

OUT OF AFRICA

There are very few words that could fully describe the experience enjoyed by the twenty-one students and staff who spent four weeks in Uganda last summer, but 'awe-inspiring' and 'moving' might be a start.

The main aim of the trip was to spend some time in the small rural village of Kabubbu to see the work of the local Hailsham charity Quicken Trust which St Bede's has been helping to support for the past two years. Team leaders Lou Belrhiti and Cherie Smithyman had visited Kabubbu in the Summer of 2005 and, whilst there, decided that it would be a great to return with a group of St Bede's students together with a handful of staff members to increase the links between St Bede's and the two Kabubbu schools - the Community Primary School and the new Trust High school. So that's precisely what we did.

This trip was by far the best experience of my life. The moment I stepped off the plane and took my first breath the smell of Africa hit me. The first few days were spent acclimatising in Kampala which was extremely exciting. We spent a day white-water rafting on the river Nile; learnt to use the local transport (motorbike taxis!) and money; familiarised ourselves with the food and some local customs; practised our language skills and generally found our Uganda feet. Then on to Kabubbu

Kabubbu-The Projects

Where do we begin? As we drew near the village in our old bus it was overwhelming to see all the local families greeting us, mums with babies and children waving and running after us. I must admit I became a little tearful. The first morning we all had to introduce ourselves at the primary school assembly and tell the children a little about ourselves. During the two weeks we were there we lived in the grounds of the primary school and were all involved in several projects. Some of us took lessons in different subjects at the primary school and even at the high school; we took assembly several times; made a clay oven; installed a solar powered lighting system; visited families; helped out at sports day; and shared in some local cultural events including three different church services. We also built a house for a woman whose previous one had fallen down. That was hard work but very rewarding and we will leave you to imagine her reaction when we had finished. After each day's work there were legendary evenings of fun with the students of our own age from the High School - games of football, a quiz night, a film night, a play, singing and dancing.

The toughest but most eye-opening thing we did was the family visits. Seeing the living conditions of the villagers was a shock to most of us but perhaps the moment when we learned most. It was a privilege to be allowed to see the homes, meet the families and make friends with these lovely people. We were all very upset to leave. The friendships that I have made will be with me for the rest of my life and there are so many memories that will stay with me forever.

After Kabubbu

The daring among us returned to Jinja to go bungee jumping: I thought I'd left my stomach at the top. After that we had a long journey to spend a couple of nights in

Queen Elizabeth Safari park, stopping in Fort Portal for a relaxed lunch. We spent that evening in Kasese and were unexpectedly entertained by the Cadet Corps Choir. Early the next morning we were up for a venture into a bat cave and a river boat trip between Lake George and Lake Edward, seeing elephants bathing, hippos, Nile crocodile, buffalo, Uganda kob and 63 different types of birds including the "Crested Crane" - Uganda's National Bird which appears on its flag.

On the way back to Kampala we stopped at the Equator for a look in the craft stores and some ceremonious shots on the actual Line. After long day we at last got back to Kampala and quickly caught our breath before our reward - a relaxing long weekend on the Ssesse Islands in Lake Victoria spent fishing and playing beach volleyball, sitting round the camp fire and, of course, enjoying the hospitality and the location.

The trip ended in on a great note with a celebratory Indian meal, which was most welcome. Thanks very much to Mrs B in particular and very well done to everyone. We were all rewarded with a souvenir to remind us of a trip of a lifetime.

To put it in a nutshell, there are very few words that can describe the experience we had, but our best advice is go and experience it for yourself, realise how lucky you are and cherish every moment. You can start by visiting <http://www.quickentrust.com/> and click on 'Tourism'.

Nick Crane & Matt Armstrong Ford