

December 2011

At the beginning of this year I decided I would undertake a year of fundraising and raising awareness of domestic violence for **Refuge**, all of course, in memory of Hannah Louise.

What a busy but rewarding year it's turned out to be.

I have been very touched by how helpful and supportive everyone has been. Small gestures mean just as much as bigger ones.

At the beginning of the year I 'sold' Hannah's story to the magazines, *Chat* and *Woman*. The *Daily Mirror* also picked up the story and produced a double page spread. It was very hard to go through everything again and trust that someone else would accurately express my thoughts but all in all I don't think it turned out too badly, hopefully the message got through to the right people. The *Swindon Advertiser* have also published some strong articles and kindly advertised my *Grand Canyon Trek*.

Radio stations have also been very supportive. At the beginning of March Clive and I travelled up to Leicester for an interview with BBC Radio Leicester and afterwards we visited De Montfort University to have a look at the developments they've been making to their Crime Scene House with the Criminal Injury monies I donated, this amount was also matched by a Government scheme. It's so nice to know that the money is helping such a great resource and is being used for the benefit of a wide range of people.

I was also privileged to be invited back to De Montfort in July for their first donor event. BBC Wiltshire Radio have also been extremely supportive and I have been invited to participate in several of their shows.

At the end of March, **Refuge** posted a mother's day letter from me on their website [www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk) and they also emailed it out to many of their supporters, this helped to swell the fundraising pot. You can still see the letter in their 'news archive' section.

The Wootton Bassett Light Operatic Society (WBLOS) allowed me to make a collection after each of their performances of *Annie*, in 1996 Hannah appeared in their production of *Carousel*.

Throughout the summer Clive and I were regulars at local car boot sales and many people were kind enough to donate items for us to sell, my cousin Lynn, donated 10% from the sales of her paintings for the year.

Our neighbour's son, Josh, made a collection at school and we held a very well attended coffee morning at the St. Bartholomew's Churchcroft, the cakes and biscuits people made for us were delicious, as, I understand, were the cakes Hannah's brother Tom recently made and sold in aid of **Refuge** at a recent event. Hannah's godmother, Jane, also helped me with a stall at the Wootton Bassett Christmas lights and shopping event a few weeks ago, it was so cold but worth it.

My biggest fundraising event this year was my *Grand Canyon Charity Trek* at the end of September. I collected sponsorship on my *Just Giving* page and using sponsorship forms. Right from the start I decided to self-fund my trip so that everything donated went straight to **Refuge** and not on my trip costs.

I met eight fellow travellers at Heathrow on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September and we flew to Phoenix Arizona to start our adventure. We were met by our guides, Zac and Jimmy and stayed overnight in Phoenix.



The following day we travelled to Sedona, to the Red Rock State Park, for a short walk in the midday sun to get accustomed to the climate, it was hot but, at the top of the bluff we climbed, were fantastic 360 degree views. Zac and Jimmy were so knowledgeable about everything in the area and were so keen to pass their knowledge on.

From Sedona we travelled on, along the famous Route 66, to our overnight stop at Peach Springs. This forms part of the Hualapai Reservation which is a 'dry' reservation so no alcohol allowed.

The following morning we got ready for the trip to the Canyon. Every morning we had a safety briefing from our guides. They described the days as how many litres of water we needed to carry and consume. Yesterday's hike had been a 2 litre day but today was going to be a 4 litre day and they checked regularly that you were drinking steadily. The kit we needed in the canyon was packed into canvas bags; this had to be kept to a minimum as it was all going down on the horses. Everything not needed was in our holdalls and that would stay locked in the van at the top of the trail. The rucksacks we would carry had to be as light as possible, our water rations, snacks, camera, sunscreen and water shoes. As we travelled to the top of the trail at Hualapai



Hilltop it came back to me exactly why I was there and if it hadn't been for Hannah's death I wouldn't be there at all, I had been so busy meeting new people and experiencing this extreme environment I hadn't had time to think about it but I wished then that Clive had come with me.

So there we were looking out at the Canyon from the Hualapai Hilltop. It was big but didn't look a mile deep, perhaps the scale made it look deceptive. But no, we were just looking at the top of the first plateau; a faint line in the red sandstone

was the top of the next part of the canyon!

