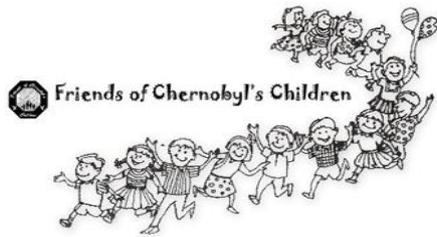


# FOCC Edinburgh West – Autumn Group



## Daily Blog for the group visit ~ 13<sup>th</sup> October to 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2010

### Day 14: Tue 26<sup>th</sup> October ~ Country Dancing, Manicures & Golf

Drop off at the Broxburn Scout hut today. After lessons the children enjoyed their Scottish Country Dancing followed by lunch, with a fantastic soup provided by Fiona Anthoney (Kristina's Mum). Not a drop was spared.

In the afternoon the boys and girls were split, with the girls loving their manicures and hair braiding, and the boys having a fantastic afternoon of golf.

**Stars of the day:** Olga, Benji & Lyn (slight misprint with her age ... apparently she's not a day over 32) for a fantastic article in the Bo'ness Journal.



### Day 15: Wed 27<sup>th</sup> October ~ Deep Sea World

Early morning lessons followed by a minibus ride to **Deep Sea World**. The children loved it and had a brilliant day



out. The staff were all fantastic and showed us around the rock pools, allowed us to meet some animals that shed their skins (stick insects, bearded dragon, and a corn snake), introduced us to Charlie the clown fish (the children were absolutely enchanted), & played a game of "Simon



Says" with us. Other highlights were the sharks (we told them that Tinkerbell, the largest shark in the aquarium, had only eaten 3 people so far), the seals, and petting the dogfish.



**Fun Stuff:** Last night 12 of the children, Inna and some of the host parents were at the award winning **Karma**



**Restaurant** in Whitburn. The children and adults all had a ball. We had 3 courses and as much juice as we could drink. We had a mixture of starters and a mixture of main courses all to different tastes so that the children could try what they liked. They loved it and I was surprised at how much they ate and the variety of what they ate. Just when you thought they couldn't eat any more, desert arrived ... chocolate profiteroles! There were a few plates getting licked clean, which was so funny to see.

The owner, Robert was great and really enjoyed having the children there. He has already invited us back next year!

**Star of the day:** Denis for extreme courage in the face of a vicious thorny stick insect and later in tackling a 4ft constricting corn snake.



### **Day 16: Thu 28<sup>th</sup> October ~ Swimming & Olwyn Keogh Visist & Tumblezone (Part II)**

Early morning lessons then off to swimming which was great fun once again.

After returning to the hall, we were joined by Olwyn Keogh the charity founder and director. Olwyn was fantastically impressed with all that we have done to get this visit organised and took time to chat with everyone before taking the children into the big hall for some games and enthusiastic singing! The children were thrilled to meet the architect of their new experiences and all sang and danced their hearts out! Olwyn then had to retire with Heidi and Katia to discuss further charity business and was given a rousing send off by all the children.



We then took the minibus for our second visit to **Tumblezone**, where

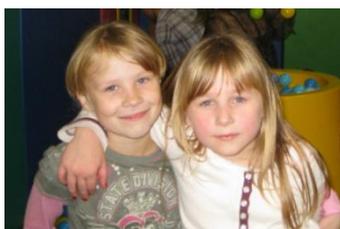


once again the children had a fantastic time. The staff were absolutely terrific and provided lunch and drinks for all.



Upon returning to the hall, lessons were resumed, before breaking early to have a wee party for Vadeem to celebrate his 9<sup>th</sup> birthday with a fabulous cake with candles, balloons, sweets and pressies too!

**Fun Stuff:** Watching Masha Grant taking pictures at Tumblezone, then trying to rush back to the adults to show them what she had done before the pictured disappeared from the camera screen. Eventually she dragged Kostya (the subject of her pictures) next to the adults so that she could take his picture and show us without running have the length of the venue!



**Stars of the day:** Kristina for being so brave about her root canal dentistry. Vadeem for reaching the grand old age of 9. Masha Grant for giving Florence Cotton her balloon when she burst her own, and Sasha for her beautiful solo song for Olwyn. Andrei for winning the Tumblezone time trial assault course.



