



## SLÁINTE MHATH!

Since half of Scotland has been celebrating the life and works of Rabbie Burns recently, here's to your good health!

With less than 2 months left of training for the Bell Baxter team the excitement and nerves are starting to build in the camp. The kids are consolidating all their skills to date and keeping up with training. They were recently given their bronze navigation award certificates, which was taught and tested at their training week in October in the Cairngorms. With 1 more endurance session to go, there is still some work to be done. The kids have been getting some great support from everyone over the past month and I appreciate those who have managed to get along to the endurance sessions to spur them on.

*Craig*



## BUSH CRAFT WEEKEND IN KILLIN



At the tail end of January, while everyone else was thinking about haggis, neeps and tatties, the Bell Baxter Leadership team spent the weekend learning some bush craft skills while camping in Killin. They learned a host of new skills and the weekend was filled with - Axe and knife work - felling trees; How to prepare pheasants - once prepared and cooked, they were devoured; Navigation and map drawing - a bit of night navigation on Saturday night under the stars; Fire lighting skills - friction bow, Flint & steel, fire-steels; story telling - nothing like a good old ghost story before bed; Hill Walking; Historical visit - you can't visit Killin without visiting the McNab's beheading pit!

It's great to get the Leadership team out to reward them for all their hard work and for the support they continue to give to their team mates heading off to Greenland shortly.



## STRANRAER ACADEMY



The second of our information evenings took place on Monday 27th January at Stranraer Academy. Around 100 kids and parents attended to learn about what we do here at the Polar Academy. Some of these youngsters will be invited to join the guides and myself at Glenmore lodge in June before we establish who will be in the 2021 expedition team!

## HELICOPTER SAFETY TRAINING



Team Bell Baxter all met up in January at Cumbernauld Heli Port for a day of helicopter safety training. The kids learned of the importance of only approaching the helicopter from the front and that it was vital for everyone to follow instruction and pay attention at all times. The kids were then treated to a quick flight over Cumbernauld. This will be a day none of them will forget in a hurry!

Very grateful to our Patron who kindly arranged this for the kids.



## ST JAMES'S PLACE

It was a true honour to receive a cheque for £10,000 from Tom Hay of the St James's Place Charitable Foundation (SJP). SJP will be working extremely closely with us over the next year, especially as 6 members of the company will be coming on a very special expedition with us - all while raising money for The Polar Academy.



## ARCTIC ACADEMY COMES TO COMRIE



We were delighted that our BBC documentary Arctic Academy was screened over 2 days at The Comrie Film Festival. Everyone who attended seemed to be impressed by the youngsters from Bathgate. Some of the team joined the locals on day two and were happy to answer questions from the crowd on their experience of completing a Polar Academy expedition. The documentary is currently being edited into a 90 minute film which will be shared with other film festivals internationally. I recently met up with the team from Freak Films to do some outdoor voiceovers for the edited film. TV life is not as glamorous as we think!





## TYRE HAUL AND PATRONS CHALLENGE



Storm Dennis provided perfect conditions for the second tyre-hauling session in the Trossachs. With over 7 hours of continuous hard exercise in the driving rain, never once did I hear anyone complain. Instead it was all about team work. Working in their tent teams, they looked after each other and got on with the job at hand - this team is now ready for the Arctic.

It was great to be joined by one of our Patrons, GLM Architects - who also got the pleasure of hauling tyres. GLM have been long standing supporters of the Polar Academy, so it was great to catch up with them. They were also a pretty slick and fit team and we were impressed by their stamina.

## BERGANS NEW TUNNEL TENTS



Everyone is unbelievably impressed by the new tunnel tents by Bergans of Norway. Normally the designated tent teams spend weeks in advance of an expedition practicing how to put their tent up in under 5 minutes. It's important to be able to do this quickly and safely in case the weather changes suddenly while out on expedition. These new tents were up in under a minute and a half on the first try. I think we will get it down to under a minute with more practice. These tents are incredible.