parlour nearby, we went in search. After finding that it was closed, Dennis said, "Well I never said it would be open, did I?". So we staggered on in the one hundred percent humidity of the central Venezuelan climate. On arriving at a shabby-looking restaurant, Tim and Rich shouted, "We're not going in there!". But with Sue's sweet puppy-dog looks, they gave in and joined us.

After them getting the order wrong and some of us having to wait longer that others, we were all eventually served two hours later, and within two minutes, had eaten, paid and left. Sue had gone back with me to the hotel earlier, because she was feeling ill. On getting back, I attempted to talk to the receptionist in Spanish, to ask if there was a

doctor nearby, only to find that he spoke English.

When the others returned, Tony and Lynfel took Sue to the hospital, and the rest of us watched the film Cyborg, in ENGLISH, via the hotels satellite TV, before going to bed.

Tuesday 26th July

Being leader at this point, I went around at 10am kicking people out of bed, with many people telling me where to go! Nevertheless, they were soon out and about. Myself and Joe had been up since 8am, and had eaten breakfast in the hotel. Everybody else was starving at this point. After spending a long time looking for a launderette unsuccessfully, some people gave up and went in search of food instead.

We all met in the foyer later on, and went our separate ways. Dennis, Susie and Emma went in search of equipment, (finding a pair of Dermot's underpants in the middle of a road!). Chris's rucksack was repaired, and Lynfel, Stu and Armo went to a launderette with all our clothes; it turned out to be a 45 minute' taxi journey away!

After lunch, myself, Lynfel and Tony went to the supermarket, to buy all the food for the jungle trek. In the meantime, everybody else sorted out the gear that they were taking, as we could leave equipment in the hotel for the next fortnight.

Tuesday night, another overnight coach journey-joy! We used the same company that had brought us to the hotel from Cuidad Guyana. After all the rucksacks had been loaded onto the coach, the last thing to go on was Dennis' hat, so that it did not get squashed. So just to finish the day on a high, and plenty of amusement for us all, Tony promptly climbed onto the rucksacks and the hat, and went to sleep, leaving it in a different shape the following morning. We journeyed all night, and tried to get as much sleep as possible, awaiting what was probably the hardest part of the expedition: the trek from Luepa to Kavanayen.

Wednesday 27th July

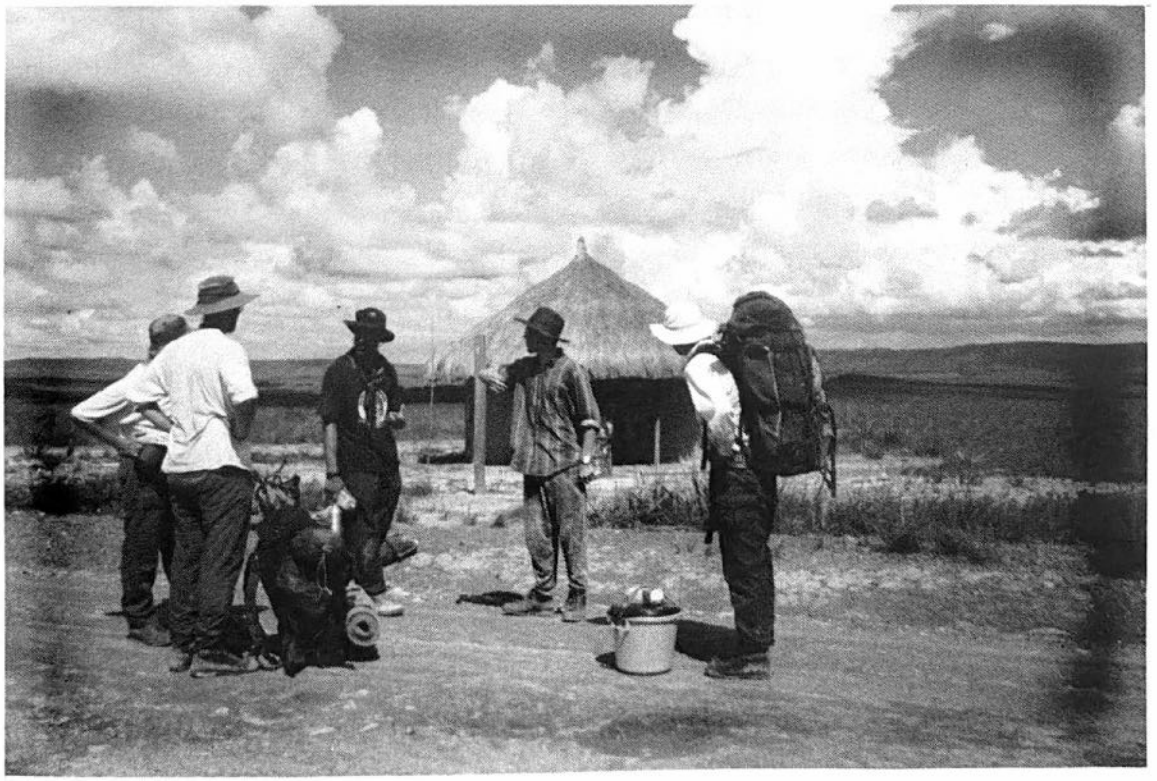
We arrived at Luepa early in the morning, the same time as another World Challenge group. It was, well, to put it this way, not exactly big. We had hoped to buy food such as fruit and veg. there. It turned out to be an Army base, with a runway and petrol pump.

After spending a short amount of time trying to work out what was happening, and failing to persuade the Army to drive us to the Mission at Kavanayen, we got back into the minibus, and convinced the driver to take us to the end of the road, after Tony had jumped up and down, trying to get his message over to him.

We tried to bribe the driver with Whisky, biscuits and so on, to take us along the dirt

The group walking on the "Road to Hell"!





track, but it was in vain. We unwillingly piled out, and after re-packing our rucksacks, we were on our way. We soon found that we only had three and a half litres of water between the sixteen of us, so Tony once again blew his top, to put it mildly! We then made the first use of our iodine crystals, and once again, we were underway.

We were sure that sooner or later, a car would come along and carry us all to Kavanayen. We kept on walking, and walking, and walking, and walking. A couple of cars passed us, but all going the wrong way. So we walked and walked. The sun came out, and we got hotter and hotter, having to fill our water and iodine bottles at every possible moment. We walked until lunch, when we had the first of those lovely Sardines, and if you were lucky, Tuna!?

Shortly after we started walking, we had a god-send, somebody came along, going the right way. Emma and Susie were in the worst shape, so they went on ahead to the village where we were supposed to stay for that night. They took our tents with them, so that they could have everything ready for us when we arrived.

We kept on walking and dehydrating, until we reached a sign. However, the distance from where we were to the campsite and to Luepa did not add up to the distance the village was supposed to be from Luepa. We finally decided that the distance to go was between seven and twelve kilometers, even though the sign said three kilometers!

With tired whoops of joy, we once again set off. Lynfel's rucksack was really killing his back, (oh didums!!!), but he made it (on pain-killers), as did we all, only to find that this 'village' was not what we thought, but a Military Research Centre. Susie and Emma had practically been arrested when they arrived, but for a kind man who helped them set up camp.

