

South African Schools' Project

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LATEST SASP MINI-GAPPERS RELIVE THEIR EXPERIENCES

Emily Ng and Anna Lindsay, two Year 12 students, one from Abbots Bromley School, the other having recently left, have returned from their trip to South Africa in October. The two friends underwent what has become a tried and tested experience, organised by Tom and Saff Campbell, giving them the opportunity to witness for themselves the difficulties that so many youngsters face in South Africa, whilst also discovering the wonders of the Rainbow Nation.

Anna writes:

“What an amazing place. A year ago I would never have guessed that I would actually be there, and not only that but...making a difference... making a difference to people who before the South African School's Project would have had very slim chances of a positive future.



Anna and Emily, with some of their new friends at Uitvlucht.

But now because of this amazing charity, the children have a fully functioning school, complete with paper, books, pens, pencil, paints, chalkboards, playgrounds, computers, a hot meal every day and most importantly a fantastic education. And with three phenomenal teachers behind each and every student the result is... well let's just say I wanted to pack up my stuff, leave my Sixth Form College at home and join this amazing place until the end of my education.

When someone asks, “So what was your favourite part?” I am simply unable to answer. I can't put a label on my favourite part because I am simply unable to put into words how amazing this trip has been. The word amazing does not even give it credit, seriously. After coming from a place where we are used to having everything handed to us on a plate, food, water, education, family, technology, toys it was a serious wake up call when I saw how little these children had. And yet somehow, they managed to arrive at school every single day with a huge smile on their face and open arms. Embracing the world with everything they had, appreciating something as simple as a newly sharpened pencil.”



Emily (whose home is Hong Kong) says: “I learnt and experienced so much in this project, which was something that I have never done before and I will never forget. Two weeks of time was short but amazing. I would say the best and most memorable part of the whole trip was teaching at the farm school. I still remember the children's sweet smiles and hugs. Their happiness passed to me straight away and reminded me how simple is love and how happy and how lucky I am to be educated. This experience will have a big influence on me and will encourage me to pursue my own dream.”

MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS GET WRAPPING

For the last five years the staff and children of Norbury Primary School in Derbyshire have sent Christmas presents to the pupils at Uitvlucht Primary School. When the school was unable to continue with this tradition two families from Cheadle, in Staffordshire, decided that they wanted to help. Julie and Natasha Johnson, and Louise and Nicola Croft, together with family and friends, have got together to ensure that the children of Uitvlucht will receive at least one present this Christmas.



It's a wrap! The Johnsons and the Crofts begin their work.

LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION!

Imagine the excitement when a film crew swept into the grounds of Uitvlucht School. Led by one of South Africa's eminent film makers, Regardt van den Bergh, the crew began their filming of a movie based on the experiences of the staff and children at the school. Clara, Reg's wife, who for a number of years was a very popular teacher at Uitvlucht, stars in the film. Once complete the film will receive its premiere in Cape Town next year.



AND FINALLY.....

Ms Elizabeth Godwin, who teaches English at Abbots Bromley School, and who accompanied this year's mini-gappers has committed her thoughts to paper.

As we flew out of Heathrow, a surge of excitement and pleasure overtook me at the prospect of new meetings, new people, different lives. Conscious of the aircraft lumbering into the air, I looked unseeing out of the window at the grey fields and spindly trees of England in the autumn and tried to imagine the arid South African landscape.

This was to be a momentous journey for me; returning after a long absence to the country where I had been born; a country my parents had loved, and lived in, for many years: going back to a country and a past, where in every likelihood, things would be done differently.

Heat and light, bright as polished silver, struck me as I stepped off the plane at Port Elizabeth. Blinking and trying to realign my senses, I tried to make sure that travel weariness did not prevent me from attending to every moment. Tom scooped us up and we sped off to Jeffery's Bay to acclimatise and rest.

The sights, sounds and smells of our journey will stay with me for the rest of my life: truth to tell I am still trying to understand the experience. Africa is a place of beautiful extremes. The Zuurveldt and its seemingly barren landscapes, suddenly populated with gazelle and punctuated by a slices of green where water had found its way - a stand of trees, a lonely field - red sand and lunar hills and a vast sky. Cape Town with Edenic gardens and butterflies so profuse they seem to make up the very air you breathed.

Distances can be deceptive in Africa, but where there are people there is life; and warmth, resilience, open affection, and dancing: I shall not forget the dancing: in the Farm School and on the ferry returning from Robben Island: a joyfulness that spilt over and spoke of sunlight, sand, water, heat, shade, fruit, nightfall, starlight and hope.

**Wishing a Merry Christmas and a joyous New Year to all our supporters
old and new.**