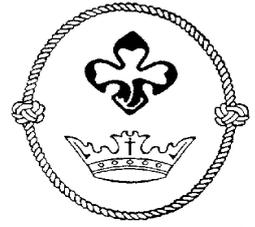




Postscript



359: 5th Week, Michaelmas 2004

The World Scout Moot



Mark Hawkins' Adventures in Taiwan

Plus:

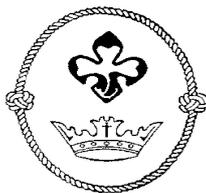
Finance And General Purposes Committee Minutes

Can you contain your excitement?

Confessions Of A Pyromaniac

Michael Ramsden owns up to his obsession

Postscript



Issue 359 – Second of Michaelmas 2004

An OUSGG publication

Editor: Alistair Green (St Hugh's)

Chair: Sarah Berman (Queen's)

Chair-elect: Gail Hedley (Magdalen)

Treasurer: Sam Snelson (Wadham)

Secretary: Phil Alderton (St Peter's)

N'n'N organiser: Michael Ramsden (St Peter's)

Winter Walking organiser: Mark Hawkins (Queen's)

Internet Officer: Caroline Berry (Ex-Keble)

Membership: Jonathan Harvey (Brookes University)

SSAGO Rep.: Mark Hawkins (Queen's)

Scout & Guide Liaison: Katherine Butler (Queen's)

Quartermaster: Michael Ramsden (St Peter's)

Old Members' Rep.: Chris Seward (ex-Jesus)

Senior Member: Katherine Blundell

All correspondence and articles to postscript@ousgg.org.uk or by post / pidge to Alistair Green, St Hugh's College, Oxford. **Deadline for issue 360: Friday Seventh Week (26th November)**

Any items received will be presumed to be for publication unless otherwise notified. The editor reserves the right to modify contributions, quote you out of context and generally abuse his absolute power.

Views expressed in *Postscript* are those of their authors, and might not correspond to those of OUSGG or associated bodies.

Printed and published in Oxford.

© Oxford University Scout and Guide Group 2004. All rights reserved.

Editorial

Is it really 5th Week already? More than half the term has flown past in the blink of an eye, and hopefully by now the freshers amongst you will be starting to settle in. Since you're still here, you've obviously realised that we OUSGGers aren't *quite* as crazy as we may appear at first sight, and decided that the Group really is for you. Before long, it will have become a way of life.

In the meantime, just sit back, relax and enjoy this issue of *Postscript*, packed full of the usual articles on OUSGG life, plus a few somewhat bizarre and pointless ramblings.

But *Postscript* isn't entirely about faffing, you know; it is also the official record of the Group's activities. For this reason, the Constitution requires that the minutes of all meetings of the F&GPC be printed. It may be the verbal equivalent of Brussels Sprouts, but at least in this case you can choose either to eat your greens – metaphorically speaking – or push them to the side of the plate, even though you know they're good for you. If you find yourself reading them for entertainment, then clearly you are a natural born OUSGGer. And perhaps, in that case, you ought to consider seeking professional help.

Alistair Green (St. Hugh's) – Editor

Chair's Report

In the time-warp that is Oxford, these Postscript deadlines always seem to sneak up on me... but I guess that time flying is a sign that all is going well, apart from getting locked in Youlbury! Activities this term so far have ranged from fireworks to fair trade wine tasting and dressing up in newspaper (very impressively, I must add, especially Sam's James Bond!) and the turnout has been excellent. Wine and chocolate was always guaranteed to bring people in, but the number of people there did amaze me! It's great to see so many new people getting involved and I hope we will get to know the freshers even better at either the Freshers' Camp next weekend or Winter Walking.

As always, there are people to thank: the good people of [faff] for potato cooking advice, Alison for help with planning the fair trade evening, Phil for moving us into the rather lovely SPC MCR when we would otherwise have had to share a room with LGBSoc, Mark for organising the bonfire for me, Keith and Alison for minibus driving... it doesn't look like I've done very much at all; no wonder I've enjoyed my term so far!

Good luck in avoiding 5th Week Blues! See you on Freshers' Camp or halfway up Brookes climbing wall next week,

Sarah Berman (Queen's) – Chair

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,

I write regarding your article “The OUSGG Alphabet” in *Postscript* 358. Under “Elections”, the author refers to “less candidates”. I feel that it is unjustified to reflect on the relative sizes of candidates in OUSGG and Florida elections. However, there are certainly *fewer* candidates in OUSGG elections, as anyone who has completed an Oxford undergraduate degree should be well aware.

