Year 8 C A N O E C A M P 14th-18th MAY

On the 14th of May the whole of Year 8 bravely got up at the time of 6.00am to be on the bus at a quarter to 7, to travel to Sydney, for a trip up (or down) the Hawkesbury River.

As we got to school there was a lot of standing around, girls still packing and waterproofing their bags.

We were all split into two groups; the first group was dropped at Windsor and would be canoeing downstream to Wisemans Ferry. My group travelled another hour to Wisemans ferry with our group teacher, Mrs Dundon. We finally arrived and met our Land’s Edge leaders - Josh who was the main leader and our canoe leader was Kat (short of Katrina) and she was a lot of fun.

I was with Caitlin and when we finally got on the water everyone was running into the weeds and trees and each other. No one knew how to paddle properly. It was quite hilarious watching everyone try and paddle. We only had to do something like three kilometres on the first day, but to us it felt like a million miles!! We were so exhausted when we finally arrived at our campsite. It wasn’t the nicest campsite but Josh taught us how to set up our tents and we sorted out camping arrangements. We all unpacked and set up beds.

Then came dinner… we were all looking forward to a good feed, but then we all found out it was couscous… oh and to make it better we had to cook it on a thing called a trangia - a trangia is a pot within a pot within a saucepan within a cooker. When you open it up it has two pots, a saucepan, a put-together stove, a burner and these things called spondonicals (kind of like tongs but it’s to lift the hot pots and pan off). You fill the burner with Metho, put together the stove part, put the burner in the bottom and light on fire. Once all this is done cut up your vegies and/or the food you’re cooking and place in pot/pan and put over the flame. But don’t forget to use the spondonicals to lift the pot/pan off the heat. The really bad thing about this was that the pots always got burnt and it took a lot of effort to clean them. In the end the food wasn’t too bad. We sat and had a group chat about the day and the distance and where we were travelling the next day. When we were finally in bed and asleep it was terribly cold!!!

In the morning our next worry was breakfast. It was powdered milk with Weet-Bix, Corn Flakes or Muesli. We weren’t too happy but I have to say that Corn Flakes, powdered milk and a LOT of honey is actually really good!! When we had finally packed up and packed the boats and were on the water we worked out we only had to paddle the same as the day before! Simple hey?! Only three to four kilometres? What’s so bad about that?! But to us it again felt like eternity!! I was with Caitlin again, at the front again, but after a lunch stop of wraps with salami, cucumber, cheese, tomato and tuna (was all optional). After what felt like a few minutes Kat told us to raft up. So we did. When we were all silent and rafted up she said, “We are here”. We questioned her and everyone was shocked! She showed us how to get our boat in on the little beach; we unpacked and set up our tents.

Dinner came and went then Kat asked me and a friend to be the group leaders for the day. We had to motivate everyone, tell them where and what we were doing, tell the time we had to get up and how we were going to pack the boat. We basically had to talk over the job of what the main leader was doing. To be honest it was the hardest thing I had to do all week, even over all the canoeing! Hannah and I called everyone over into a big circle, and told them everything we had worked out. It would take at least three and a half hours to get up, pack up, have breakfast, pack the boats and get on the water. We then brought the bad news that the distance that we had to canoe
was 22 kilometres. There were a lot of moans and groans from the crowd. They certainly were not happy about that. We explained our plan on how we were going to do things, but we left the time we planned on getting up at to last. I said “OK and we think it would be a good idea to get up at…. 5:00am.”

I woke up to the sound of my alarm at 4.30am. I got out of my tent and went and found Hannah. We started with the boys because we knew it would be hard to get them up and awake. We walked through all the tents, banging on the plastic and saying good morning guys! Time to wake up! Everything went smoothly. But we were 20 minutes behind when I wanted to be on the water. We eventually got on at something like 26 past 7. It was OK, seeing as we were two hours late the day before.

Back in the boats we started to paddle. When we finally arrived at the campsite it was such a relief. It had a pool and where we camped it was a big open area. It was really good. We set up camp and started having dinner, tonight Josh ran it and we were having pasta and vegies. It was pretty good. Marshall’s group burnt the bottom of their pot with the entire pasta stuck on it, so I helped them clean it. Tonight Kat asked Roan and Matt to be the leaders, and then told us that we were getting up at 5.00am again that morning because we were doing another 21 kilometres.

Wake up call was late because Matt’s alarm didn’t go off but we all got straight up and into it. I can’t remember what time we got on the water but it was a good time. I was with Mrs Dundon all day; it was also really good because we were always at the front.

When we arrived at our next campsite it was a steep bit we all thought we had to get all the canoes up, but luckily Kat had another plan. We all got out and in a human chain handed all of our stuff up the little cliff edge, it would have only been 1½ metres high. Kat then tied all the canoes together in the water and all was good. Everyone was really happy:

1. Because it was our last night;
2. Because we got there early we could lay everything out for it to dry; and
3. We could all have hot showers!

This place was beautiful! It had amazingly tall trees with huge ivy vines growing off and through everything. It was almost like a place out of the movies. After lunch we set up our tents then all went in different directions to explore. I ended up going around this corner to another open sort of camping area. It was truly beautiful. Josh and Kat came around and showed us how to play a game called camouflage. It was so much fun!

I had a nice hot shower and all my clothes were drying out well. We had dinner, which was Alfredo and Mac Chees. It was so good! Our pots were really dirty and we had to make them spotless for the next group of people that used them. So we all sat there in the dark cleaning out our pots, and once we got the OK from Josh we could just chill and wait till everyone else had finished. When they had we got some chocolate and played spotlight. When finished, everyone came back and we had a group talk. We finally went to bed all happy and warm and clean. That afternoon had to have been my favourite part of the week.

Wake up was at 5.00am again this morning so we could be at Windsor before the bus. Everyone was up and packing bags and tents. We had breakfast and packed the boats. In we got and off we went. On and on we paddled and finally we saw a huge boat ramp and heard two whistles, which meant raft up. Kat then told us we were there!!!! We were so happy we started singing “We Are The Champions”. Together we all pulled in and lifted all the stuff out of the boats. Then some people had to wash the boats and some (like me) had to carry them up the big hill to the car. We were rewarded with lunch, a little chill then chocolate and biscuits - along with a team chat about
the week. It was such a nice way to end a pretty good week. We all packed up and got our bags ready to be put on the bus, and when it arrived it was a big family reunion! The bus driver packed the bus and we all got lots of photos and hugs and waves and goodbyes then we finally got on the bus. If I had to have had a second favourite time of the week, it would have been then, because it was all so relaxed. On the way home we stopped at McDonald’s. Everyone was so looking forward to it. The bus trip home was pretty good.

I had a pretty awesome week, but I don’t think I will be doing it again sometime soon. However, that week was something you don’t do every day, and I am very thankful to Kat and Josh for taking care of us all week and teaching us new things. We are extremely thankful to “Mummy” Dundon for being there for us on the camp, if you know what I mean Mrs Dundon; also to Mrs Tinker for organising the whole thing!!!

Siobhan Turk