As we were within a hundred meters from the camp, it started to rain. We quickly set up the other two tents in a panic, and dived into them. We waited until it stopped, and some very nice people cooked tea, and we used Tony's ingenious idea for collecting water with the bucket from the middle of the bridge, all very well except the river was in a state of torrential over-flow. Having eaten, we all dived into our sleeping bags, deciding to leave the washing-up until the following morning and slept in probably the deepest sleep next to hibernation!

This had certainly been the hardest day of the expedition to date, even more tiring than the horrendous steepness of the El Avila National Park. It gave us all a kick up the backside.

Thursday 28th July

Susie woke us up at 6am the following morning, with the intention of being off by 8.30am, but with various technical problems such as losing the tent bags, (which Lynfel was holding at the time!), and having to collect water from the river, and of course, the Bograt (Dermot's nickname courtesy of Emma!) was washing again!

At 9.30am we were ready to move. Just as we were putting our packs back on, a miracle came along the road - a car going the right way! Our spirits climbed to a high, and we were soon walking along, minus Dennis, (as he had extremely bad blisters), who had gone on ahead to try to arrange transport for the rest of us. Five minutes later, we managed to off load Chris, who was also struggling. Joe and Sue quickly followed as the flux of traffic passed by. "If the day starts like this, how bad can it get?" were the cries. Lesson number 1 learnt:- *Never* challenge fate!

We continued to walk, and on arriving at a road junction, there were helpful comments such as Emma's, "I hope that shack over there sells Polar Beer!", and "Can't we get Mountain Rescue to fly out and collect us?". We continued anyway, watching cars come towards us, only to turn off behind us at the junction. We saw a lake ahead of us, only to arrive there to find that it was a puddle. Dermot was pleased, having yet another wash!

We decided to stop there for lunch, and as we ate the lovely(?) tuna and sardines, a pick-up truck came towards us from Kavanayen, and stopped. It's Dennis come to collect us!!!. Wishful thinking or what. The bloke was looking for his dog, the one that had followed us from Parupa!

In vain, we continued for hours, every so often, a car approaching us from behind, and picking up a few more people, including a bloke taking pity on us, and even though he had no room, he managed to squeeze Armo and Susie onto his trailer. They even had the cheek to exclaim how uncomfortable it was! The rest of us remained, morale at a high, after joking around about the perfect 'V' of sweat on Will's shirt.

A vehicle approached from Kavanayen, but by now we had given up hope. We were ecstatic when it did a U-turn when it reached us! Tim, Rich, Will and myself crammed in, leaving Tony, Stu and Bograt to carry on.

Shortly after we left, four vehicles came along, going towards Kavanayen. It was at that point that Tony made his famous comment, "If one of these doesn't stop, I'll s**t in the middle of the road and eat it!". They all carried straight on! However, feeling sorry for them, one of them stopped, and picked them up.

A couple of kilometers down the road, all the other cars which had overtaken us were turning off. So we waited there for the fourth, which were carrying our fellow team members. They were grateful to see us waiting, and we managed to all get onto this car. Dermot squashed into the back, and Stu and Tony stood on the rear bumper holding onto the rear screen seals for dear life.

Half way back to Kavanayen along came the original vehicle that Dennis had arranged to pick us up. Good timing. It turned out that he went to pick his wife up first! Anyway, we carried on to the Mission, and were greeted there by smiles, beds that you expect to find in a prison and showers that remind me of certain Welsh lakes I have been to in January!

A meal was made and was ready the brief second that I was in the very cold shower. I was certainly warmed up by a delicious tasting bolagnase and pasta. Soon afterwards, I was in bed and did not wake until Lynfel came around the following morning being rather too keen for that time in the morning!

Pre-Expedition Fundraising

Written by Lynfel Owen

For the 12 months prior to the summer the group organized and ran many fund-raising schemes. We set ourselves the target of raising ten thousand pounds from school orientated events. The OSH team members sat down at the beginning and shortlisted all the events that we thought were feesable. We were given some excellent guidence from organizers of two school expeditions that had gone to New Zeland and Kenya in 1993. They told us what had worked for them and suggested more things that they thought we should do.

The team had one slight disadvantage for group fundraising which was the distance between the schools. It was decided that both schools would run their own fundraising events independently. The OSH team concentrated on events that would involve all it's team members in school, and give a chance for individuals to do their own fund-raising. The QM team decided that they were going to concerntrate on organising their own personal fundraising events within the context of the school.

Our first event (OSH team) was a Car-Wash at the school open day. We commendeered one of the car parks as a washing area and charged people £2 to have their cars washed while they looked around the school. This brought in the first drops of money, even if it meant getting soaked and cold in the proccess. Hindsight would strongly recomend this as a mid-summer event!

We noticed that there was a lul in the range of "school products & memorabilia". One parent suggested that we could design some school glassware to sell to the friends and parents of the school. This idea was met with all-round approval and within that month we had our first batch of glassware, engraved with the school logo and a drawing of the main building. These managed to sell like hot-cakes, we have concequently sold about four batches of them! By the time it came to the expedition we had a range of four different beer glasses, whisky tumblers and wine goblets, we later had some glass paperweights added to the range using the same design. The prices ranging from £6.50 to £25.00 per glass. On the same line of thought we produced a school tea-towel which proved to be equally popular, priced at £3.

Having been most amused by a Ragmag shown to us as part of another expedition's fundraising we decided to have a go at producing our own. We were lucky enough to get on offer from a local printing firm to print it for free, to help us with our fundraising. The group put thier heads together and a produced "The Ultimate in Comic Survival" Ragmag. We sold well over 250 copies of this for £1.

While he was out shopping one day, Dennis Christley saw a watercolour print of one of the school buildings. He proceeded to make contact with the artist who was more than willing to supply us with them to sell at our prices. They proved to be more popular than we had expected and we soon ran out!

We were given the kind offer by a parent of the school for a large quantity of foreign cans of Coca-Cola, at a very reasonable price, selling them at 30p a can made them very popular amoung the members of the school!

There was a lot of fundraising done by the individuals aswell as the group efforts. Nearly everybody had holiday jobs and spent hours writing to copmanies scrounging for money and items to use as raffle and game prizes. Unfortunately this did not generate much money. We hoped that out of all requests made we would get about a 10% return, we only got about a 2% return. We discovered that a lot of companies were not willing to part with money as we were using the *World Challenge* organization, who are in themselves a money making company. This proved to be the only major obstacle that hindered the majority of the fundraising.

We were lucky enough to be contacted by the owner of a Post-Office branch that was soon closing down, who kindly donated the entire Christmas decoration department of the shop to us to sell. Selling them in school and to family and friends made a respectable profit with comparative ease.

Our major 'event' was the school Summer Fayre. We had been collecting books for several months previous, we collected enough to hold a very large bookstall which was a very popular and a good money-spinner. Many games, especially for the younger childeren, were organized and minimal 'playing fees' were to bring us in a fair profit.

Governing bodies from both schools made generous financial donations to the fund, along with many other donations from Old-Pupils Associations and the like.