**Day 17: Fri 29<sup>th</sup> October ~ Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway, Lessons & Games**



After morning lessons, we took the minibus to **Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway** where we were warmly welcomed by Amanda, James and all the staff who were fantastic. We were showered with gifts (thanks especially for the whistles!), allowed to sit in the driving seat, and given the huge responsibility of clearing the platform and waving the train off as we all travelled to see the Fire Clay Mine. At our destination we all disembarked to see the engine being moved to the front of the train and took a walk down into the Avon gorge to see the Fire Clay Mine entrance. With

a picnic lunch on the train on the way back to Bo'ness our visit was completed with fond farewells to all, and an invitation to visit again on the children's next visit. Amanda is writing an article for the Scottish Railway Preservation Society magazine, and we all hope to be seeing and hearing more from her in the future!

We were also met in Bo'ness by Scott from the Herald & Post where we had a brief interview and photo-shoot – the article is to be published on Fri 5<sup>th</sup> Nov.



Returned to the Church Hall for more lessons in the afternoon followed by a very hotly contested sports competition between the boys and the girls. Naturally the boys won, but it was a close run thing with the final result being 3 games to 2.

**Fun Stuff:** Watching Natasha doing the crab during the sports competition – great speed but absolutely no control in terms of direction!

**Stars of the day:** This week's best behaved children (as voted by the children themselves) were Vlad, Denis, Kristina & Olga, and an extra special star for Denis who did a fantastic job (with big smiles) of waving the train out of the station.

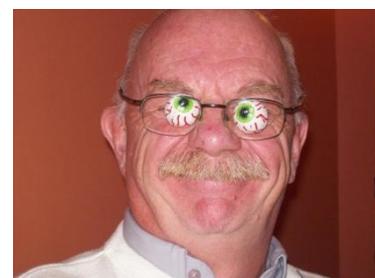


**Day 18 & 19: Weekend**

Halloween, a very strange concept to our children, was enthusiastically embraced! Can you identify the children?



... and finally, concerns were raised over the pre-visit family interviews. Who on earth cleared the Bishop & Pattison families?



## Day 20: Mon 1<sup>st</sup> November ~ West Calder Woodland



We were treated to a great day out at a clearing in a very peaceful and remote part of Selm Wood near Kirknewton by the men and women of the **Forestry Commission**.

We played games of owl hide and seek and the bat and the moth. Then we were shown how to light a barbeque without matches or lighter. The kids loved stoking the fire with twigs once it was lit.

The ladies showed the children how to make forest postcards using leaves and ferns and the kids came up with some lovely designs. Next was hats made of ferns and of course the biggest fern hat was made by the smallest boy. Vlad who looked like son of Rambo. The men were in great demand for making whistles out of twigs -mainly for the boys. Sorry hosts - another noisy whistle to hide :-)



We had jumbo sausages on the barbeque courtesy of our friends from Halls and they were very well cooked by Bob, Nat and Katia using tongs carved from twigs in front of our eyes by our skillful forestry friends.

Then the kids all sharpened their own special twig with a potato peeler to attach a marshmallow for toasting. Once it was melted it was sandwiched between two chocolate digestives and they tasted fantastic. Mmmm.

The children also made a necklace with a cross section of a small log at the end like a wooden medal. Most of them coloured their name in Russian on one side and their name in English on the other.



To finish off they were all given a pack of top trumps all about types of trees.

The kids loved it. Who would have thought you could have so much fun in the forest.

**Stars of the day:** Denis for his very artistic forest postcard. The forestry guys for their woodcraft skills and patience in the face of high demand from the boys for whistles. And of course Vlad son of Rambo for his huge fern hat.



## Day 21: Tue 2nd November ~ Balerno Bowling Club Burns Experience



Lessons in the morning, then we took the minibus to **Balerno Bowling Club** where the children were treated to a fantastic lunch (Soup, Haggis Tatties & Neeps, Ice-cream & Jelly) followed by a presentation about Robert Burns accompanied by a few songs and stories. The children then sang a traditional Belarussian song and danced the Gay Gordons. They were then presented with a book on



Robert Burns, and given some home-made tablet which was devoured before returning back to the church hall.

**Fun Stuff:** A mixed reaction to haggis, and initial (but very brief) fear of men wearing kilts!

**Stars of the day:** Nikita who had a large molar tooth extracted at the dentist. Angelina & Sasha for tidying up after snacks. Kristina for eating absolutely all of her lunch (including extra ice-cream).



### **Day 22: Wed 3rd November ~ Lessons & Bowling (Deer Park)**

Morning lessons followed by soup and sandwiches and a minibus ride to **Deer Park Ten Pin Bowling** in Livingston.



The children had a ball, and scored way better than any of the adults!

