

**IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF LAWRENCE
JORDAN 2014**



EXPEDITION REPORT

**2427 (BIGGIN HILL) SQUADRON AIR
TRAINING CORPS**

Flt Lt James Dyer RAFVR(T) FRGS

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INTRODUCTION.

Since 2007 I have planned and organized 4 overseas expeditions for a number of Air Cadet Squadrons in Kent Wing.

The main aim of this series of expeditions is to expose cadets to overseas expeditions, to undertake large physical challenges and to develop the cadets leadership and understanding.

This expedition was a first for 2427 squadron and was a learning experience for all involved, the cadets ranged in age from 14 to 20, and the staff team were all overseas expedition novices, some only recently becoming staff, except for one team member who had accompanied me on two previous expeditions and attended another with a different Wing.

External assistance was provided by a team of Bedouin guides recruited through a contact in Jordan and assisted by Khalid Ammin and Sam McConnell.

Since I was a young man I have been interested in T E Lawrence and his exploits, for a number of years I have been planning an personal expedition to Jordan to visit places connected to Lawrence and to cross the desert where he operated.

Due to a number of complications with planning a cadet expedition in Egypt caused by the Arab Spring and subsequent issues in 2012 with the political situation I decided that my plans for Jordan could be amalgamated into an interesting expedition for Cadets.

2014 marks the 100 year anniversary of the outbreak of World War One, T E Lawrence played an enormous role in this conflict and his exploits still have relevance in the issues that exist in the Middle East today. With the forth coming anniversary in 2016 of the Arab Revolt and the attached remembrance of Lawrence and his activities it seemed a timely expedition, ensuring that Lawrence's exploits still have relevance to young people 100 years later.

As this expedition was designed to provide an opportunity for the cadets I am going to allow them to tell their story in this report as I think that it sums up what they did, what they gained and how it has influenced them.

Flt Lt James Dyer RAF VR(T) FRGS
Expedition Leader

THE BIGGIN HILL TEAM

Flight Lieutenant RAFVR(T) James Dyer Expedition Leader

Sam McConnell Deputy Expedition Leader

Squadron Leader RAFVR(T) Paul Saunders

Sergeant (ATC) Nicole Harvie

Civilian Instructor (ATC) Andrew Hogan

Civilian Instructor (ATC) Christopher Mance

Civilian Instructor (ATC) Eloise Sinclair

Cadet Warrant Officer Sam Huckle

Cadet Warrant Officer Elaine Seow

Cadet Sergeant Jack Cunnion

Cadet Sergeant Henry Terry

Corporal Charlotte Drury

Corporal Luke Graves

Corporal Matthew Wain

Corporal Joshua Plenderleith

Cadet Adam Potter

Cadet James Crawley

Cadet Rowan Beswick

Cadet Sean Bruce

Cadet Morgan Chalmers

Cadet Dominic Du Preez

Cadet Ben Harvey

Cadet Emma Elson

Cadet Joshua Parson

Cadet Oliver Peplow

In The Footsteps of Lawrence of Arabia 2427 (Biggin Hill) Squadron's Expedition to Jordan 15th – 24th April, 2014

By Corporal Matthew Wain and Cadet Emma Elson

In 1917 Thomas Edward Lawrence united the Arab tribes to lead a revolt against the occupying Ottoman Empire, he targeted the railways the Turks laid, and eventually attacked the strongholds of Aqaba and the garrisons at Mudawwara. Ninety-seven years later 2427 (Biggin Hill) squadron sent an expedition to follow the footsteps Lawrence took to attack a train of Turkish soldiers, a hundred kilometre trek from Rumm Village in the Wadis to Mudawwara in the Empty Quarter.



Back: Henry Terry, Sam Huckle, Sean Bruce, Jack Cunnion, Ben Harvey, Rowan Beswick, Dom du Preez, James Crawley, Luke Graves, Chris Mance.

Middle: Sqn Ldr Paul Saunders, C.I. Andy Hogan, Sergeant Nicky Harvie, Josh Plenderleith, Morgan Chalmers, Matthew Wain, Oliver Peplow, Josh Parsons, C.I. Elouise Sinclair, Flt Lt James Dyer.

Front: Adam Potter, Elaine Seow, Charlotte Drury, Emma Elson.