Yours etc,

David Ball (Ex-Keble)

Dear Sir,

For the benefit of any freshers who, having read *Postscript* 358, are under the impression that the F&GPC is futile and generally pointless, I feel I should point out that it is really the Faff and General Pedantry Committee, and that far from deciding to do nothing, it regularly decides whether it is necessary to buy a new rope.

Yours etc,

David Ball (Ex-Keble)

Freshers' Camp

Freshers' Camp is next weekend and will involve a night under canvas, orienteering, amateur radio, air rifle shooting and a camp fire! If you've not already told me that you want to come, please do so now! And if not then why not?! The main aim is for it to be a weekend break from Oxford and a chance for freshers to get to know each other and the current members a bit better, so you certainly don't have to be a fresher to come, and equally don't worry if you don't yet know anyone particularly well – we're all very friendly!

We're leaving Oxford at 11am on Saturday and returning for 3pm on Sunday, but if you want to come just for a day then we can probably work something out.

All food is included and the cost will be something around £12-14 depending on numbers and transport.

See you there!

Sarah

[chair@ousgg.org.uk]

The Small Print

Minutes of the 131st meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, held on 17th June 2004 at the Royal Oak

Present:

Jacqui Bradley (Chair), Maddy Bunce (Treasurer), Philip Alderton (Secretary), Mark Hawkins (SSAGO Rep.), Alistair Green, Caroline Berry

The meeting was declared quorate and opened at 17:45.

Apologies:

Hayley Thompson, Michael Ramsden, Sarah Berman, Katherine Butler.

Minutes of last meeting and matters arising:

With the consent of the committee these are to be carried over to the next meeting.

Officers' Reports:

Chair - "Apples"

Chair-elect - The Secretary had received a report and read it into the minutes: "Bananas"

Treasurer - "Cranberries"

Secretary - *[being unable to think of a fruit beginning with "D", the Secretary began to drink his beer until he thought of one. The SSAGO Rep. said he was welcome to play "Think while you drink" by himself, but that he was wasting time. He still couldn't think of a fruit, so this is what he said at the time]:* "Dairylea" and "SNAFU".

SSAGO Rep. - "Gooseberry"

Insurance -

The situation is that we are paying the Scout Association £122.85 per year for contents and personal property insurance. We have been doing it for a long time. We pay £60 for our equipment, which is worked out based on what we hold, and around £70 for personal cover. This has been used in the past for contact lenses and glasses about three or four times over the last seven years. It covers up to 30 people for up to £200 (or is it £400?) each, with an excess of £15. The policy doesn't include "brittle" items. If we were to cancel, we must do so by letter but we would get a rebate for the unused portion of this year's fee. The Group does get three months' warning about not renewing the policy, but if addresses are not changed this gets lost. It has been unpaid in the past. As the Treasurer so eloquently put it, you think "oh s**t, it's insurance! We'd better pay".

For the contents insurance, the consensus of the committee was that we should continue to have it. The debate mainly centred on personal insurance. The Group have not been doing many trips of the adventurous nature which we did when the policy was taken out. For Winter Walking™ and other trips, Jacqui said she assumes stuff gets locked in. Mark noted that we haven't used a minibus for Winter Walking lately and stuff is normally in locked building. Philip said that people do take valuable items to Winter Walking™: Michael Ramsden even lost his camera at the 2001/02 event. Philip thought that most people have personal insurance for valuables. Mark said it might be worth telling members they need to insure their stuff. Caroline said that there is no point in having it if it's not known about. She didn't.

Jacqui asked about the use of personal tents on OUSGG events. Caroline said they should be covered by personal insurance. Philip said that if we were to cancel the personal insurance, we would have to see about getting our own tents for people to use.

There was a consensus that it was easy to get a policy if we needed one, and Mark noted that we could always take it out for individual trips. Moreover, as Caroline pointed out, the nature of the Group might change and the need for such insurance might arise again. Maddy said the insurance information was at the bottom of her file when she received it. It was said that information about the insurance scheme should be prominent, so future treasurers are aware of it.

