

Blandford 1 2005 Pathfinder Venture

I have just returned from my third Pathfinder Venture, held in Blandford, Dorset. Some three and half years ago when Alison, Mark and the family had just joined BPC, Alison invited me out to lunch. She said she had a proposition for me! I guess I was a little nervous as to what I was going to be asked to do. "How would you fancy coming to Camp with us next year" was the question, "you can bring your girls along, Charlotte may like to be a young leader" I guess I was a bit hesitant initially. Anyway Alison gave me some insight as to what happened at Camp and what would be expected of me and invited Charlotte and me along to the first planning meeting held early in February 2003.

The team of people, none of whom I had never met before, were very friendly, encouraging and extremely welcoming, they immediately made Charlotte and me feel at ease. They were a group of people Alison and Mark had pulled together over the years from various churches. We came away from the first meeting feeling that yes, we would like to be part of this team, although we were both nervous to say the least.

So here we are having just returned, feeling tired and exhausted but also feeling extremely uplifted! The Holy Spirit does work in mysterious ways! There were 58 Pathfinders this year, equal numbers of boys and girls between the ages of 11 - 15; the leaders' team consisted of 16 leaders, 4 musicians, 4 cooks, Grace age 8 and Ella age 3!

Our day started at 7.30pm with a Leaders' Team Meeting, Breakfast at 8.30am, then Squad Duties at 9.00am (washing up, hovering, cleaning the loos! etc). Squads worked as a team and gained points (points mean prizes!) so at the end of the week, the squad with the most points got their reward. At 9.45am morning activities took place: there was a choice of Football, Tennis, Table Tennis, Chess, Cookery, Music, Drama and Crafts. Morning break at 11.00am, drinks and cake (no wonder I put on 3lbs) followed by Forum sessions, which covered, Sciences, Media and Self-Esteem, Money Matters, Health, Worship, Relationships and the Occult. The kids really played a very active role in these workshops and lots of interesting questions arose.

Lunch followed at 12.30pm; the food was excellent, for me it so nice to have every meal cooked by someone else and not to have to do the shopping! Squad duties happened again after lunch, followed by an afternoon activity, such as; swimming, giant water slide, village walk which included a murder mystery, (leaders all have a part to play, and they all seem to enjoy the dressing up). Supper followed at 6.00pm, with the Young Leaders, doing an extremely amusing supper show; this year the theme was Star Wars.

As you can see, we all had pretty action packed days; we even managed to squeeze in a day at a Theme Park, Ten Pin Bowling, an outing to Moors Valley Country Park, and on the last day, Hunt the Leader, where all the leaders put on fancy dress outfits and walk round in Blandford, while the Pathfinders have to try to find us! Mark was Action Man this year and Alison was a very pink Barbie! All of these outings require tight organisation, getting the children on and off coaches, ferrying them into town (luckily we didn't manage to lose any of them this year!) A Risk Assessment has to be done for every activity we do!

The slightly more serious stuff happens in the evening meetings after the supper show. Every year we have a different theme; this year it was 'Location, Location'. In the past we