In the last few days building up to the start of our adventure, many members of the team including myself (Emma) began to feel the pressure. We were scared to step out of our comfort zones into the unknown, with no idea what awaited us.

Between the 26 of us we had many different goals that we wanted to achieve whilst undertaking in this expedition. With some people the main goal was to improve their fitness or navigation skills, for others it was to learn about a different culture, as well as learning how to survive in such an extreme terrain, but mostly we wanted to attain that feeling of pride and accomplishment after finishing the hundred kilometre trek.

In preparation for the expedition we held some fundraising events to help raise money for it. This included a 20 kilometre bike ride from our squadron to Hever Castle because Lawrence visited castles by bike when he was studying. We also had a stall at a boot fair in Orpington to and, lastly, we did a fundraising Spitfire-pull at Biggin Hill Airport where we gained much support from the public as well as friends and family. Also in preparation we had a one-night stay at the squadron. During that time we were given the task to find out as much as we could about a chosen period in Lawrence's life and provide a presentation, a real shock to some of us who knew very little about his efforts in World War One. Also on this stay at 2427 Squadron we discussed our aims, goal and wishes for the expedition. Finally, the biggest eye opener for us was the next morning, when we were woken up at 07:00 and told we had to have all our gear packed up and ready to go in under twenty minutes; preparation for the real expedition.



Final checks before we left the squadron.



Many of us were amazed by the westernisation of the airport in Amman.



Me, tired? Never!

When we arrived in Jordan we were impressed by the luxury of the airport, especially with the Starbucks that we stayed in for a few hours and provided us with free hot chocolate and pain au chocolat. This misled us in believing that the next few days was going to be easy, with hot chocolate and pastries being provided on demand; were we in for a surprise!

After a long bumpy coach ride, that I personally couldn't get any sleep on, we arrived in Wadi Rumm, where a few of us decided to purchase traditional Arab headdresses such as Keffiyehs and Shemaghs for the days ahead. After getting off the coach we all topped up our sun cream and water as we were waiting for a fleet of trucks and cars to come take us to our base camp. However, it soon became apparent that there were no vehicles coming for us, and that Flt Lt Dyer had decided to surprise us by making us walk to the base camp as a warm up; this was when the expedition suddenly got a whole lot more difficult.

Whilst walking out of Wadi Rumm I was astonished by how hard it was to walk on the sand, we couldn't have been travelling any faster than 2, maybe 3 km/h, how on earth were we going to complete a 100km/h trek at this rate! After a few hours, though, we stopped for our first *lay-up*.

Lay-ups are long stops in the middle of the day that usually lasted for about 5 hours. At the start we would sit down, take our boots off and get comfy whilst the Bedouin prepared us

breakfast, we'd then relax or take a nap for a couple of hours, work on our projects, have some lunch, get ready to go (top up sun cream, water etc...) and then set off at around 15:00 / 16:00. For most of our *lay ups* over the next few days we would attempt to find shade under the cover of huge rock formations, but some days this was not possible.

On our first *lay-up* instead of working on our projects as we had not yet been set any, we had a briefing about how to survive in the desert, which involved hygiene, eating, and the no-longer taboo subject of going to the toilet. Eventually, after a second stint of walking, we arrived at Red Sands camp, our base camp, where we unpacked and rested. We had walked about 8 km that day, a distance that at the time felt like a marathon, but now, looking back, seemed like a walk in the park.

As we said earlier, one aspect we looking forward to was sleeping under the stars; we were not disappointed! On the first night in Jordan, at Red Sands camp, the majority of us decided to sleep outside in order to experience what it would be like on the walk. One of my fondest memories is looking up at the sky that night, after about 36 hours without any real sleep, and just staring at the stars, mesmerised by the sheer number and brightness of them. The camp was encircled by cloth tents which the moon rose over that night; I was so amazed that I could see the moon rise I couldn't get to sleep, despite my tiredness.



Our first look into Wadi Rumm, not a single one of us really knowing what was going to happen.



Red Sands Camp, our base camp.



Food had never tasted so bad, yet so good at the same time.

On our first night we sat and had a lovely dinner of steam-cooked vegetables, rice, soup, pitta bread and chicken. Now I'm not exactly a fan of vegetables, but these steamed-cooked onions, peppers, tomatoes, potatoes and cucumbers were to die for! After this dinner we had officially had our first breakfast, lunch and dinner made for us by the Bedouin.