Cutting out the personal policy would save us up to £70 a year. Philip asked that if we did this, would those who didn't want the current members' subscription rate to go up to £25 have a cause to complain? Maddy didn't think so. Caroline felt we needed to cut costs overall, and chairs needed to make more effort for events to be free. Jacqui noted that the use of minibuses was a major expense. Caroline mentioned rooms, but Mark pointed out that we only need to hire 22nd Oxford's hall occasionally. Jacqui felt that attendance has been falling over the year because of a continued need for members to pay for events. Philip noted that Trinity's turnout had been unusually high for the time of year, but others felt this bucked a general trend. Maddy said we needed money in the kitty so that we can charge less for some events. She would offer Hilary and Trinity chairs around £20-£30 - the Michaelmas Chair needs a larger budget. Her gut feeling is that the MT chair should not spend that much, but to virtually subsidise the bonfire. Mark said his bonfire had paid for itself. Regarding fees, Caroline said that cost of OUSGG per year would still be £25 plus events, which does seem like a huge increase - she would rather it was done in stages, but the decision had now been made so we should aim to keep to it. Jacqui said we should to aim to put money into the equipment fund, at least £100. Mark reminded the committee about the trip levy; Phil said the levy was hardly ever used. Jacqui suggested that from the £25 fee, we should put in £1/£2 into the equipment fund, perhaps to buy new tents. Mark reminded us about SSAGO's grant funds for items which benefit local Scouting or Guiding.

The meeting moved to motions:

Motion: "That we shall we cancel personal effects insurance, with immediate effect."

Votes for - 5. Motion carried. Action: Maddy to do so.

Jacqui asked for a piece of paper explaining the situation to be put into both the Treasurer's file and the trip folders. There was brief speculation about the current whereabouts of the latter. Philip asked Caroline to put a notice on the kit list reminding members to properly insure their personal belongings. The committee felt that it was important for the group to buy tents, as members' own tents are now no longer insured, but that we should raise some for this, hence the following:

Motion: "£2 per from the membership fee of current members be put into equipment fund." **The motion was carried unanimously.**

Any Other Business:

It was asked if the committee should set a budget for chairs. It was felt that this an issue to be settled between the Treasurer and the Chair-Elect.

The meeting closed at 18:23.

Winter Walking™

The premier event of the OUSGG calendar is set to take place over the Christmas vacation. This year it will be at Consall Camp Site in Staffordshire, which is located between Leek and Cheadle on the edge of the Peak District. The building has room for 34 people, a kitchen and even central heating!

The provisional dates are Wednesday 29th December until Tuesday 4th January, but these may still be subject to change.

Contact Mark Hawkins for details.

The Italian Faff (Part 2)

Alistair Green on “Fashion House OUSGG And Things That Smell”

They do things differently in Italy. Meat and vegetables are never served together; you drive on the right hand side of the road; taps are routinely foot-operated. So perhaps I should not have been quite as surprised as I was when I entered the gentlemen’s cloakroom at the Brek restaurant in Milan’s fashion district. The first thing I noticed as I walked through the door was a bra, proudly displayed in a glass case directly in front of me. The second thing I noticed was that the walls were covered with pornography.

And yet, even though the place had seemed fairly respectable up to that point, it was by no means the first surprise that I had had that day.

That morning we had gone to see two attractions recommended by the guide books: a ruined Roman amphitheatre and the canal. Although the amphitheatre was marked on the map, and very close to the youth hostel, it took us a certain amount of searching to locate it. As soon as we had found it, it was obvious why: all that was left was a hole in the ground, with a few stones lying about and the unmistakable aroma of dog pee. Plus it was entirely fenced off.

Once we had fully absorbed the sheer splendour of this great monument, we decided it was time to move on. Our guidebooks contained photos of an attractive, idyllic canal which looked ideal for a pleasant stroll, and was listed as one of the things to see. When we got there, we saw local artists selling paintings depicting the same scenic waterway. Unfortunately, these images bore no relation to what was actually there. Writing in the scrapbook that evening, Phil described it as “a static, plastic bag-laden cesspool, smelling even more strongly of human pee.”

Slightly further along the canal an antiques fair was being held, strategically placed upwind of the worst part so that the air was actually breathable, although the water still looked rather stagnant. At least the fair *was* as advertised in the guidebook, so we knew we had found the right place, and not gone to the sewage works by mistake.