Fundraising continued after the expedition returned untill the end of the first term back at school, as there was a lot of glassware and other goods left to sell. Members of the QM group held a 'Jungle Ball' at the half term break. This was a great sucsess. Most members of the whole team managed to attend at least one of the three balls that the QM group held through-out the pre-expedition year.

Please refer to the full breakdown of the accouts later in this brochure for more information.

Fundraising & Accounts by O.S.H Team

Expedition Costs

Total Expedition Cost from World Challenge	£ 34,500
Cost per OSH member [10 OSH members]	£ 2,300
School funds raised per OSH member	£ 611
Personal cost to each OSH member	***£ 1689***

The cost per each member does not include any items of peronel kit that had to be purchased, such as boots and sleeping bags.

The cost given by World Challenge was inclusive of all group equipment, insurance, daily food & equipment allowences for the expedition, hire of guides & porters and anything else except spending money

Breakdown of in-School Fundraising

FUNDRAISING EVENTS	**AMOUNT [£'s]**
Car Wash	80
Summer Fayre - Bookstall & Games	300
O.S.H Glassware	1920
O.S.H Tea Towels	150
O.S.H Limited Edition Prints	200
Ragmag	220
Christmas Cards & Decorations	50
Coca-Cola	80
DONATIONS RECIEVED	
O.S.H Feoffees	3000
O.S.H Old Boys	600
EXPENSES	
Yellow Fever Vaccinations	200
Coach hire O.S.H to LHR	170
Sundries	100
Gross Amount	6580
Expenses	470
Total Profit made	***£ 6110***

WORLD CHALLENGE

Chairman: Lt. Colonel H. R. A. Streather OBE
Education Director: M. W. Vallance MA. Vice Chairman: J. S. Lee MA, Headmaster, Trent College

EXPEDITION :- VENEZUALA 94 OLD SWINFORD / QUEEN MARGARETS.

PERSONAL PROFILE REPORT ON- LYNFAL OWEN

Lynfal has obvious very well developed leadership abilities for his age, however he would be the first to admit that these didn't come into effect until half way through the expedition.

When they did he showed himself to be a very efficient manager of resources and manpower in getting the tasks done. He could have helped himself here by allocating specific roles to people instead of asking for volunteers, this caused some frustration in retrospect on his part. He has a lot of experience in the outdoors and this came to the fore during the jungle trek and was appreciated by others. It was pleasing to see that even after his leadership role had finished he continued in the same positive manner in encouraging people on the trek and during camp.

Lynfal's only real downfall are his mood swings that do show signs of immaturity. There is a stubborn streak there that can emerge at times. He is aware of this and has shown that he is learning to control this, be more aware and be big enough to apologise afterwards. Once he has won over this frustration he will be a very well rounded person. A pleasure to spend time with on expedition.

A. Thomas Burns
20.8.94

TONY BURNS
EXPEDITION LEADER

World Challenge Expeditions Limited
Soane House, 305-315 Latimer Road, London W10 6RA Telephone: 081-964 1331 Fax: 081-964 5298
Registered in England No. 2173751. Registered Office: 25 Lower Belgrave Street, London SW1W 0LS

WORLD CHALLENGE

Chairman: Lt. Colonel H. R. A. Streather OBE
Education Director: M. W. Vallance MA. Vice Chairman: J. S. Lee MA, Headmaster, Trent College

EXPEDITION :- VENEZUELA 94 OLD SWINFORD / QUEEN MARGARETS

PERSONAL PROFILE REPORT ON - SIMON BRISTOW

Simon has impressed me with not only his high personal motivation and enthusiasm throughout but his level headed attitude and responsibility shown.

His period as leader was probably one of the most difficult during the whole expedition being the planning and supplying of the jungle trek. Whilst his enthusiasm and wish to get things right was high he lacked the ability to communicate his ideas to the group coherently and in a precise manner. Consequently he lost vision of the goals he had set himself. He could learn to take a step back in future to aid reflection and help develop this aspect of his leadership skills.

I found him to be a very selfless individual with nothing too much trouble for him even if he was feeling under the weather himself. Despite the fact that his time as leader wasn't as organised as it could have been, I found him to be a very reliable individual, always eager to learn. He has been big enough to accept that aspects of the expedition have been physically more demanding than he expected. If he continues to improve his interpersonal skills as I have seen during the second half of the expedition, this will aid him greatly in his own future personal development. Well done.

Tony Burns 20.9.94

TONY BURNS
EXPEDITION LEADER

World Challenge Expeditions Limited
Soane House, 305-315 Latimer Road, London W10 6RA Telephone: 081-964 1331 Fax: 081-964 5298
Registered in England No. 2173751. Registered Office: 25 Lower Belgrave Street, London SW1W 0LS

Pre-Expedition Training

Written by Lynfel Owen

The group undertook many training events and a general fitness plan in preparation for the expedition. *World Challenge* ran their own training weekends which all the group attended, in groups of four to five. This provided an excellent opportunity to meet other *World Challenge* groups and compare notes on the various expeditions going that summer. They were held at a training centre in Derbyshire in the depths of winter! The content of the 'sessions' consisted of a large amount of treking as a group, practical demonstrations of river crossings, putting up hammocks in the jungle (something hard to imagine in a Derbyshire forest!), casualty evacuation and a series of medical and health lectures, specially focused at our type of expedition. They were great fun and a good learning experience for everyone.

The OSH team organized their own walking and canoeing weekend in North Wales (the climate proving very un-tropical again!). The whole group spent five days together on a walking trip in Yorkshire in the summer half-term, the climate this time proving to be a little more 'tropical'.

Everyone tried to spend as many weekends as possible out walking with well laden rucksacks and walking boots; it was found that you could get a good simulation of the tropical climate we were going to be walking in by wearing one too many woolly jumpers! Walking was the best form of fitness as it was what we were going to do but we did a lot of running, to improve stamina, and a fair amount of work on the upper body in the gym to improve rucksack carrying abilities.



The group at the start of the 3 Peaks trainng walk

On the whole most people tried to do increasing amounts of fitness as we neared departure. By the time we left, nearly all members had worked up to doing about two hours of fitness a day.

A large amout of time was spent 'acquiring' and deliberating over the necessary kit that we needed. We were rather horrified, especially after the W.C. training weekends, by how much personal kit we needed, and the expense was another nightmare. We were training with the pre-conception that we would be carrying 40Ib rucksacks (about 70 litres) for the majority of the time. We were rather horrified at the amount we actually ended up carrying (in the 50+lb range), especially the smaller members of the group.

The group equipment that was supplied by WC should have had allowances made for it in the training as it was to add 10lb to each person's pack. Luckily most members had been over-training and therefore the extra weight was only an initial horror that soon faded under expedition pressures.

As the native language of Venezuela is Latin-American Spanish we decided that it would be beneficial if everybody learned at least the "Yes, No, Beer and 1 to10" of the language so that we would not be dependent on the few people who spoke Spanish to get us through. The easiest way we found to learn was to set vocabularly targets for each week, to learn about ten words that week, or about three or four useful phrases.



Tony getting in some climbing practice!