On the trek, breakfast was after a good 4-6 hours of walking, so we were given biscuits and Bedouin tea when we woke up to fuel us for our morning stint of walking. Breakfast that morning was a selection of jams, Dairylea spreadable cheese and an Arabic nut-based paste that was nicknamed *rocket fuel* due to its energising effect. All these spreads were put on pitta bread and accompanied by a boiled egg and a banana.

Lunch, a few hours, later consisted of tuna, cucumber, tomato, olive oil, herbs and once again, a few slices of pita bread. We were also given snacks and drinks throughout the day;

these were usually an orange, a shot of salt, a biscuit and some of *Khalid's Magic Potion*, which consisted of a teaspoon of salt and 2 teaspoons of sugar mixed into a small cup of water. This hydration drink tasted so awful we'd squeeze as much orange juice into the cup as we could in an attempt to improve the taste in any way possible!

All these meals were very nice, but what we didn't realise is that they would be the same for the next nine nights! The same three meals, over and over again, the only difference being that on the trek we didn't have the luxurious dinner I previously described, instead we just had soup, chicken, rice and pitta bread. Now you'd think that we would get fed up with this food after a few days wouldn't you? Especially after having pitta bread 3 times a day, but we were taught that food is fuel and, after all of our exertion, we were happy to eat the same food for the whole expedition.



Our first *lay-up*, where we received our first briefing about wildlife, hygiene, safety, food and culture



For the trek we split into five groups, each group had to map read for a day.

In the couple of days we had at the base camp, before we left for our trek, we had a lot to plan, the most important of which was how we could tell the story of our expedition. We split into three groups, the photographers, the Go-Pro team and the documentary team. The purpose of splitting into the three groups was so that we could put more of our focus into creating a project to tell our story.

The photographers were taught by Sqn Ldr Saunders how to take a variety of different pictures, in different scenes and settings, so that we would have excellent pictures for articles, displays, presentations and where ever else the pictures may be used.

The documentary team were tasked by Flt Lt Dyer to interview members of our expedition team in order to gather footage for a documentary he wished to create. We had to think of questions that would show how people felt about the meaning of the expedition, how their feelings changed throughout the expedition, how they were physically coping and much more.

The Go-Pro team had the fun challenge of finding inventive ways to capture video footage of us during the expedition. This included ideas like *bottle-cam*, *rucksack-cam*, *plate-cam* and many more and would later be used in shorter, less serious videos to show the highlights of our trip.



Interviews for the documentary we are creating.



The Go-Pro teams *union flag cam*.

Whilst in the desert we learned Bedouin culture; on the first day we learnt that it is respectful to take your shoes off when you step on to the mat, whether it is to just sit down or whilst eating. On our first *lay-up* of the trek the Bedouin introduced us to their tea; it was an extremely sweet flavoured tea that was offered to us in small glass, accompanied by a small biscuit. Furthermore the Bedouin introduced to a few Arabic words, including: Shokran (Thank you), Al'afw (you're welcome), Salam (hi) and a few more.

One skill which was vital to the expedition was getting used to our 300,000:1 *map* (that was actually a google earth image). For a couple of hours we split into groups and walked around the area, trying to use the large rock formations as reference points and get used to the variety of colours that appear on the map, comparing them to what we could actually see. This was definitely going to be one of the hardest tasks of the whole expedition as none of us had really used maps like these before, and we couldn't have got any practise back in England.

The last bit of preparation we had to do as cadets was to lighten our kit bags as much as possible; this meant that if we didn't need it for the trek, it didn't go in our bags. The reason for this was most of our bags were very heavy and, because we were walking for five days, every gram lighter our bags were, the easier the trek would be. This meant that we could take no more than three pairs of underwear, only two pairs of socks, no snacks and no other luxuries; we only took what we would need, not what we would wanted.

On our last night before the trek we all climbed to the top of a rock formation about a hundred metres away from the base camp. Up on top of the rock, we all watched the sun set over the large rocks in the distance, a sight that was very picturesque and will be a long-lasting memory for all of us who watched it.