Never before had I seen such a huge variety of tat

for sale in one small area, and I speak as one who has been to Blackpool on numerous occasions. After pottering around for half an hour or so, resisting the urge to buy an old typewriter or some rather dodgy-looking Nazi memorabilia, we headed to the nearest tram stop for a ride to the city’s fashion district.

Soon we were in one of the most stylish places in Europe. While Alison and I were content to window shop, Phil and Jonathan decided to attempt to plunder as many items as possible for our scrapbook, and also made it their mission to locate a tie in OUSGG colours. The first port of call was Gucci, which they left clutching the Women’s Collection catalogue. They reported having seen a red velvet jacket which would be perfect for Alison – a bargain at just €1250 (£890)!

After dropping in on all of the other big names in the fashion world, we passed a small but expensive-looking shop called *Kiton*. Jonathan wondered aloud if they might have any complimentary sweets in there, and so without further ado he and Phil headed in to investigate.

A few minutes later they emerged, looking conspiratorial and barely suppressing fits of laughter. Jonathan grinned and held out his hand, revealing four individually-wrapped mints which he had palmed while Phil distracted the assistant by examining a display of ties.

After lunch we foolishly decided to trust the guide book yet again, and acted on its recommendation to visit the Via Circo, where the ruins of part of an ancient chariot racing track are still preserved. As it turned out, all that was left was a pile of ancient bricks in a patch of fenced-off waste ground between two modern buildings. This didn’t stop Alison from insisting on taking some comedy “chariot racing” photos, even though the rather odd-looking pose caused some motorcyclists to point at us as they rode past.

A few hours later we returned to the youth hostel to find that Jo and Gareth had already arrived, along with Jo’s friend Peter, an ex-member of Scogui (Loughborough’s answer to OUSGG). Over dinner and ice cream, we made our plans for the second phase of the trip: two days of walking in the Alps.

To be continued...

A Bosnian Diary (Part 2)

Alison Parker concludes her account of charity work in the Balkans

1st July

This afternoon we met Vernes to go climbing on one of the crags that tower over Mostar. These crags seem such obvious climbing venues, but so many of the hills round Mostar are mined that you have to have local knowledge before leaving the road. We wound our way round the hairpin bends before walking a short way over a saddle to the crag. We tried some lines and eventually pushed one through to the summit. At the top we found packing for mortar shells and its easy to see why they were here – the stunning view over the city makes this an ideal location for someone who quite literally wanted to set their sights on Mostar.

2nd July

Today was the day we had been looking forward to – a day off, white water rafting on the Neretva. This surely has to be one of the most beautiful gorges in the world. The sides are at least 300m high and at times drop straight into the water only 5m from each other. Occasionally underground caverns pour their streams into the river and birds, fish and even snakes add the finishing touches.

On Tim Clancy's recommendation (via my Bradt guidebook) we finished the day by heading up the valley to the village of Dreznica. It felt like the further up the valley we went the further back in time we went in terms of farming practices and the way people stared at us for intruding into *their* valley.

3rd July

Today we had a mammoth journey to Zenica where we walked over the most amazing meadows – literally thousands of species of flowers and at every step crickets, bees, ants and wasps would spring away from your foot.

We then headed for Sarajevo – supposedly one of the finest sights in Bosnia. However, I found it to be a surprisingly plain town – much like any other European city, but without any particular attractions, say Barcelona without the Familia Grada or the art galleries or Brussels without the

Atomium. The old town has some pretty shops but isn't a patch on Mostar, whose old town is rightfully dominated by the striking arch of the Stari Most. The evidence for the war is a lot less obvious here. Vernon showed us a mortar round buried in the pavement but there seems to have been a lot more restoration here – more re-rendering and fewer “dangerous ruins”. Trams and trolley buses trundle the streets and carefully dressed Bosnians mingle with S-FOR soldiers and the occasional tourist.

5th July

We took Zaha to Fortica today who proved to be an interesting customer. Bosnians tend to do their own risk assessment rather than relying on “professionals” which explains their unwillingness to do activities like abseiling which they perceive to be dangerous. However, it can work the other way and persuading Zaha to submit to our authority regarding, for example helmets and descent routes was a bit of a mission.

9th July

Today we had 9 participants for rafting, so it was a bit of a manic session and trying to keep control of everyone when half of them just wanted to swim and the other half refused to wear helmets and buoyancy aids. My particular favourite was the kids who got into the middle of the lake, stripped off their helmets and buoyancy aids, dived off the raft and swam off.