The Jungle Trek

Written by Joe Grainger

Friday 29th July - Friday 5th August

Rest day at the Mission

After the long trek from Luepa most of the team were shattered so the thought of a six day trek through the rainforest did not bear thinking about, but after a days rest preparation and provisioning for the trek had to take place. The food that we had bought in Ciudad Bolivar was stacked up on to a table and split up into main meals and snacks. Breakfasts were to consist of a small helping of porridge and a hot drink. This seemed to suit everyone except for Igor (Adam Robbins). Lunch was to be a tin of sardines, or if you were lucky a tin of tuna for one of the days. This along with a packet of bran biscuits and three sweet biscuits was to be lunch. Supper consisted of rice or pasta with the dehydrated meals supplied by World Challenge. Everyone grabbed their rationing of food for the week and went to pack.

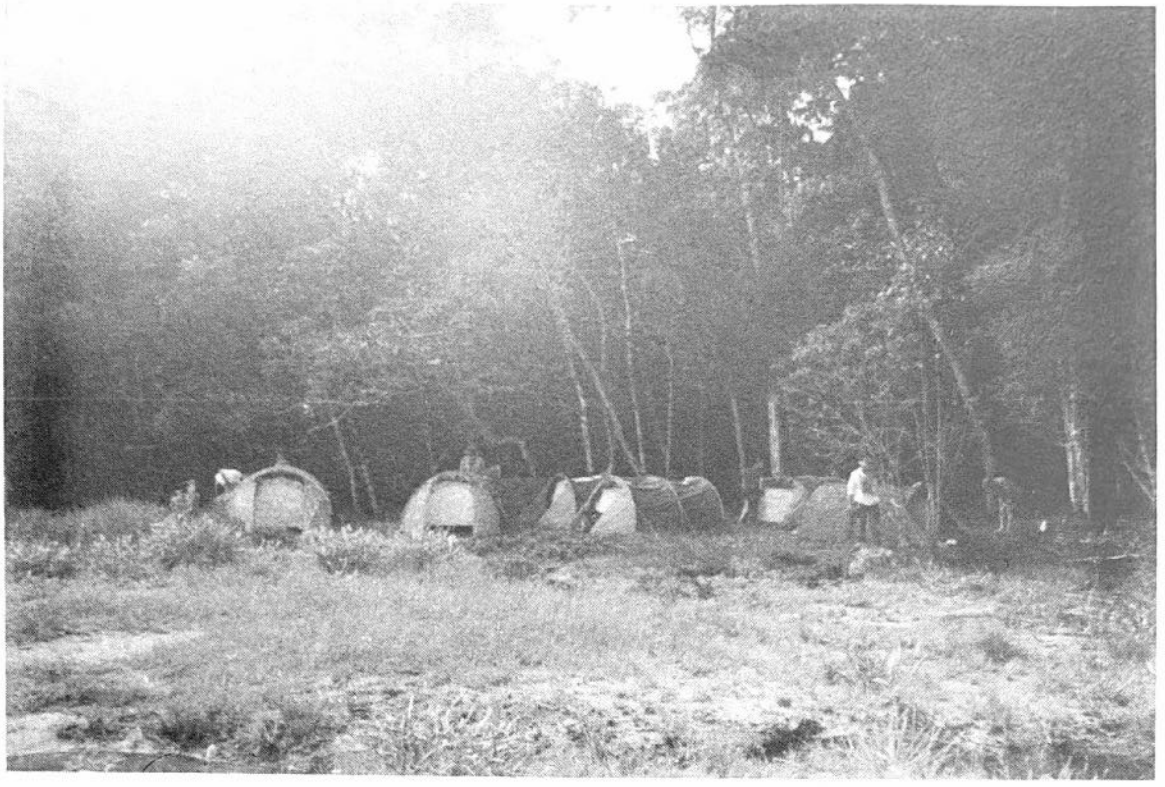
Packing.....well this was one of the more interesting stages to the preparation. Everyone emptied out the entire contents of their rucksack on to the floor and began to sort it out. Following the trek from Luepa to Kavanyen we had all realized that weight was of great importance. Anything that was likely not to be used over the trek was thrown or passed on to someone else in the group!

Lynfel did however keep his fold open manicure bag, including useful items such as pins, combs and SOAP! Most people managed to get the weight of their packs down.....some more than others (Eh, Brownie).

Start of Trek

Tents and group equipment was checked and everyone was ready to go. The Pemon Indian guide we had met the day before (Carlos) arrived at 8am as he said he would. The two porters we had hired followed him plus another two porters behind them. They later turned out to be Carlos's sons. We began walking at a steady pace through Kavanyen (this didn't take very long) and headed out in to Savanna. We walked at a good pace for about two hours and found ourselves on top of a large drop. The view of the rainforest was fantastic, stretching as far as the eye could see. We continued walking all afternoon in the blazing heat and at around 4pm arrived at a deep fast flowing river. Carlos indicated that this was the place we were to camp and we all dropped to the floor.

First camp - on the edge of the jungle





Everyone cooling off and having a wash under a rather spectacular waterfall

Tents began to go up soon after and soon after that the campsite was looking more friendly. Lynfel and myself went off to look for some branches to rest the cooking pot on. After about half an hour of tying twigs together with paracord, Carlos walked up with three thick stumps and proceeded to knock them in to the ground in a tripod actually in the fire. The cooking pot rested on them perfectly and within half an hour supper was well underway, we did not realize that there was actually a variety of wood that did not burn! Whilst supper was cooking a group went off to a nearby waterfall for a shower and the group that were cooking bathed in the river.

After a long days trek in the sun, everyone except Igor was feeling hungry. He was not too well, with a high temperature. He had a small amount to eat and went to sleep, followed shortly by the rest of us.

Day 2 of Trek

After a good night's sleep everyone was feeling refreshed and ready for the day's trek, although we all wondered how we were to cross the river. We were slightly alarmed when we saw Carlos who was on the other side, jump in and swim across but he led us further down the river to where his sons were waiting with a dugout canoe. We crossed the river safely and continued on. The trekking was again through Savannah, and by this time most people were looking forward to the rainforest to get out of the sun. When it came later that day opinions changed as people fought to stand up on the thick layer of roots and leaves that covered the floor. Lunch was again after about for hours walking and this was followed by a further four or five hours until camp.

Days 3 - 6

The rainforest was a wonderful experience to all of the group who had never been surrounded by such a harsh environment before. During the six days several insects and a snake were pointed out by Carlos, and at one point Emma was bitten by a spider; fortunately it was not a poisonous one but even so gave a painful bite. At one of the lunch stops one of our porters cut his leg open with a machete. The cut was deep so the first - aider (Emma at the time) got some Steri-strips from one of the first aid kits and covered the wound over.

We kept to the planned distances every day. This meant waking at about 5am and then starting walking by 7am and finishing as it got dark. This meant a long day's walk with only an hour's lunch break. The morning was the part most people dreaded, having to put on wet, smelly clothes and pack away wet tents. As the trek continued most people were ill at some stage. This was probably due to the water that they had been drinking, or something they had eaten (nothing I cooked of course!). Washing clothes properly was



(Above)
The group work their way through one of the few open sections



Negotiating a river crossing in the depths of the jungle

impossible so most people wore the same clothes for the whole week. The rain storms in the afternoon kept people from getting too smelly!

Day 7 - Last Day in Jungle!