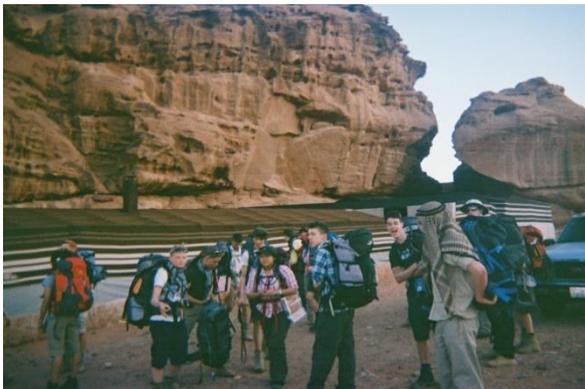


The two authors, watching the sunset on the rock



They could see for miles!

On Friday, at 05:45 on the dot, we were awoken by the sounds of the Bedouin shuffling around in order to make us breakfast, but it wasn't until the CWO and Flight Sergeant started shouting at us to get up, get dressed, pack up and eat that we actually started to move; they had a good reason to shout at us though, in just 45 minutes we were about to begin our trek through the desert. It was at this point in time that it suddenly hit us - this was the moment we had been preparing for these last few months, this was the moment where our physical and mental capabilities were going to be pushed to their limit, this was the moment where the most memorable part of our lives so far would begin.



Mixed emotions as we set off



The long road that would eventually fade out half way through the day

The minute we arrived at our first camp site we were all buzzing with excitement! Although we had already spent two nights in Jordan, this somehow felt different. A few of the cadets had brought card decks so we crammed in as many games of cheat and 3 card brag as we could before dinner. Our dinner was once again soup, chicken, rice and pitta bread. (By the end of the expedition some of us were a tad fed up of this meal, to say the least! But, nonetheless, we knew that this food would provide the fuel we needed to survive the long treks through the scorching heat.)

Hygiene was a major factor in preventing us from falling ill. We had to wash our hands and use hand sanitizer before every meal, and we had to go to the toilet (by that I mean dig a hole, squat, wipe and burn the bog role) a good distance away from our camp. We even had a copy of a Bristol Stool Scale, which ranged from 1-7, and after every bowel movement we went back and talked about our stool, making sure we were drinking enough water and didn't have an infection. This sounds like a disgusting thing to do; can you imagine if you did that at home? For us though it became part of our routine.

During our days in Jordan we had to adapt to a very ordered sleeping and washing pattern, making sure we were well rested for the long days ahead and also that we kept good hygiene, as infection was a likely occurrence. We developed a sleeping pattern very similar to the Bedouin; 21:30 go to sleep, 05:00 wake up, and an hour or so sleep in our *lay-up* during mid-day. This way of ordering our day seemed very odd to us but it soon became apparent that this was what we needed to successfully complete this trek.

The next few days and nights were quite repetitive, we would wake up at 05:00 and have to be ready by 05:30 to set off. The reason we had such an early start each morning was to avoid the sun as much as possible as it made the walking even more difficult than it already was. During the morning we would normally have two or three short breaks (about 15-20 minutes) before we stopped for our *lay-up*, where we ate our breakfast, had a few hours rest, followed by lunch. After we had helped the Bedouin clear up from lunch we all gathered round the truck that had the water stores and made sure we had at least two litres (as opposed to our three litres in the morning) as, at this point, it was still extremely hot and we had to make sure that we stayed hydrated. As the days went on we slowly started to learn more about the Bedouin way of life; it was so fascinating to see how they adapted to living in these extreme conditions, for example their sleeping pattern; waking up at half four in the morning, going to bed at ten and having a one or two hour kip when the sun was at its highest point in the sky.



Us cadets, attempting to survive without technology

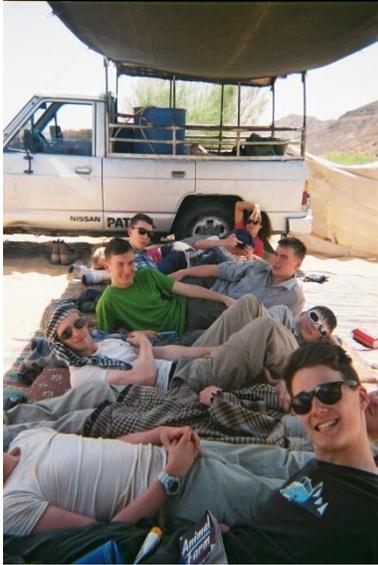


You may see this picture as a cool bit of greenery, but we saw this as food, rest, and success after a long stint of walking!