10th July

This afternoon we went to Kravica, another Bosnian beauty spot, only this one the locals are aware of, so we arrived to a heaving resort with hardly a square inch spare. Here, the river spreads out into a braided system 100m wide before plunging 25m to the pool below. From the bottom you can't see the river so the water seems to put out of the vegetation.

13th July

Today was supposedly a rafting session but since it was still raining (in a more British style now) we decided that rafting was a silly idea and we wanted to join one of the outreach teams anyway. We went to Salacovac – a transit camp where families who left during the war and cannot return to their home stay until they can be

rehoused (up to 6 years).

16th July

I was also struck by what a secular city Mostar seems to be when you scratch the surface. There are two Catholic churches, an Orthodox chapel and the evangelical church (which we were associated with) and about 15 mosques who ring their bells and call to prayer in a very insistent and almost competitive way. But otherwise there are none of the hallmarks of a religiously observant culture – modest dress (I have seen less women in traditional dress here than I would in Cowley), observance of holy days (in terms of shops opening etc.) activities around religious buildings, attitudes to alcohol, etc. Certainly

few of the people I've talked to (other than evangelical Christians) rate their faith as important in their life. So why has a war been fought in the name of religion here?

17th July

After seeing off so many others it was our turn to depart so we got into Mekmed's kombi and left Mostar with sadness and gratitude for the insights and beauty it's shown us.

With thanks to Novimost International and to St Andrew's Church World Mission Group and St Anne's College Centenary Fund for financial support.

The World Scout Moot (Part 2)

Mark Hawkins *continues the saga*

Well, I said this was to be a serialisation, so I'd best write part 2 before Alistair's deadline of whenever it is...

After breakfast, on the day after the opening ceremony, it was time to meet up with the members of our international patrol whom we would be spending the next ten days with. This involved finding the correct bus out of about 50 or so. On each bus there were about 3 patrols. Having correctly located the bus along with Will and Kevin from the UK, it was just a case of waiting for it to fill up and to find our patrol members. This did not take long and soon I had met up with Johannes (from Germany), Kygumi (from Korea), Song aka Kevin (from Taiwan), Yung-Cheng aka Flora (from Taiwan), Brenda (from Mexico), Yu Yu aka Jenny (from Taiwan) and Jueng-de aka Jimmy (from Taiwan). The bus then left Linkou and we were on our way to Expedition Centre 2 in Tanin County, with Kevin taking photos of everyone on the bus and everyone swapping contact cards.

I should take a minute to explain that, for the first five days of the Moot, the camp was in five different locations or Expedition Centres, each with different activities etc.

It was not long before we arrived at the campsite where we were staying for the next few days. At the site we were met by welcome party consisting of some local scouts singing! It was then lunch

time before we set up camp, and an opportunity to chat to people from the other patrols.

Once we were all set up it we had the most bizarre activity of the whole Moot. We had fire training. This involved putting out a fire using a fire extinguisher, crawling through a smoke filled tunnel and getting drenched by a local fire appliance! Jeung-de informed me that (with the exception of getting drenched by a fire hose) every school child in Taiwan did the same training each year – a bit different to a UK fire drill! Later on in the evening we had opening ceremony number 2 with entertainment provided by local scouts. It was rather spectacular involving throwing fire round, people (being thrown round in a cheer-leader type way) and doing Tai-chi with swords!

The next morning we were off in the bus to go on a boat trip. International relations were furthered by numerous silly games which we decided to play on the boat as we went down the lake. Eventually we reached our destination, disembarked and climbed the hill to cross the lake on a rickety bridge. The bridge really was quite rickety – some of the planks weren't nailed down! The scenery was quite spectacular – including the massive spiders which were the size of your hand!

It was then back to the boats and the bus for lunch. Lunch turned out to be cakes – yes that's right folks just cakes! Let's just say that the lunch boxes on the Moot became a bit notorious, so I'll try not to rant about them too much.

Following lunch we were off to go jungle walking. I'd never walked in a jungle before and it was quite cool – well actually very humid but you know what I mean! The walk was not particularly hard so it was easy to chat to everyone as we walked along. At the end I was reminded that we had actually been in the jungle when Will came up at hit me on the ear – he'd just knocked a leech off it!

