



January 2014

On the Trans-Mongolian Railway through the Semi-Gobi desert

As some reading this will know only too well, the journey of bereavement is neither short nor smooth, instead it tends to meander with no particular sense and can be full of unexpected surprises. The latter part of last year I found particularly challenging, and at times rather low, though in many ways now feel much more prepared to leave the past behind and press forward - something of a new beginning, I suppose.

Prior to heading off on my travels through northern Asia in August, the children and I spent a week serving at Camp Tayside in various capacities. Following my epic journey, which I had undertaken with my elder daughter, Shanae, I returned from Beijing at the beginning of September and to the start of a new term with the Bible School.

### Camp Tayside

I've lost count of the number of years we have been involved with Camp Tayside - a children's Bible Camp held each summer, north of Dundee in Scotland. This year we were fully subscribed, having more children at camp than we have had for a number of years. This is an encouraging sign, particularly as the majority were of a younger age group and should have a good number of years with us.

Over the years my roles have varied, but in recent years I

have taught the classes for the non-teaching staff, whilst the children's classes are taking place. There are a number of other responsibilities I have, including preparing and serving the now obligatory traditional 'hot chocky chocky that tastes jolly good' by the campfire each evening!

Apart from playing my part in what has proved to be a vital part of the lives of many young people, the camp also provides me with an all too rare opportunity to be together with all my children in the same place for a week - and for that I am very thankful. All three are very active members of the staff, as is Aubrey's wife, Sara.

### British Bible School

Though, as I mentioned above, the latter months of 2013 were something of a struggle, I spent much time in preparation of new material for both our Distance Learning and Access Learning Programmes in addition to preparing for our In-House Training Day and autumn Study Weekends at Wembley.

After conducting a training day on Missional Outreach, in which congregations are encouraged to review their shared values in light of God's mission, I returned to Wembley later in the year to co-teach our practical module on Mission Studies. Students attending can

opt to either simply sit on the classes or undertake additional assignments to work towards a British Bible School exit award.

In light of our ongoing shift in emphasis, we are currently reviewing the use of the BBS building at Corby. Our needs have changed and the building is in need of some attention so we are considering options, along with the local congregation, as to the best way to go about making improvements.



Some of those attending one of our Weekends on Mission Studies



Presenting congregational training on Missional Outreach

## This and that

I continue to preach regularly in Corby and elsewhere - over the last few months in Wembley and Buckingham Park (England); Newport (Wales); and Dundee and East Kilbride (Scotland). I have also recently conducted a number of school assemblies at our local primary school.

Later this month I will be heading to Gemünden in Germany for the annual Advanced Bible Study Series at which the British Bible School has a regular spot. And I am still planning to be a part of the archaeological dig at Beth-Shemesh in Israel this summer.

## The long journey

I mentioned earlier the journey I made with Shanae across Europe and Asia this past summer. Some of you might have read a few blog entries I posted at the time - yet to be completed. We travelled the whole distance by train, from Peterborough to Beijing, with the exception of crossing the Baltic Sea by ship from Stockholm in Sweden to St Petersburg in Russia. For me, the purpose of the trip was to explore a part of the world I had never seen and to experience something of people and cultures so very different from mine.

You should be able to find a link to my blog on Facebook, though it does need seriously updating with the remainder of the trip. Though there were many highlights on the 7,000 mile journey, crossing nine time zones, I enjoyed our time in Mongolia the best.

I believe that travel is a great educator. Not only does it give us insight into how worlds so different from our own live

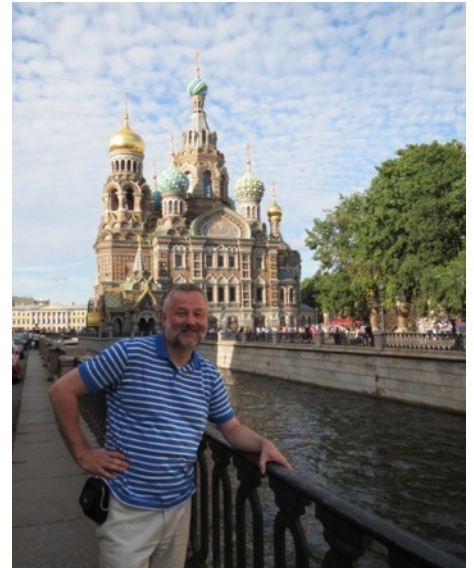
from day to day, but it helps us to understand ourselves apart from our own native contexts, and indeed question something of the validity of those contexts. And this was a very educational journey.

## Family

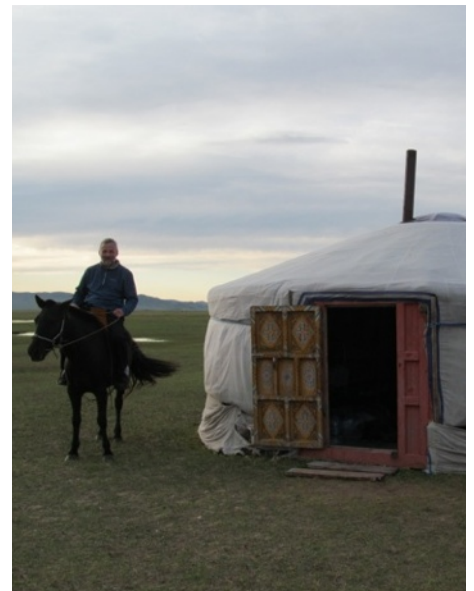
After spending a few days in Beijing at the end of our journey, I returned home whilst **Shanae** continued circumnavigating the globe via Malaysia, the USA and South America. She is now back working in Brussels after her year off. **Aubrey and Sara** are now settled into their new home in Forfar, north of Dundee, where **Aubrey's** work in designing websites progresses well. And **Rachelle** has resumed her studies in English and Film at Dundee University.

**Shanae, Rachelle** and I spent a week in a cottage near Penrith over Christmas before heading further north to Forfar to spend the New Year with **Aubrey and Sara**. All are well. The weather was, and has not been the best. We had a lot of rain and parts of England are now quite severely affected by flooding. Thankfully we are not.

Apart from a temporary car problem that required the replacement of the emission control valve, and a problematic wisdom tooth that will require invasive and possibly debilitating surgery, all else seems to be moving ahead in the right direction. Please continue to remember my family and me in your prayers. I am thankful for your ongoing support and encouragement in work that can at times appear somewhat discouraging. But we have confidence in knowing that our labour in the Lord is not in vain - he will always make it bear fruit. Thank you.



*Near the Church of the Spilled Blood in St. Petersburg, Russia*



*Riding past our ger in Mongolia!*



*With Shanae at the Great Wall, near Beijing, China*