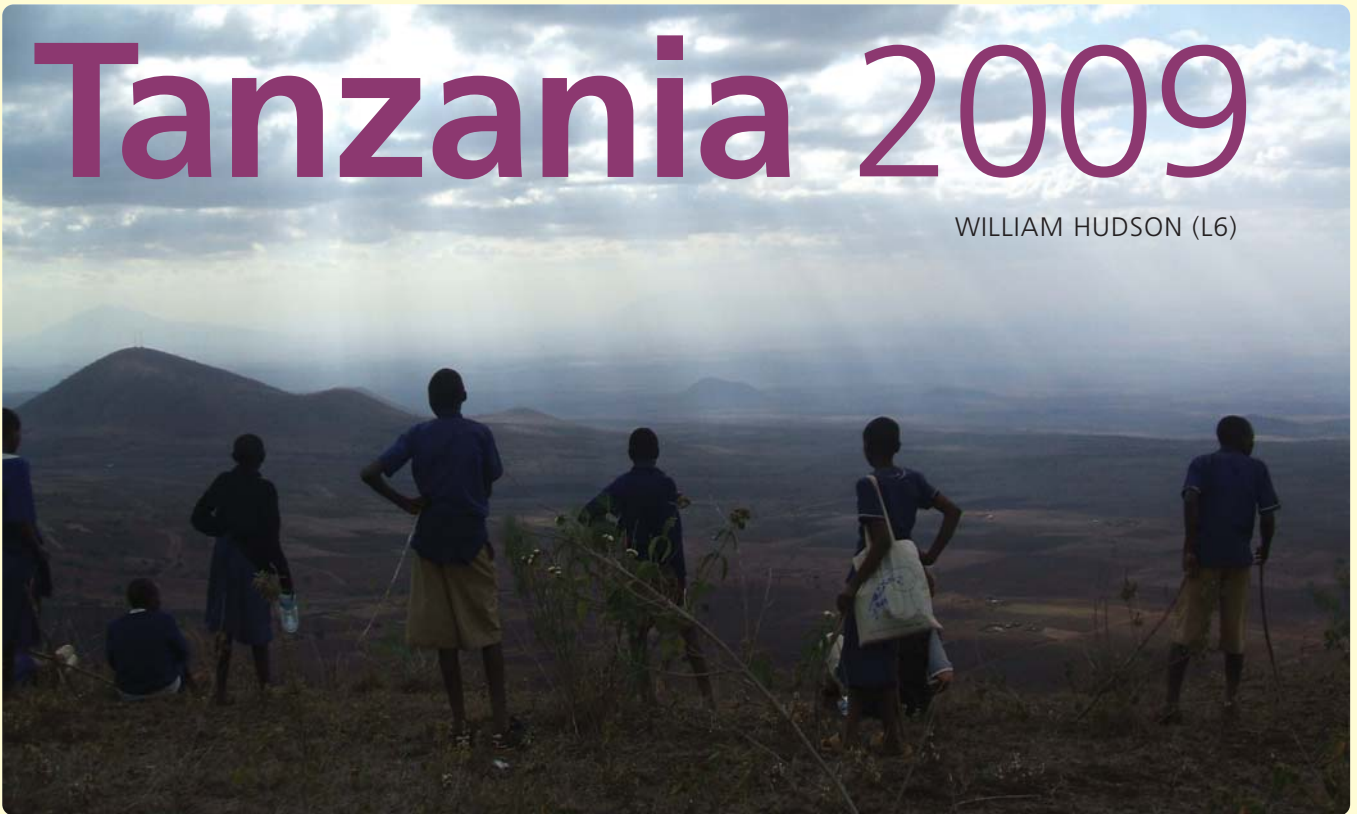


Tanzania 2009

WILLIAM HUDSON (L6)



We arrived at Kilimanjaro International airport with a sense of trepidation as, despite having seen pictures from previous years, none of us really knew what to expect. Once we were through immigration we made our way to the Masai Camp in Arusha...

It was raining for apparently the second time in three years and most of the crops had failed due to the droughts and there were many derelict and unfinished buildings amidst the vast open spaces.