It was then back to site for 'free time activities'. These were traditional Chinese activities such as tea making, Diablo, Chinese writing etc. We did these every evening and I was very proud of learning to write my name in Chinese; however I proved utterly hopeless at Diablo or 'Chinese Yoyo' (as they liked to call it) – much to the amusement of Yung-Cheng.

In the evening some patrols put on some little sketches then DJ Cooki took to the decks – having decided that the Taiwanese attempt at mixing was not too good. I bet they wondered what these mad crazy English people were like especially when Kevin produced his infamous glowsticks!

The next day my bus was on the 'cultural' day. After a bit of a walk in the morning Sanches from Haiti joined us – for some reason it had taken him a while to fly across – so at lunch I practised my rather rusty French on him! He asked me all about Brownsea Island and was quite impressed that I had been there. We then had a bit of a tour of the ancient city before we could go shopping for souvenirs. Unfortunately the heavens decided to open so we all took shelter from the rain in the temple. Jueng-de, Yung-Cheng and Yu Yu showed me round the temple explaining all about the Taoist religion – it is really totally different to anything we are used to in the West. The unfortunate thing about the rain was that when we returned to camp several people's tents were flooded, so the site building turned into a refuge camp for them.

The rain, however, had eased by the time we actually returned to site so the evening's

entertainments could still go ahead. These consisted of sketches or songs from each country contingent. We opted for 'Rocking All Over The World' and 'The Time Warp' to perform – typically British?

Day three on the EC saw us visiting a home for the mentally disabled. After a tour of the facilities it turned out that we were to entertain the residents! This resulted in an impromptu game of 'dodge ball' being organised by François and yours truly leading a rendition of 'Singing In The Rain'. That turned out to be a bit of an omen – a bit like Travis playing 'Why does it always rain on me?' at Glastonbury the other year (I digress) – since it rained when we were having lunch.

We were eating lunch – a nice lunch with rice and chicken etc, with the old chopsticks – outside Icita Technology, waiting for a tour of the site. Our EC was technology themed so this was our technology activity. Unfortunately it was not particularly brilliant, the highlight being able to use the company's gym for a bit whilst we were waiting for our buses!

The site was well and truly flooded when we got back. The European tents seemed to be holding up all right, though – we're obviously stupid enough to camp in the rain!

Our final day on the EC saw us visiting a pottery museum before having a go at throwing some pots ourselves – with lots of rather random results. Watchara from Thailand, for example, ended up with a big lump of clay at the end. It was then a chance to look around the pottery shops before going back to site, for a final opportunity for me to try and perfect my Diablo technique before dinner. The evening saw a good party inside the hall – the field was too boggy by this point. The next day we would be heading to Dong Hwa University in Hualein to meet up with the rest of the Moot.

To be continued...



Bus Number 7 about to leave for Dong Hwa

I couldn't go to Youlbury, so I went to... St John's College Fireworks

Says Andrew "If-I-haven't-missed-the-deadline-and-Alistair-doesn't-decide-that-even-F&GPC-minutes-are-better-than-this-then-I'm-no-longer-a-fresher" Freer

St John's hosts one of the larger firework displays in Oxford, and the queue for tickets was stretching from the gardens out of the front gate. Buying tickets in advance is well recommended, as we sailed past most of the queue to join the crowd already around the main lawn.

Two rockets called the fanfare to announce the start of the fireworks, and capture the attention of those watching, but after this ostentatious start, it became apparent that M. Ilic, our head pyromancer for the evening, was going for that favourite pattern of starting with the small fireworks and building up. We had settled down, enjoying the radiant beauty and féérique stars, when we were brilliantly astounded as the team suddenly showed what they were made of. They picked up the case with the first of the larger ground-based fireworks, as the first pair of Catherine Wheels span into hypnotic beauty.

Now I've got that out of my system, I'll carry on:

At this point the chaplain left the crowd, presumably to go and check on the drinks for afterwards. Since she was wearing her cassock she did look a lot like a ghost wandering through the woods. When she got back, the fireworks began to get a bit funnier, but possibly more dangerous. First a pair of bangers shot out horizontally from their pot, causing the chaplain, most of those lighting the fireworks and some of the crowd to automatically leap into the air.

The bangers weren't the only ones to do this. Another tub-based firework seemed determined to take over most of the lawn. It was easy to see why it was a good idea to clear such a large area.