The final day of the trek started off half an hour late, but morale was high within the group, and we set off at a good pace. No sooner had we started though than Chris slipped and cut the back off his head open.

The Steri-strips came out again and after 20 minutes we were off again. We reached a large down hill drop and Carlos pointed out Kamarata to us in the distance. It looked a long way away but he assured us that we would reach by the end of the day. At that moment the heavens opened and the steep drop in front of us became a mudslide. As it was the last day everyone dived to the floor and slid down to the river at the bottom. We all sat there for five or ten minutes and then realized we were being watched by a Pemon Indian family. This was the lunch stop and the family kindly gave us some bread to go with our meal. Tony thought it would be a good idea to give them some of our rice we had remaining. We later found out that their 'farm' was a rice plantation!

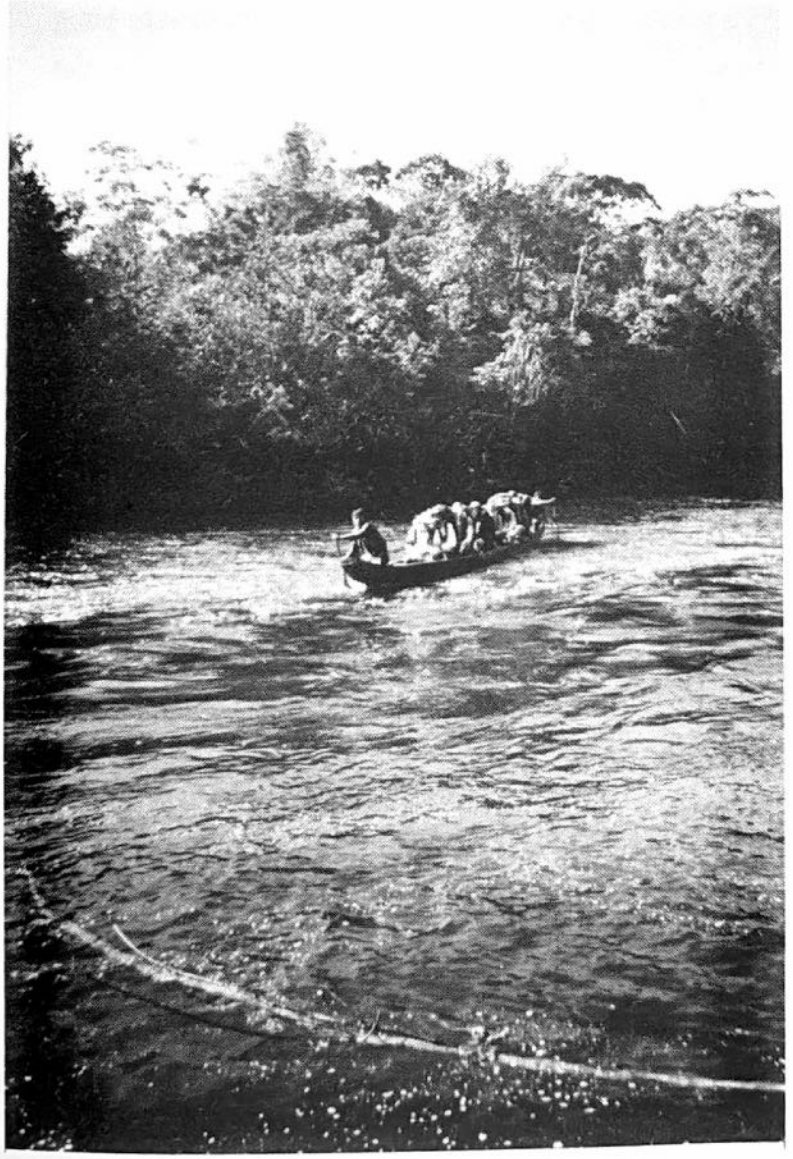
The afternoons walk led us to Kamarata where we could see the Aryan Tepui - the largest Tepui in the world, a breathtaking sight. The group dropped to the floor of a large hut, while local Indian people put up hammocks around us.

The group was immensely proud of their efforts over the last week. The walk had been very hard covering 270km over the six days most of which was rainforest.

The ideas we had about Kamarata we not quite correct. Instead of it being a great town with shops and restaurants it turned out to be similar to Kavanyen with two shops and a Catholic Mission, and as we soon found out the sale of alcohol and tobacco in the village was strictly forbidden by the Mission! We enjoyed somewhat sober celebrations that night, the feeling of self-satisfaction at having completed the trek and the thought of the river trek to Angel Falls was enough to keep everyone on a high well into the night, and early next morning!



(Above)
One of the very few signs of habitation seen



Negotiating a large river crossing with the aid of a local dugout canoe

THE CANOE 'TREK'

Written by Tim Fisher.

Saturday 6th August - Tuesday 9th August

After our period of rest at Kamarata, we had begun to think that the worst was 'probably' over, and that we could settle into the capacity of tourists for the remainder of the expedition.

The canoes for 'the trek' (rather amusingly named as all we had to do was to sit down for hours on end. Sheer bliss!!!) were supplied by a rather dodgy 'tour company' run by a rather suspicious bunch of locals. This had all been organised by Tony and Armo the day before in their rather limited spanish, but as everyone knows language is no barrier to the British and when they couldn't quite get their point across, they resorted to speacking loudly and slowly with plenty of gesticulation. As always they eventually got the point across, and the following day at around two o'clock (as promised) our 'tour guide' showed up with a jeep to carry away our gear to the canoes, and as we ambled to the canoe 'berth' the realisation finally dawned.NO BL**DY RUCKSACKS! We were finally on holiday.

When we arrived at the embarkation point (or river bank as it was commonly known) we found our chariots awaiting us in the shape of two rather large native canoes.The most striking thing about these craft were the rather substantial Japanese made outboard motors precariously balanced upon the rear of the craft.

Once we had all arrived at the canoe station (and I use this phrase in the loosest terms possible) our equipment was loaded onto the canoes.We hung around for about ten minutes while the locals argued amongst themselves and drank petrol (one of the blokes was trying to siphon some petrol from a container into the motor, but he ended up drinking it!) then we climbed upon the canoes and began the journey towards Angel Falls.

When we were finally under way, we all sat back and just enjoyed the sensation of being 'chauffeured' down the river, marvelling at the majestic Tepuis towering above the canopy of the jungle.

This euphoria lasted about two hours, it seemed to almost disappear with the sun at about four o'clock when the rain (bang

on time as usual) appeared. The canoes carried on ploughing through the river, for ever it seemed. We were all wet and cold (most people had dressed for sunbathing in the canoes), and we had no idea where we were going or when we would get there (perhaps this is why this particular part of the expedition is referred to as a 'trek'!).

Spirits finally fell when the engine on one of the canoes failed. Cries of "we're gonna die!!" and "shut up you whining burk!!" rent the relative quiet of the jungle usunder as the now engineless canoe drifted aimlessly along the river. Our guides tried (without much success) to restart the motor, so they eventually gave up and began to paddle which did no end of 'good' to the morale of their passengers.At this point one bright spark (the oldest member of the expedition,but in his opinion, most youthful) pointed out that it was all a plan of Charles Rigby to make life 'more exciting' and it was 'all in the script'. This turn of phrase was to become common usage when ever anything went wrong for the remainder of the expedition which it frequently did.