**Fun Stuff:** The joy that a Whoopie Cushion can bring! Watching Vlad's huge jump for joy after he got his first strike.

**Stars of the day:** Andrei for the highest individual score at the Ten Pin Bowling. Denis for selecting and leading the winning team.



### **Day 23: Thu 4th November ~ Scotmid Smoothiebike & The Concert**

Clare Rajan from Scotmid came along with the smoothiebike and, having chosen the fruit to go into the smoothie (and given Clare a lesson in Russian!) the kids had to pedal their socks off to make a smoothie drink – yum! Pasha led the way with a burst of energy.... even Inna took a turn!



**Scotmid** have also further supported us with a very generous gift and in providing the water bottles that the children will use when travelling home.

The rest of the day was taken up with final concert preparation, with the children getting away early ahead of the evening's big concert.



The concert was a huge success with people from host families through to the many people who have supported us in so many ways. After a warm welcome from Heidi, a lovely talk by Katia about what this visit means to our children, and a presentation of flowers to Heidi (our Coordinator and driving force behind the establishment of this group), the children sang and danced their hearts out and thanked everyone for all that they have done. The concert ended with a lovely version of Auld Lang Syne, and Coffee, Tea and lots of cakes were available for all afterwards.



**Fun Stuff:** Didn't our little princesses look fabulous in their concert dresses?

**Stars of the day:** Sasha for her fantastic solo song. Masha Grant and Pasha for presenting the flowers to Heidi. Katia & Inna for preparing such a fantastic concert.



#### **Day 24: Fri 5th November ~ Mary Erskine & Stewart's Melville Junior School**

Early start for the children today with a minibus trip to **Mary Erskine & Stewarts Melville Junior School** where we had a marvellous day as guests of the school. The children were quickly split up and embedded into different classes where they took part in normal school activities. Computer work, arts & crafts (with some fabulous elephant candle holders being created), singing and classroom discussions. We all had a lovely lunch (fish and chips for most of us) before spending lots of time with all of Primary 3 in the playground. Before going home the children were presented with some fantastic gifts, all beautifully wrapped up, and gave a mini concert to the whole year to say thank you for their generosity, hospitality and kindness.

**Fun Stuff:** Watching all of the children becoming friends so quickly and answering some of the brilliant questions that the pupils raised. Finding out what really goes on in the Staff Room, and I assure you it is sinful on Fridays (in a calorific way).

**Stars of the day:** Sasha once again for her solo song at the mini concert. All of the staff and pupils for a wonderful day. And our weekly prize winners, as voted by the children themselves, were Pasha & Natasha for good behaviour.

**Day 25/26: Weekend**

The last weekend, and after the fireworks, a final chance to get the last essentials and some wee treats for the children to take back to Belarus.

**Day 27: Mon 8th November ~ Swimming & Ten Pin Bowling at Deer Park (Part II)**



Final day with all the children at the Church Hall. Swimming at Broxburn pool was followed by a return to Ten Pin Bowling at Deer Park, where we had lunch and another couple of hotly contested ten pin competitions.

Upon returning to the Church Hall we had a wee party to mark Angelina's 8<sup>th</sup> Birthday.



**Day 28: Tue 9th November – Going Home**

The last day for the children in Scotland. With heavy hearts they are delivered to Edinburgh Airport for their flight to Gatwick (accompanied by Heidi, Shirley and Ian), where they had an overnight sleep before returning safely home to Belarus on the Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> November.

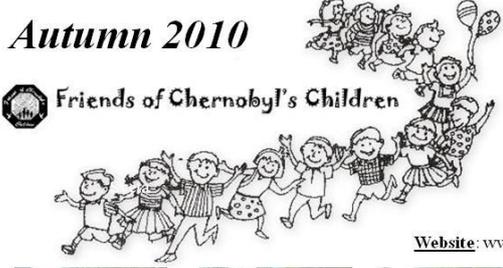
The children before arriving in Scotland ...



Olga      Sasha      Kristina      Angelina      Nikita      Pasha



Inna



Katia

Website: [www.focc-edinburghwest.org](http://www.focc-edinburghwest.org)



Masha



Masha



Kostya



Vadem



Andrei



Denis



Natasha



Vlad

The children after a month of love and care ...



Olga      Sasha      Kristina      Angelina      Nikita      Pasha



Inna



Website: [www.focc-edinburghwest.org](http://www.focc-edinburghwest.org)



Katia



Masha



Masha



Kostya



Vadem



Andrei



Denis



Natasha



Vlad