One of the most impressive, though, was the spark-shooter that aimed itself at a tree. Most people wondered if it would catch fire. Some of the more thoughtful wondered if it would be possible to coat another tree with something flammable next year, and burn off the leaves.

The big finale was a huge bucket, which seemed to contain a every one of your favourite fireworks, and lasted about five minutes, finishing off with another pair of rockets to round off.

All in all, the fireworks raised about £1800 for Oxfam, Save the Children, St Francis' Hospital, Katete, Shelter, Cancer Research UK and the Sir Michael Sobell House Hospice.

Lessons Learnt By A Pyromaniac

Michael Ramsden owns up to his mistakes...

- 1) When using Catherine Wheels, trees are not an ideal surface for them to be attached to.
- 2) Ensure Roman Candles are embedded well into the ground, especially if the ground is very soft or the firework is particularly tall.
- 3) Take care when burying the launch tubes in the ground so that they are as close to vertical as possible and that the maximum possible length of the rocket's stick will be covered.
- 4) Have a fire bucket very close to the area where fireworks are being lit.
- 5) If there is a prevailing wind, ensure the audience are not downwind.
- 6) The smell of gunpowder hangs to clothing for a long time.
- 7) Fully check the contents of the box to locate the fuse provided; it may not be obvious at first.

The Big Gig

Hayley Thompson on a concert with a difference

I think I may have found an alternative source of power for the country – teenage girls' (wait a minute) screams. I recently went to the Big Gig 2004. For those of you that don't know this is a concert hosted by Girl Guiding UK each year. It has previously been held at Wembley Arena and was the fastest selling concert there last year. This year, in the interests of fairness, it was moved to Manchester Evening News Arena. Well, I say fairness, I should say popularity. So when Natalie suggested a girlie weekend, but would we mind if she disappeared to the Big Gig in the evening, we said of course not. When we found out that she was going to the Big Gig, we hatched a plan to get tickets ourselves. I went with my Guides last year and they loved it but they felt that Kent to Manchester for a concert was too far. I'd go without them! Christina dutifully set off from Folkestone at the same time I left Headington, only for our trains to arrive together. Thanks Virgin! After a rather girlie day shopping, we were off to the Arena, watching James Nesbitt film on the way.

The demand for tickets this year was so great that Girl Guiding UK put on two performances in the biggest indoor arena in Europe. And filled it. Twice. Christina was dispatched to the gift shop, pausing on the way to advise the security men how to deal with marauding Guides, and returned bearing camp blanket badges. Natalie and her friend Laura, not totally convinced of our sanity at this point, disappeared to meet Natalie's Guides. Christina and I ascended to the gods to wait. We had to move shortly afterwards when two 10 year olds pointed out we were in the wrong seats. We had a fantastic view of the stage and of the crowds. Thirteen thousand

“...all had a desire to see how loudly the girls could scream. Anyone with even a passing idea about Guides knows this is a very, very silly idea.”

Guides has to be seen to be believed and two Guiders who shall remain nameless found it quite emotional. In our defence, we had been shopping ALL DAY. You probably know that I am a great people watcher and so I spent quite a long time, well, watching people. In our row of fifteen seats, there were eight people our age and older who'd come without their Guides. There were Guides with banners, obviously made in a patrol time before the concert. There were as many wider Guiders as younger ones and even some elusive Young Leaders and Rangers. The noise was deafening and that's before the show started. We'd looked curiously at the gadgets the Guides had spent their pocket money on and didn't really understand. When the lights went

down, the auditorium became a twinkling, sparkling place. The acts were publicised beforehand so between the four of us we had a rough idea of who we were seeing. As soon as the music started, 13,000 girls stood and started dancing, singing and enjoying themselves. The acts were varied, but loud, and all had a desire to see how loudly the girls could scream. Anyone with even a passing idea about Guides knows this is a very, very silly idea. Every time a performer waved to the crowd, 13,000 girls thought that wave was just for them. The childish part of me feels compelled to tell you that we also did a massive Mexican wave. OK, I admit, I've led a sheltered life.

In previous ramblings, I have been quite critical of the direction that Guiding is moving in and the image we now have. The publicity slides before the concert showed us how popular Guiding remains and the waiting lists in existence because there just aren't the leaders to open new units. If I was in any doubt about the movement before the concert, I was convinced by the sight of 13,000 girls with a common identity, enjoying themselves and having fun. Isn't that what it's all about?