While on the trek we noticed there was a lot more wildlife than we thought there would be, we all expected sand and nothing else. The desert was actually full of wild creatures such as flies, beetles, ants, scorpions and snakes, as well as a few camels and goats that were owned by the locals. The scorpions and snakes posed a big threat to our health, so we were taught how to deal with bites/stings and the evacuation plans in place for us all. Most importantly though was that we had to bang our boots together after we had taken them off and to check under our sleeping mats, to make sure there were no hidden creatures. There were many instances of scorpions being spotted under our mats but we only came across a snake once, which was swiftly dealt with by one of our guides; yes, one of Matt's fondest memories is waking up to a banging noise and shouting 'What's that?', to get a reply, 'Don't worry, it's just Abdullah smashing a snake's head in'!

Another aspect we noticed, when walking through the desert, was how we could see for miles in all directions, and all we could see would be large rocks, and that the ground which was always the same colour to what we were standing on. However, over the five-day trek, we noticed that the colours would change; we went from red sand, to yellow sand, to dried up brown mud valleys, to grey volcanic rocks, to beige rocks, to green valleys and, not necessarily in that order, we would come across three or four of these a day. Looking back, I now realise it was because we travelled so far, we were literally walking into the horizon.

On the third day of the trek we had reached the mid-point between both locations. I remember this being one of the most difficult periods throughout the whole trek, as by this time we had all massively begun to feel the strain. We had blisters on our feet, achy muscles and no energy in our tanks; we could sense that some people were coming to the end of their tether. Later that night as we waited for dinner, Flt Lt Dyer sat us all down together and we discussed the problems. He reminded us that we are all in this together and that we needed to remain as a strong team in order to successfully complete the missions we had set out to complete.



For 5 hours we sat like this to stay in the shade. Tightly packed, hot, sweaty and exhausted, we all managed a smile for the camera! The staff on the other hand had a little bit more space...

Morale was something that was very hard to keep up, especially in heat that reached 42°C at one point whilst we were walking. To cope we made sure we were in *buddy pairs* and that we regularly checked our *buddies* had enough water and felt ok. Towards the third day we were so desperate to keep morale up we even started singing, which worked well for us at the back, and even better for those ahead of us, slightly, as they started to walk faster, away from our 'lovely' singing voices.

The most vivid memory I (Emma) have of the expedition was the very end of the walk. The look of achievement on people's faces will forever stay in my memories; priceless! About a hundred metres from our final camp, two members of the team held up a giant Union Flag, again another very memorable moment. Where we camped on our last night was in sight of Mudawwara; if we climbed up a hill by our camp we could see the town in the distance, this made us really feel like we had completed our trek, and that we had truly followed in Lawrence's footsteps.



Flying the Union Flag in the Empty Quarter



Yes, those are sandals Abdullah's wearing.

On the first day after our trek we were all exhausted, so exhausted we were allowed to lie in until 07:30, bliss when you've been getting up at 05:00 every day! Today was our final day travelling the desert, but thankfully we were completing the final stages in vehicles because we had to go through a farming town. Between the twenty six of us we had to fit into the back of just four vehicles, a forty-year-old van, a couple of open top trucks, and a car; this meant we got closer to our colleagues than we may have liked, especially as none of us had had a shower since we left the base camp.

It was about a 45 minute journey from where we camped on our final night to the old train station. In England, a site of such historical value would usually be turned into a museum or at least be a protected building, but when we got there we found there were two women living there. They were very nice, however, and let us have a look around, although there was little to suggest this was an old railway station, other than a few old tracks outside.

After the visit to the train station we visited a garrison where the Turks were based when Lawrence attacked the train all those years ago. I thought the garrison and its several outposts were quite small, the main garrison being no bigger than a couple of large semi-detached houses back home, but it turned out around two hundred Turkish soldiers would have been based there. I can hardly imagine how bad it would have been to live there as a soldier.