Eventually after about half an hour our guides managed to restart the engine, much to the relief of all of us who had been trapped aboard the vessel. So without further ado we restarted our journey.

By this time the morale, which had been rock bottom, went straight through the floor.Our guides were searching the riverbank with torches, which suggested that our destination might be 'obscured' from vision.

"Not only are we wet and cold" came a voice (the owner of which was unidentified as it was too dark to see!),"but our bloody guides are lost! Some holiday!". The reply to this was almost preordained;

"IT'S IN THE SCRIPT!!" rang the cry from every British throat on that canoe, and as luck would have it, by the time the laughing had finished we had reached our destination.

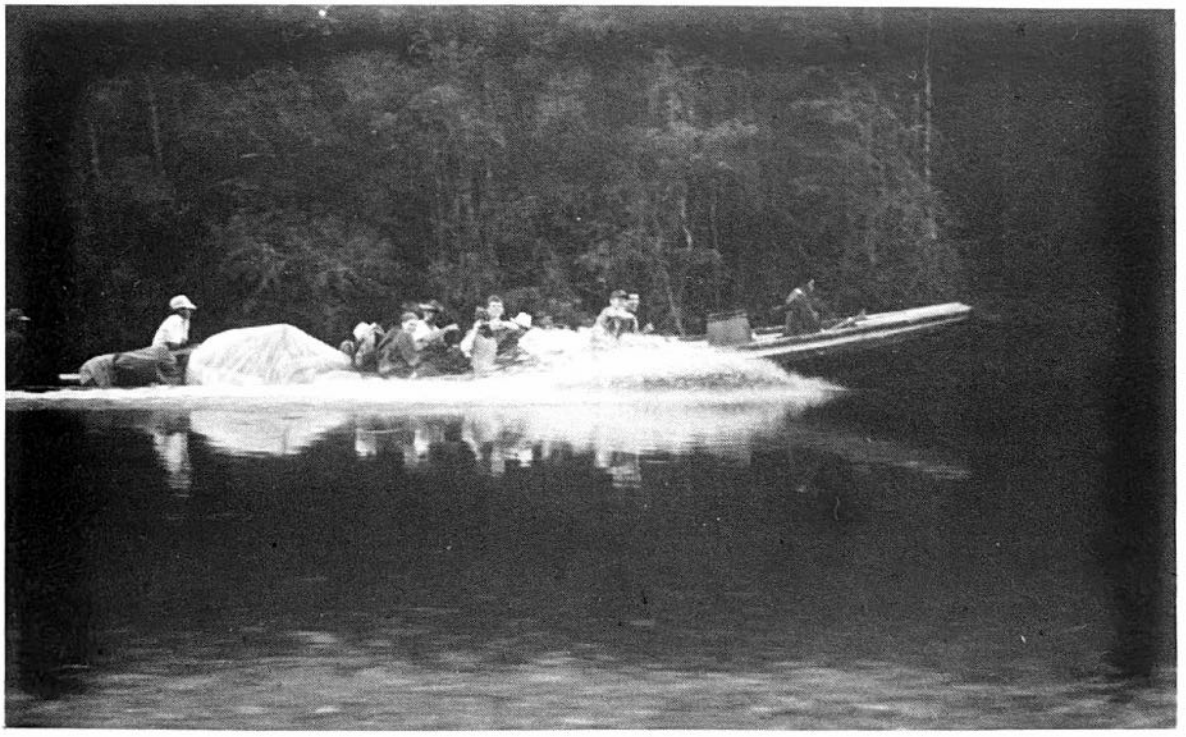
Our stop for the night consisted of a couple of leaky corrugated iron roofed shacks in which we discovered a bunch of tourists (some Aussies and Brits' off to see Angel Falls) were already in residence in the 'shelters'.Our hammocks were strung up in the shelter making a giant Newton's Cradle which made for a fun night, because whenever someone turned over in their hammock the disturbance was 'transmitted' down the line.The evening meal consisted of a morsel of chicken with a little bread.Some members of the group were not amused.So with empty bellies and drooping eyes we retired into our 'cradle'.

by any form of tourist exploitation or facilities. There are no roads there, you have to spend a day in a canoe or ten day's in the jungle to get there!

After this we returned to the camp, and while walking back I was attacked by a 'ravenous beastie'(which was in fact a two inch long ant which buried its jaws into my finger). Tony thought this was most interesting and took great pleasure in slowly extracting it with his tweezers; this man had no sympathy! We then had some lunch and prepared to leave for Canaima.

On the route to Caniama we stopped to retrieve our rucksacks from the 'safe area'. When the guide pulled the tarpaulin off the sacks, a swarm of termites was revealed. These little pests had spent the best part of the last day eating our rucksacks (some to a greater extent than others) .So the owners of the infested bags quickly emptied them and chucked them in the river to drown any of the unwanted visitors that could not be scraped off, much to the amsment of our guides and those whose rucksacks had not been attacked(these swine took greatt pleasure in reminding the others that it was all in the script!).When all this had finished we repacked the canoes and once more set off for Canaima.

Our destination was reached after dark, and we had to walk to our "hotel" in which we put up our hammocks. There was a bathroom so we could even wash. Our holiday had hopefully begun for real (but not unless Rigby had anything to do with it!!!).



One of the two boats speeds alongside the other making headway towards the falls

WORLD CHALLENGE

Chairman: Lt. Colonel H. R. A. Streather OBE
Education Director: M. W. Vallance MA. Vice Chairman: J. S. Lee MA, Headmaster, Trent College

EXPEDITION :- VENEZUELA 94 OLD SWINFORD / QUEEN MINGHIRES

PERSONAL PROFILE REPORT ON - DERMOT GRAZEBROOK

Dermot is a very happy go lucky young man with a sense of humour that is quite dry and appreciated by the majority of the group. This does need to be tempered at times depending on the situation.

At the start of the expedition Dermots personal organisation and general awareness of others was very poor indeed. He has been too used to things being done for him and not working on his own initiative. I have seen an obvious change for the better during the expedition, with him thinking about things more and how they impact on others.

During his time as leader he tried with some success to organise the group but unfortunately much of this was taken away from him by the owner of the hacienda we were working on.

Dermot needs his own space and coped very well on the jungle trek, pulling his weight more than most and learning to put things in perspective from this experience. His fitness was without doubt and this was used at times selflessly for the benefit of the group.

He has learned much about himself during his month here and the responsibility now lies with Dermot in how he decides to apply this knowledge.

Tony Burns
20.8.94

TONY BURNS
EXPEDITION LEADER.

World Challenge Expeditions Limited
Soane House, 305-315 Latimer Road, London W10 6RA Telephone: 081-964 1331 Fax: 081-964 5298
Registered in England No. 2173751. Registered Office: 25 Lower Belgrave Street, London SW1W 0LS

Taken From EXPRESS & STAR - Thursday, October 23, 1994

Adventure of a lifetime

Ten Old Swinford Hospital students pulled out their backpacks and tackled jungle undergrowth, tropical storms and deadly tarantulas on expedition in Venezuela, this summer.

by John Simpson

Pupils, Lynfel Owen, Dermot Grazebrook, Stuart Sopp, Simon Bristow, Will Taylor and Tim Fisher flew over to the South American country for the most gruelling – and fun-packed – mental and physical challenge of their lives.