19th – 21st November 2004

Don't forget to sign up! You wouldn't want Mark to have to go on his own, would you?

359 Is A Magic Number

Says Jonathan Harvey

As a matter of interest, I would like to point out that the number 359 has a particular resonance for Trekkies. I should make it clear that I have not watched Star Trek for many years now, without the aid of Trekkies Anonymous, but I do remember that a famous battle was fought between the Federation and the evil Borg (a scary, assimilating “collective”, with resonances of Communism) at “Wolf 359”, in which the Federation (that’s us, by the way) got their arses well and truly kicked.

I know this is of no value or interest to anyone, but as Alistair seems to have nothing else to put in “359” at the moment, I thought anything would be better than

F & GPC minutes. I used to have a particular affection for Star Trek. I loved its naïve optimism about the world. I loved the fact that all the “aliens” had to make do with half a pound of gelatine stuck on their forehead because the production team couldn’t afford anything more convincing. I loved its faintly frustrating lack of violence. In a TV and film culture in which almost all disputes are settled by killing everyone you don’t like with a big gun, the people in Star Trek often succeeded in negotiating their way out, or thinking their way out.

It was, of course, often, even mainly, sanctimonious, touchy-feely twaddle, and deeply improbable – in every really dangerous situation, on a ship containing 1000 people, almost the entire command crew, all the senior officers,

would “beam” down and find themselves in whatever passed for hot water on the given planet. If they’d all been killed, the ship would have been paralysed as the middle-managers, the only people left, fought it out between their committees for control.

But it was some kind of alternative to machodom – someone once pointed out that only in the 80s would you have had a shrink (“Ship’s Counsellor”) on the Bridge, right next to the Captain. And it was a view of the future that wouldn’t make you want to cut your wrists – no glassy-eyed Mel Gibson riding around in a rusty old banger, Tina Turner trying to shoot him with a crossbow. Not even a “mutant” Kevin Costner with gills trying to save the world with only a few 200-year-old copies of National Geographic.

No, the world of Star Trek is far too neat and clean a place in which to cut your wrists (another interesting thing about the original Star Trek - when someone got shot, they sort of glowed a bit, then, conveniently, disappeared, so there was no mess to clear up).

Some of you ordinary people might have lost the will to live by now, so I’d better stop. Suffice it to say that I grew out of watching Star Trek, I suppose because it was too naïve, too infuriatingly Utopian, too synthetically cheerful and lacking in guile to be true. The world just isn’t like that, but perhaps, though, these attributes, and this optimism, are not entirely without merit.

Live long and pros[no, I can’t, I just can’t...]

“I thought anything would be better than F&GPC minutes...”

Words of Wisdom

At the camp fire:

Caroline: “You’re making too much noise to be alive!”

Keith (to Alison): “You’ve been *sucking* Alistair’s stick?!”

At N’n’N:

Sam: “Is that a full kettle?”

Phil (in reply): “No, it’s a fish.”

Out and About With EriX

Jacqui Bradley presents us with a puzzle

Not content with sitting on a chest of drawers in Jericho, EriX decided he wanted to go on a little trip around Oxford. But can you work out where he had his photo taken? See issue 360 for the bigger picture!



100 Postscripts ago...

Way back in Trinity Term 1993, the cover story in *Postscript* 259 was a letter to the editor debating the thorny issue of membership fees, going over very much the same ground as the F&GPC minutes that you read a few pages ago (*didn't you?*). It seems some things never change.

Thankfully, however, the editor's disturbingly liberal use of the Mr Men as illustrations in *Postscript* is a tradition that has not been continued. Nor is the editorial simply "Sorry *Postscript* is late" in this day and age.

In other news, the SSAGO groups from Birmingham and Cambridge visited Oxford, where we promptly thrashed them both at Pooh Sticks and the picking-up-a-small-cardboard-box-with-your-teeth-game. The visitors were also taken on a hike around the city, but a certain Mark Dunn from Balliol found this rather disappointing as "at no point on the walk were there any pigs. As a founder member of OUPFA, the Oxford University Pig Fanciers' Association, I feel this was a serious omission. We did talk to some sheep, but it wasn't quite the same... they are not very good conversationalists."

Don't forget to send in your contributions for *Postscript* 360 by Friday of 7th Week (26th November)!