Our last stop, before travelling back through the desert to our base camp, was the train Lawrence attacked during World War One, although it turned out we couldn't actually visit the train as it was on Saudi Arabian soil. Unfortunately, we were not able to cross the border as we didn't have visas, but we could see the train from the checkpoint where we were stopped as it was on top of a hill overlooking the town and the train wreck.

After we had visited all of the historic sites we began to head back to Wadi Rumm, which was a four hour road trip through the desert we had just walked through. This is probably the most uncomfortable drive of my life as it was bumpy, hot and we were packed tightly in, so much so that we had to stop every half hour to rotate around where everybody sat in the vehicles.



The Turkish garrisons of Mudawarra, the ones that Lawrence would have attacked all those years ago



Nearly a hundred years on the scars of WW1 are still present in the desert.

It was about mid-afternoon by the time we arrived back at the base camp, but it wasn't time to rest just yet as we had to unload the bags and sort out all of our kit, although by this point in the expedition we were all like well-oiled machines. As far as I'm aware, we didn't even talk to each other, we knew what to do and we did it. I think the only words spoken were to ourselves. When Sqn Ldr Saunders and Flt Lt Dyer asked us to perform a war cry, I'm sad to say Emma's was much more manly and scary than my (Matt's) embarrassing attempt.

Once we had got our kit unloaded and sorted we all sat around and had our final lunch in the desert. Whilst sat down, we had our expedition debrief. This was a very light hearted conversation about how our projects were going, whether or not we had achieved our goals and how we were all feeling. At the time everybody felt good and felt that they had achieved their goals, however it would take a few weeks, or even months back in England before any of us would realise the true effect the expedition had on us.

That night we were expecting our usual dinner, but we were in for a treat, for the first time in nine days that we had something other than chicken for dinner... goat! The Bedouin had prepared us a feast of goat and steamed vegetables, with rice and pitta bread, of course. After dinner we had our final briefing which included the cadet tradition of the paper plate awards, although as we didn't have any paper plates it was modified into the paper cup awards. These ranged from *camp couple*, to the *poo crew*, to the *Dyer-lite award*, to all sorts; all these awards being based on our fondest memories of our time in Jordan.

The next morning was our earliest yet, a 03:00 start in order to make our flight. It was a fairly stress free morning (for us cadets anyway) with us travelling on trucks and cars to Rumm

Village, then grabbing a coach to Amman, where we stopped at the gift shop before heading to the airport where we boarded our Royal Jordanian flight back. A very stress free trip... apart from the part where the flight was over booked so we nearly didn't come back to England, and then when we did get on the plane we were spread out all over the plane, but other than that it was completely stress free!

On the flight back the cadets got talking to the people they were sat next to as we were all wearing our bright yellow expedition polos and spread out. Everybody was very friendly and very interested in what we had done. One person we got talking to was a secondary school teacher from Leicester, who had actually visited Wadi Rumm himself with his family. He was absolutely amazed by what we had completed as a team, and he went on to say he would be showing all of his classes our YouTube videos come September. It was only then did we realise the scale of what we had actually achieved. At that point in time walking a hundred kilometres through the desert didn't seem that much as we had been preparing for months; it was finally starting to hit home just how long the trek was.



Four months later we can now truly appreciate what the expedition did for us, and look back at all we experienced. We are at the stage where our articles, videos and documentaries are slowly being pieced together, and when we watch/read them, we think about the distant memories that we once lived

A common question I get asked is 'What was the funniest moment of the expedition?' There are definitely many contenders from Sam's appalling chat up lines to Jack Cunnion's many accents, or Henry Terry's Go-Pro videos, and even other cadet's mischiefs, but the one that sticks out for us is C.I. Hogan's attempt to syphon water, which backfired horribly when he got a face full of water in front of all eighteen cadets.

Flt Lt Dyer made it very clear that this is was not just a walk, and especially not a holiday, it was an expedition, because expeditions have purposes. Officially our purpose was to learn

about Lawrence of Arabia and how his actions have affected the world today, a hundred years later, and as a team we definitely achieved this as we enjoyed learning about him and his actions. However, as individuals the expedition served different purposes which were different for everyone who was involved in the expedition.

