

Vine Trust Work Party — Peru
Dave Mockett
August 2008





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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Following the success of our previous work party with the Vine Trust in 2006, five students volunteered for a work party to Peru during July 2008. Fiona Deans, Verity Hurding, Tamara Inglis and Sarah Stewart from Lochalsh were joined by Scot Wilson from Fife, who had just finished his first year at Newcastle University having spent two years at the School of Traditional Scottish Music in Plockton. Scot, Verity and Tamara had joined a COOL sailing holiday in the Gulf of Latvia in 2007.



We were to join a larger team from across Scotland and the UK made up of people from across the age ranges. Our contingent were the youngest on the work party and I had some concern that the work we would be undertaking in Peru would be too much for some of the girls. However, all were very excited about going and had been fully briefed from the previous work party. (Fiona's brother, Dougal, was a member of the original work team.) The costs had increased since 2006 and each team member was required to raise a total of £1525. It should be recorded that the Vine Trust subsequently had further charges from KLM due to increased fuel prices during 2008 and so were running over budget, however this increase was not passed on to team members. It also became necessary for COOL to offer some support to allow all our students to commit to the project. Excess funds from 2006 which I had raised were used to underwrite one of the students. By the deadline in April for making the final payment to the Vine Trust, not all of the necessary funds had been raised, but we were kindly given a gift of £400 from the Kyle & Plockton Free Church pending a sponsored event which I was to take part in with them. Two coffee mornings were also held in Glenelg Village Hall and all the money was recuperated before we left.

Our previous visit was a three week excursion which included five day's tourism following the work party. This was not possible this year as I was unable to find a suitable female leader



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to accompany me. However, our work sites has also changed so we were able to visit Machu Picchu within the work party itself, a trip which I highly recommend to team members although they were required to fund the extra £100 from their own pockets.

WEEK 1: KUSI, NORTH OF LIMA



Our first week was a return to Kusi near Yungay, the village that SU Peru are building below Huascaran, Peru's highest mountain. We started with a nine hour bus journey from Lima to Yungay which coincided

with Tamara's 18th birthday. She enjoyed some fun on the bus with the other girls who had brought balloons and we were really touched when, in the evening, the staff at Kusi appeared with two birthday cakes. It was exciting to see how the work had progressed since our last visit and particularly good to see a new building now complete where two members of our previous team had begun the foundations in 2006.



The first day of work was a bit of a shock to the system and was very demanding. Two tasks were required for the week: adobe making and granite block shifting. I was assigned to the granite but I was concerned that at the end of the day I discovered some of our girls had worked for an hour or so and spent the



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rest of the day playing with the boys. Whilst this was a perfectly acceptable use of time, I was worried that the thought of returning to the strenuous work in the hot sun at high altitude would severely reduce the enjoyment and effectiveness of the trip for them. Because of this, it was great to see the way that they regrouped and on the second day got back to the brick making. The first week's work continued with these two tasks. It was hard work but did bring a sense of achievement, and everyone worked to their own capabilities.

Each day began with thirty minutes of morning devotions led by members of the team before breakfast. One morning Scot, Tamara, Fiona and Sarah grouped together to lead that time for us all. The evenings were spent with the boys and learning more about the work of SU in Kusi.



Within the week we also had a visit to the National Park glacial lake of Llanganuco and a tour of the cemetery built on the devastation caused by the 1970 earthquake. Since our last visit a new church has been formed in Yungay which the residents of Kusi attend. All of us went and I shared a short encouragement of our prayers in Scotland.

WEEK 2: URUBAMBA, CUSCO



Our plans for the second week were disrupted at short notice due to national strikes in the country. During these strikes roads are blocked and travel is made difficult. This did give us the opportunity to visit Kawai, another SU centre just south of Lima.

I had previously visited Kawai in 2005 but on this occasion we had lunch with the boys living there and were then treated to their own unique brand of entertainment. We flew on to Cusco



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as planned but after an hour's bus drive to the boys' centre at Urubamba we were unexpectedly caught up in the strikes and had to turn back, frustratingly only 15 minutes from our destination.

This gave us an extra day in Cusco but were blessed to be able to find a hotel which could take the whole team at very short notice. Some folk were disappointed to lose this day of work but I felt that not only did it give us some greatly needed rest but was simply another part of Peruvian culture that we were able to experience.



The work at Urubamba was more heavy lifting of completed adobes and rocks needed for foundations. We were helping to build foundations for a new

workshop where the boys will be able to learn trades.

Following the heavy lifting some of us turned to mixing and laying concrete.



It was during this week that we had a day trip to Machu Picchu. In total, due to the strikes, we were only able to offer a couple of days of work but it was warmly received.



With no church readily accessible on the Sunday morning I volunteered to lead our own service in our hostel. Scot, Sarah, Tamara and Fiona helped me lead the singing, bible reading and reflections before I preached for the team.

CONCLUSION

It has been a difficult year for the family and a big part of me found it difficult to spend the two weeks in Peru. Also the work wasn't quite as varied as our last visit and it was both heavy and strenuous. Personally I suffered from bad headaches for the whole of the first week in Kusi and that made sleeping



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and enjoying the evenings harder than expected. This year's team seemed to gel much better with fewer cliques and our students, despite being obviously younger than the others, made a valuable contribution to the success of the team. Indeed, at the end of the fortnight their contribution and enthusiasm was highlighted by the group and one of the team leaders made a

special effort to encourage me in offering this experience to our young people, and congratulating me on their contribution.

On occasion I felt that some of our group could have made more effort to integrate with the rest of the team. That said, it meant a lot to me that my presence was much appreciated by the Plockton group and it gave me the opportunity to develop my work with them. Expectation and evaluation sheets were filled in by the five students before and after the work party which revealed that all would recommend the experience to others. It may be that one or two might even choose to return in time. On the plane on the way home I wrote personal reflections for each individual; it was an emotional time, having known the four girls since they were in P7, that my work with them was just about complete. It was always my desire that I would see a complete generation through high school and these were the fulfilment of that with COOL.

When school age people in the region first get to know me I have access to around eight hundred children. As I sat on the homeward flight I considered that after all the years in school, the climax of my work came down to these five. Also, this was just about the best that I could offer to these school leavers, both in terms of my time and the overall experience of seeing the gospel in action on a life-changing trip. Whilst I found being in Peru hard this year, I came away with an increased sense of pride and value in what we offer through COOL. I always aim to bring the best that I can to my work, and I believe more



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than ever that opportunities such as are presented through the Vine Trust should be a part of all that we do. Whilst I don't feel able to offer this particular trip every year, not least because of the financial drain on the community, I would go so far as to suggest that we should in future be asking ourselves why we, and specifically I or the current youth worker, would not be pursuing such opportunities, rather than whether we should go ahead with them.

Dave.

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