On the third day we left for Lerang'wa. The excitement in the bus was indescribable as we left Arusha and made our way out into the sweeping wilderness towards the school. Villages gradually became fewer and farther between, yet even when we were over an hour away from the school, children would run alongside the bus screaming and waving with happiness. When the main concrete road stopped and became a mere dirt track it was a sign to us all of how remote this school was. The landscape was completely dry and the soil had turned to red dust due to the lack of moisture. Nearly three hours after leaving the middle of Arusha we were finally at our destination and as we turned the next bend the image was truly incredible.

Amongst a small collection of buildings surrounded by absolutely nothing, we saw

a flock of children dressed in blue, launch themselves across from one side of the school to another. By now most of the girls were crying as we heard these children screaming and cheering. We entered the school to a song and some of the children clapping on either side of the bus. We sat at desks while the local Masai performed a traditional dance and ritual. We then performed our song – 'The World's Greatest' - which we had been practising tirelessly for a lot of the journey there. We then presented the banner to their Headmistress, Mary. It was kindly made by the Textiles Club assisted by Georgia Mills, as a symbol of Caterham's link with Lerang'wa. Lucy

Josh Higginson presents a school bag to pupils in standard 4



Hannah Wright (Head Girl) and Alex Hinkson (Head Boy) presenting sports kit to Emmanuel Saiko (Head Boy) and Neema Longida (Head Girl)





Preparing to hand out school bags

“By now most of the girls were crying as we heard these children screaming and cheering.”

and Katy then came out wearing their shukas – Masai clothing! After our welcome lunch the kids surrounded us, playing with our hair, clothes, bracelets-anything they could get hold of- before most of us ended up playing football with them and being covered in red dust.

Each morning the children parade before school, singing the Tanzanian National Anthem and presenting the stick they have picked up on the way to school in order to fuel the fire to cook lunch. It was humbling to see the effort these children make to get to school as some of them live many miles away, and some so far away that they only attend school a few days a week.

We taught between two and four lessons each day and taught them Maths, English, Science, Art, Music and Geography. Lessons included painting with straws, a volcanic eruption using coke and mints, playing bongo drums and the guitar as well as other enjoyable games. To be honest I don't actually think they understand the concept of much that we tried to teach them, however the fun they have and the look on their faces is the most rewarding thing. They derive so much enjoyment from us simply being there and spending time with them and it truly is the highlight of their year. The fact we were only there for one week meant that we were constantly entertained. We played duck, duck, goose Swahili style, umpteen games of football (unfortunately we lost the official Caterham vs.

Lerang'wa annual match 3-1) and netball. We also danced a traditional dance that the girls were taught that involved them dancing with a partner and shaking their hips and bums, resulting in a roar of laughter from the kids most of the time.

Our daily excursions in the afternoon provided many an entertaining moment, from Hannah Spence asking if there was a kangaroo in the distance, to the repulsed look on the children's faces as we tried to shake hands with them with our sweaty hands that weren't used to the heat! They weren't impressed and promptly either put a jumper between both hands or just stood clear of us!

A trip to a local Masai village was one of the major highlights of the trip as it was literally like something out of a documentary. We were right down in the heart of traditional African life, surrounded by huts and a village of people. We had a tour of a Masai hut from a Masai man called Richard, who had a mere three wives, and we got to meet one of them with his supposed one day old baby. However, we think he might have meant one

week or month as it was pretty big for a one-day-old baby.

Aside from teaching and entertaining the kids we also used our time at Lerang'wa to check up on previous projects funded by Caterham, as well as the current ongoing ones. I am pleased to report that the kitchen and new toilet block facilities are very nearly complete and will provide a far more sanitary and pleasant environment for the children to be in. Moreover, the solar panels and new teachers' accommodation block are all still in working order and are enabling Mary to work longer in the evenings due to the electricity provided, which is a great benefit to her.

One of our gifts to the school from the money raised from everyone at Caterham

The Textiles Club banner is presented to The Headmistress





Standard 7 receive their school bag gifts

was a new school bag containing a bowl and cup, an exercise book and a pencil. We managed to fill 550 bags in no time at all the night before which was extremely hectic, yet at the same time really enjoyable. We distributed the bags the next day and it was like seeing the look on a child's face during their first Christmas when they received their gifts. They all wrote their names on the front and walked around with them so proudly at break time, being very protective of them if anyone else should try and see what was in their bag! Mary told us that the attendance rate on that day was just over 90%, the highest they have ever had, which I think we were all really flattered by as it showed how much they all wanted to be there to appreciate what we were doing for them.