Personally I (Matt) didn't have any fears or any goals other than to just enjoy myself whilst I was out there, learn about Lawrence & the Bedouin people, help others achieve their goals and to complete the trek. However, in the months after the expedition, I have realised how I have developed as a person, especially after a conversation with Flt Lt Dyer about how I should act and behave as a leader, which I remember vividly like it was yesterday. Looking back I can say I achieved all my goals, especially helping others to develop and progress, although I did more of that myself than I would have first thought. The experience I had on this expedition was just unbeatable; when people ask me *would I go* on an expedition again I say no, because *I am* going on an expedition again. Because of this expedition to Jordan I have made it one of my life goals to go on as many expeditions as possible.

I myself (Emma) had a few goals and many fears. My main goal was to successfully finish the trek, as before I started I had little hope that I would be able to achieve this; having never done anything like this before, so I was extremely proud of myself and everyone else for undertaking and successfully completing the expedition. Another goal of mine was to develop my navigation skills as my ability before Jordan was pretty much non-existent. I feel as if I have definitely achieved this; going on the expedition has taught me how to accurately identify landscape features in order to reach the intended destination. After signing up for the trek I started to fear many things, including the long days in the heat and also the toilet (or lack of a toilet) situation. But I have proven myself wrong as I completed the strenuous mission I set out to complete.

There will be many memories of the expedition, from the incredible scenery of the Wadis, to the barrenness that was the Empty Quarter. There were tears, there was pain and there was stress, but overall we came together as a squadron, and as a team, to overcome the challenges that we faced. Bonds between people were created that will last for years, we learnt life skills that will last decades, but most importantly we gained memories that will last the rest of our lives.



Team bonding was something we thought would happen, but never did we think it would occur to the extent it did.

So overall what aspect of the expedition has had the biggest impact on our lives, you ask? Well, it's a tough one; some might say it's the thought that we would have done Lawrence proud, and that in a hundred years some people may follow in our footsteps. Others may say their biggest impact was how they developed as a person, gained life experience and leadership skills. For some it would be the bonds they formed with their fellow cadets, one or two may even say it was seeing how the Bedouin lived there lives. However, there is one aspect that sticks out for us in particular, and that is since the expedition we haven't, and nor will we ever, eat pitta bread again.

CONCLUSION.

Since returning from the expedition the cadets have undertaken a number of tasks to ensure that they have processed the experience, we have given talks to the T E Lawrence Society Symposium, the Ulysses Trust Annual Awards Presentation and to the main squadron.

We have published the cadet's report as a glossy A4 booklet and produce at least 2 short films of the expedition.

The expedition was a huge success, we trekked 26 Air Cadet Personnel 120KM across the Jordanian desert in temperatures up to 45'C, visited sites of historical importance and have returned to process and communicate what we undertook. We had no major injuries or complications with fitness, the logistics worked well and it was a healthy team that returned to the UK at the end of the expedition

The main lesson learnt on this expedition has been about developing the financial processes at 2427 to allow us to ensure financial regularity; this includes improving budgeting, educating the Civilian Committee further about the financial planning and launching the expedition earlier to ensure that we have plenty of fundraising time.

Also I have decided that in future with a squadron as large as 2427 (over 100 cadets) I will be undertaking a selection event to decide on the motivations of some of the participants, we had a small group of young male cadets who once on expedition seemed to consider it a holiday and continually needed to be talked to about silly and childish behavior. My intention would be to operate an application and interview process to ensure that the cadets (and parents) understand what the expedition was about and what their motivations are, as well as what they want to achieve from attending. Previous lessons learnt since 2007 such as parents meetings and communication, fundraising and planning have been implemented and again worked well.

All in all this has been a successful expedition, it was pulled together in a short period of time and was led by a confident and experienced team who along with the senior cadets and the cadets involved worked well in the lead up, the training and the execution of the expedition.

As usual there are a lot of people to thank and they were all instrumental in the success of the expedition and include-

Cadets and Staff of 2427 Squadron
OC 2427 Squadron Leader Paul Saunders RAF VR(T)
Civilian Committee 2427 Sqn
2427 200 Club
Ulysses Trust
HQ Air Cadets
Wing Commander Roger Davis RAFR
Kent Wing ATC
Khalid Ammin
Sam Maconnell Desert Expeditions
Haitham Dahlan- Jordan
Eid Sabah El Zalabeya- Wadi Rumm
The Heritage Hanger- Biggin Hill