They were joined by Tony Burns, a member of the London-based World Challenge Organisation, who helped organised the trip of a lifetime.

The expedition saw the students endure an acclimatisation trek in the El Avila National Park where the team reached heights of more than 7,000 feet.

They then spent a week taking part in conservation work at a national park.

This was followed by a seven-day jungle trek through a rainforest over 270km.





Canoe trek

To finish off the adventure, the team took part in a canoe trek to the famous Angel Falls landmark which lasted three days and then enjoyed two days on the Caribbean coast.

Lynfel Owen said: "The expedition was an overwhelming success with team work the key.

"The jungle trek proved to be the most demanding challenge.

"There was a combination of blistering heat and the claustrophobic jungle environment draining everybody and most people lost weight.

"One of the most spectacular scenes had to be waking up early in the morning, in the comfort of a hammock, to see Angel Falls cascading down."

Taken From EXPRESS & STAR - Tuesday, October 4th, 1994

Boys brave jungle perils

Ten boys from a Stourbridge boarding school braved the tropical heat and deadly insects of the South American jungle on a six-week trip of a lifetime.

Pupils from the Oldswinford Hospital School trekked 170 miles through the rainforests of Venezuela after a week of conservation work in a national park.

The group spent three days on a canoe trip up to the spectacular Angel Falls, and met native Indian tribes.

They coped with mosquitoes, tarantulas, bird-eating spiders, snakes and ants, and hiked at altitudes of up to 7,000ft.

Student leader Lynfel Owen, aged 17, said: "We saw a country which hosts the two extremes of wealth, in an environment of amazing natural beauty."

The students spent 10 months fundraising for the £30,000 summer trip, which was run by the London-based World Challenge Organisation.

Venezuela - An overview

Written by Dennis Christley

Before we left for Venezuela we were warned by many people to take care over our possessions and to beware of pickpockets. Dire stories of gangs tripping tourists up on escalators and pinching their wallets were told with vicarious glee. The Channel Four documentary "A Rough Guide to Venezuela" did little to inspire confidence as it painted a picture of Caracas as one huge barrio filled with muggers and conmen. Reality, as always, proved to be much different.

On only our second day in Caracas a waitress in the hotel handed in the travellers cheques that one of the party dropped. One of the maintenance staff tried to explain this to us but, being suspicious and not understanding the language very well, we thought he was trying to lure us to another restaurant or con us in some way. When we discovered our error I was ashamed at both my cynicism and my poor Spanish. On another occasion when we were on a beach, a local ran up to us waving several Thousand Bolivar notes and asked if any of us had dropped them. I wonder how often people in England are so honest.

In the larger cities we were treated with the same indifference one might expect in any major city throughout the world though we did cause the occasional stir of interest when we trooped through the streets with our packs on and we did hear the odd murmur of 'Hey, Gringo". Outside the cities, however, we received the greatest kindness and hospitality I have known. The people, especially the indigenous Indians, watched us with fascination and came forward to help whenever they thought such help was needed. There many examples of this - when Sue tried to hang out some washing and found her line wouldn't reach the pole two men stepped forward and erected another pole. When Stu started to hang his hammock on board the ferry a whole family insisted on helping him to hang it and when Charlotte was rinsing out a blouse in a bathroom on board another passenger insisted on doing it for her. In the Indian villages complete strangers would come up to us to ask where we were from and to wish us well.

Because of the exchange rate everything in Venezuela seemed incredibly cheap to us and at first we tended to treat the currency with some contempt, not bothering to wait for change or tipping ridiculous amounts. When we thought more about it we realised that while things were cheap for us, the local people had to work hard to earn enough to keep body and soul together and that we needed to respect that fact. It was embarassing to think about what the Venezuelans must have thought of us when we were throwing our money about. I must say that some of the group had much more respect for even the smallest notes by the end of the R and R period when money became much tighter.

The beauty of the country is mentioned several times in this account though there were times when, laden with back-packs and weary from walking, we might not have fully appreciated its splendour. Some sights could not fail to impress; our first sighting of Auyun Tepui, the biggest tepui in the world; Angel Falls seen as we rounded a bend in

the river and from the bottom of the falls themselves. Even the jungle was beautiful when we got the chance to wipe the sweat from our eyes and appreciate it !

There are many things I shall remember when I look back on the trip but above all I shall recall the kindness and friendliness of the Venezuelan people.

WORLD CHALLENGE

Chairman: Lt. Colonel H. R. A. Streather OBE
Education Director: M. W. Vallance MA. Vice Chairman: J. S. Lee MA, Headmaster, Trent College

EXPEDITION:- VENEZUELA 94 OLD SWINFORD / QUEEN MARGARET'S

PERSONAL PROFILE REPORT ON:- ADAM ROBBINS

I have found Adam to be a quiet, sometimes reserved, individual who does worry at times when placed in a position of responsibility. This is more the fact that I feel he wants to do a professional and thorough job for everyone than having any lack of self-confidence. This is certainly not a problem.

He has shown himself to be a very selfless person throughout, more so than during his time as leader when he gave up his place on the ferry when one person had problems with their ticket, in order to sort matters out.

Adam needs to look at and develop his general communication skills with the group especially the delegation of tasks. I have however found him to be a very honest, reliable and hardworking person who has often been first to volunteer to do work around camp. An important member of the group who has been well liked.

Tony Burns
20-8-94
TONY BURNS
EXPEDITION LEADER.

World Challenge Expeditions Limited
Soane House, 305-315 Latimer Road, London W10 6RA Telephone: 081-964 1331 Fax: 081-964 5298
Registered in England No. 2173751. Registered Office: 25 Lower Belgrave Street, London SW1W 0LS

The R&R - Margarita Island.

Written by William Taylor

Wednesday 10th - 13th August

Most of us caught the ferry from Porta de la Cruze. We were down Emma, who had lost her ticket (well who else.... and don't say me!),and also Tony and Igor who had gallantly come to her aid, and consequently had missed the ferry, the journey was long but uneventful, except for Simon getting all his remaining money stolen while he was asleep. We arrived on Margarita Island early in the morning, and I mean really early, probably near 1.00 am.

Anyway we all piled off the ferry in search of a taxi bus that we could hire. Very quickly one was expertly secured by our one remaining Spanish speaker, Dennis. We were then driven to (name of town? -we are pretty sure that it was the capital!) where the Driver's geography seemed to fail him, he could not remember where our hotel was, though luckily in the end his first guess was the right one. Very quickly we unloaded the bus and found our rooms.

To our delight the hotel had a swimming pool, and some people decided they would have a swim to refresh them after the journey; remember this is at about 1.00 am . Meanwhile Stu and Armo went in went for a walk and found an open ice cream place and so had a late night ice cream binge, they swear blind that it was run by the Mafia! Well anywhere that is open at that time of the morning was bound to be a bit dodge. Everyone then piled into bed and slept until late the next morning; all excepting Tony, Igor and Emma who had to catch the next ferry and did not get in until 7.00am.