The mood was subdued when our last day at Lerang'wa dawned, but we were determined to spend as much time as possible with them all. We played 'hapana, hapana, ndiyo' (the Swahili duck, duck, goose but no, no, yes). The kids are so happy and gracious and live life to the full and it is such

an inspiration. We had a final sending off ceremony at the front of the school in which they sang a farewell song that included our names one by one being mentioned. We sang 'The World's Greatest' again and having gradually taught bits of it to them over the week, they joined in and were crying, which in turn set off most of us. Some children gave gifts of necklaces and bracelets to those they had made a strong friendship with over the week, which was a poignant gesture as they have so little in life compared to us, yet are probably a lot more generous. It was a sad day, all things considered, and I can now see why people from previous years say that they are desperate to go back. The final

day reinforces how much they enjoy our company and the tears, especially from the older ones, really shocked us.

We arrived back in Arusha with an afternoon to recuperate before our ascent of Mt. Meru. I think many of us were excited about this challenge ahead but some were less enthused! It turned out to be an enormous task, by far the hardest thing I have ever done in my life. Everybody

made it up to at least Saddle Hut (3570m), the last stop before the summit, which in itself is a great achievement, especially when a couple of members of the team were suffering from bronchitis and tonsillitis. Most of us then ascended Mini Meru, which offered spectacular views of Kilimanjaro in the distance and of the summit that we were to face later in the night. Unfortunately, only twelve out of twenty attempted the summit, owing to altitude sickness and other ailments.

We left at 11.30pm having had only a couple of hours sleep and it was absolutely exhausting. The ascent became gradually steeper and harder to handle, with rocks slipping away effortlessly under our feet. We had to scale rock faces with sheer drops (we found this out upon returning in the daylight) as well as contend with huge cross-winds and freezing cold conditions. Nevertheless, nearly seven long, cold, hours later we arrived first at Socialist Peak (4566m) and the view was simply breathtaking. The sun was beginning to rise and Kilimanjaro was in the distance, poking up from above the clouds which looked like a field of cotton wool beneath us. The feeling of despair dissipated instantly as we got to the top and were greeted by this phenomenal spectacle. After tears of jubilation and countless photos, we made

Post football match line up



our way back down as it was too cold to stay up there for any great length of time. Upon arrival back at Saddle Hut three hours later, we walked back into our room and were greeted by cheers and greetings from the rest of the team who were all gutted that they couldn't do it, and just when we thought we might be able to sleep we had to leave to go back down to the camp we spent the first night at.

The scenery of the jungle canopy as we descended was just like something out of 'The Jungle Book', with lush foliage and trees covered in moss surrounded by the misty clouds. Towards the bottom of the mountain we walked through areas with giraffe a stones throw away which was really surreal. We were all exhausted and very glad to finally get to the bottom and now we had two days of Safari to look forward to.

Our campsite seemed like the Ritz in comparison to what we had experienced up the mountain, which was a welcome change. We visited Lake Manyara National Park on our first day, seeing an array of wildlife including many baby elephants and their mums, wallowing hippos, thousands of monkeys, literally, and the open savannahs of zebra, wildebeest and giraffe. Our second day took us to the Ngorongoro Crater, which was a sight to behold. It is absolutely enormous and the view we had from the road up above it was incredible. We drove around and saw the usual wildebeest and zebra, but we also saw lions, which are not always guaranteed to be seen, as well



Traditional Shuka Dresses

as a rhino which is virtually never seen, so we felt extremely fortunate.

On reflection, I think I can speak on behalf of everyone and say it was the best three weeks of our lives. New friendships were made, old friendships rekindled and so much fun was had by absolutely everyone. On behalf of everyone I would like to thank the teachers, Miss Thomas, Miss Dixon, Mr Taylor, Mr Grimshaw and Mr Wilkinson, for all of the hard work and organisation required for this trip to run smoothly. Also, congratulations to Mr Wilkinson on the birth of his

daughter, which was why he couldn't come on the trip but I'm sure he was there in spirit. Finally, the biggest thank you goes to the parents and students for your kind generosity over the past three years and for helping to fund the projects that have been occurring. Your money really does make a difference to all of the kids at Lerang'wa.

View of the Ash cone from the top of Little Meru



An Art lesson in progress