I awoke the next morning for my first day light view of the tropical island that we were going to spend the next two days on. I must say I was impressed; it was everything that I expected, hot sun, palm trees, long golden beaches and bikini clad women - Paradise. I found that most other people had already got up and had breakfast or were having it. I was recommended the American Breakfast, which was very much like a full English breakfast only more greasy and unhealthy (Typically American!).

By the time that I had finished nearly everyone else had disappeared either to the beach or the shops, leaving me with Emma and Chris.

We decided that we would go into town and find everyone else. A little way down the road form the Hotel we met Sue, who it turned out had already found the nearest Heavy metal shop, and had a go at the proprietor (who spoke only Spanish) for having fake Monsters of Rock '94 T-shirts.

Sue decided to stay with Emma, myself and Chris. Everyone else, I suspect, was doing much as we were, looking at shops or had already made it to the beach. We investigated a few more shops and I brought a hat.

The girls then decided that they needed to go to the loo, so we found the nearest Bar (The only place we knew we could find a decent loo, honest); it turned out to be a country and western bar so we stayed a little, listening to the music.

Several hours later, we left the bar and found the beach. Emma had brought her Hammock to sling between two palm trees which were growing along the beach. This would have been a good idea, had she brought bungees to put it up with. Anyway we laid our towels on the floor and sunbathed for a bit, in between playing in the sea, and going for walks down the beach; you know seaside sorts of things. There was a man on the beach hiring out jet skis, so Sue and I decided to hire one for an hour. It was great fun, even when Sue decided to slingshot me off the back by doing a particularly sharp turn; luckily I had the safety shut off thing attached to my arm or else she would have probably carried on without me. I don't know, women drivers who needs them eh!

Stu though apparently performed the most spectacular over water aerobatics when he managed to do a roll with a jet ski he had hired. Unfortunately I was not there to see it happen though by all reports he did it with quite some enthusiasm. We had a lunch of chips and Polar from a cafe on the beach.

We packed up and left the beach some time during the afternoon, and made our way back to the hotel, where everyone was meeting in the bar. We decided that it would be nice for us all to go together for a pizza at a place just down the road.

The restaurant was fairly nice from our point of view, but Tony, Dennis and a couple of others had problems with the service and after a heated debate with several waiters and the manager, went elsewhere. Some of us then went on to the Country and Western bar that we had found earlier. We stayed there for a while, and had a few drinks before we split up.

Lynfel, I, Emma, Sue, Tim and Chris all left with every intention of getting back to the Hotel. Unfortunately we passed a club called the 'Village Club' on our way there, and someone said "shall we go in." and one thing led to another and we ended up inside until near 1.00am (Tim and Chris left earlier because Tim was feeling ill). We then staggered back to the hotel were we all met up with Stu, Armo, Dermot and Susie who had all been out to another club, but had got back earlier than we did. Somehow, I cannot remember how, we ended up leaving Sue to go and see if we could by some coke anywhere. The more sober of us (everyone who had not been to the Village Club) suddenly realized that we should not leave Sue alone if she was feeling sick so they went back to the hotel. Myself Emma and Lynfel carried on, realising that the only place that we could find any Coke at that time of night was at the club, where we stayed, for another hour or so.

Somehow the getting coke bit disappeared on the way.

We eventually left the club and weaned our way back to the hotel, a few hundred meters up the road. Why it took us almost 3/4 of an hour to get there may only be answered by quantum physicist or just maybe we walked passed the hotel door about three times. Locating our rooms turned out to be quite an exciting adventure.

The next thing I remember is sitting at a breakfast table having an American breakfast, and feeling rather rough.

We had intended to go to the beach again that day, but a tropical rain storm in the morning put pay to that idea. So instead we spent the morning around the hotel bar, in the swimming pool and out in the town shopping for Duty frees (it was a duty free island) and presents. It seemed that nearly everyone had a 'rough' night the night before! We had lunch

at a restaurant up the road with a few other people, and then we went back to the hotel. That afternoon we all met on the patio by the pool for a debrief. Many of the good and bad points of the trip were discussed with Tony who needed our thoughts for his report to World Challenge. He then took us all to one side to talk to us about our individual reports.

After that was done we sat around for a while amassing large bar bills, which were generally left for the person who was stupid enough to be last at the bar. (talking of money I still has not been solved how Lynfel managed to spend so much the night before when he did not have any with him!).

Dinner was taken at the restaurant where I had had lunch, and large amounts were eaten by all, except of course those who were still feeling the effects of the night before. Everybody then returned to the Hotel. Sue, Emma and myself walked leisurely down to the road looking at the roadside stalls as we went there was some fantastic stuff there, clothes, jewelry etc.. and we bartered down and brought a couple of items.

When we returned to the hotel we found that some wise soul had brought a bottle of tequila and a bottle of champagne, and most people were having a celebratory toast to each other. Emotions were very tense and worried among most members of the group as to the thought that such a wonderful expedition was coming to an end.

We had packed and left everything in one room at 1.00pm. Sue had made the journey to the port and back earlier in the day to get tickets for the ferry, so when it was time to leave we were all ready to go...? Well it did not help that half the group was finding it hard to stand up!

Well we got taxis to the port. Mine arrived first, closely followed by the others, then the fun started. Armo had a slight disagreement with her stomach in her taxi and we had had to use the breakfast money for the next day to pay for it.

Once on the ferry most people fell asleep, thank goodness. The ferry trip was quite uneventful, and we arrived in Porta de la Cruz early the next morning.

I think that even the R&R was a learning experience, as was most of the trip, people did somethings that they wished they had not, and certainly learnt from them. For me it was the perfect ending to such a wonderful experience.

I think I would definitely reccomend Magarita Island as a very 'hot & happening' holiday resort, worth another visit!

Acknowledgments

There are many people that I would like to thank for myself and on behalf of the whole team for making the Expedition the great success that it was. We owe a huge thanks to these people who helped financially, morally and in giving us a lot of their valuable time. We could not have achieved half of what we did without them.

All of our parents, for almost every reason.

The O.S.H Parents Association for letting us use their venues for fundraising and for their constant support.
The O.S.H Feofees for their generous financial donation.
The O.S.H Old Boys for their financial donation.

All of our Sponsors;

- **-Sunway Properties S.L.**
- **-Nickolls & Perks Ltd (Wine Merchants)**
- **-Tewkesbury Auction Sales.**
- **-Harts Hill Motoring Centre.**
- **-Stourbridge School of Motoring.**

and especially;

- **-Formula Business Forms Limited. For the printing of this brochure and our Ragmag.**

Mr. Neil Barrett for all his time and advice with all of the expedition training. We wish him all the best with his new career, he will be missed at Old Swinford.

World Challenge for all their services.

Finally, many thanks must go to Tony Burns for his excellent expedition leadership and Dennis Christley for his great efforts before and his active participation during the expedition.

PRINTED BY:



CONTINUOUS BUSINESS FORMS AND CUT SETS TO THE TRADE

Unit 1, Block 2, Shenstone Trading Estate,
Bromsgrove Road, Halesowen,
West Midlands B63 3XB
Tel: 021-585 6333 Fax: 021-585 5620