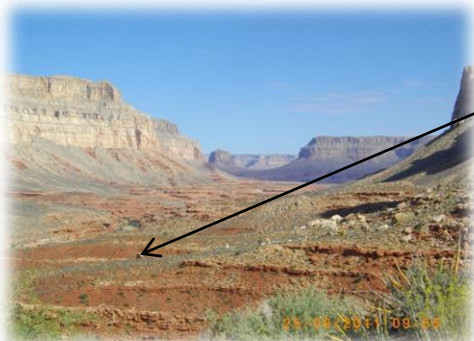
So at about 9am we started our 'switchbacks', loose, steep, interspersed with wooden making deep steps in places. the shallowest part to minimise especially when we climbed passed us we had to stand back earlier in the year a rider going coming up, the horses had an altercation and the rider and horse on the way down, fell over the edge. The horse was killed, it's skeleton remains at the side of the trail, the rider was airlifted



descent down the shale covered narrow paths, sleepers to support the trail We were advised to look for the depth of the step, back out!! If the horses against the canyon wall, down was passed by horses

out and survived.

At the bottom of the switchbacks we came to the top of the red sandstone layer, the next part of the canyon just visible. We were told by our guides that if we were drinking enough we should expect to need to pee at least twice. There were going to be plenty of rocky, small side canyons for privacy



but we needed to ensure we peed on a flat rock not a bush. If you use a bush the critters will descend on it to get the minerals you've left behind and in the process damage the bush, a flat rock won't mind!! If you needed more than a pee you had to tell Zac or Jimmy who would dig a deep hole for you and supply a bag for you to deposit the paper in and carry it out!! I don't think any of us ever had to do that, fortunately our campsite had great composting toilets!



Everything that goes in and out of the Canyon generally goes on horseback even the U.S Postal Service.

The Havasu Canyon is not part of the National Park but is the reservation of the Havasu 'Baaja' Native American Tribe or Havasupai Indians as they are sometimes called. They control the permits allowing people to camp in the Canyon. There is only a mile stretch where camping is allowed and this is ten miles from the Hualapai Hilltop. They also own

many of the horses used on the trail. Some travellers choose to use the horses but this is expensive and where's the challenge in that?



Deeper into the red sandstone



layer



As we walked further it felt as if we were being swallowed by the red sandstone, the top of the rim was getting further away and sometimes not visible at all.

Eight miles into the hike we arrived at the Supai village, the most remote village in the U.S.

Here we collected our permits which we had to ensure were displayed on our rucksacks at all times.

The Havasupai's are a quiet tribe. They leave the village to board at High School but many return after their schooling

has finished. There is now a helicopter service which runs several times in the week, it's a subsidised rate for the villagers, if a hiker wants to take this route out they need to pay for a ticket, about \$200 and then wait in the queue with villagers choosing to fly, you may or may not make that days flight. Heavier items are brought in this way; we saw someone's door arrive while we were there.

We continued our hike and made our first river crossing, changing from hiking boots to water sandals. We weren't allowed into the water without footwear, the riverbeds are very rocky and

in places the Travertine makes them very slippery. As we descended deeper into the Canyon we began to see the waterfalls, New Navajo first and then Rock falls.



There are two rainy seasons a year, often flash floods occur and at times they are so big that waterfalls change their positions due to the amount of rock moved.

This is me in front of the Rock falls - we had the opportunity a few days later to swim in the falls.

The top of the red sandstone layer is visible and then further up the top of the rim.

After about seven hours we were nearing our campsite.

We arrived at the top of the Havasu falls which are about 100ft high.

The water really does look

turquoise. In a few days we would be hiking through the canyon

to the left of the falls but today we were really glad we were nearing the campsite.

Two of us would share each tent; we were advised to keep the fly sheet closed at all times. Padded rolls were supplied but that ground still felt pretty hard.



When we arrived Zac and Jimmy set to work putting the camp kitchen together. All our supplies had come down on the horses. We all climbed into the fast running river at the back of the campsite. The tents were already there but not all of them were up. Zac and Jimmy got snacks prepared for us and then set to work cooking dinner, it was dark before we ate under the stars and we were shattered.

The Canyon is not a quiet place, the water roars behind the tents and the crickets 'sing' all night, it stays very warm at night because the Canyon walls keep the heat in, sleep tends to be sporadic.

In the morning Zac and Jimmy have coffee, tea and hot chocolate ready for anyone who wants it at 7.30, appetizers are ready by 7.45 and breakfast is at 8am - Zac makes amazing pancakes. After breakfast we make our lunches from a vast array of food. Everything is designed to give

you calories and keep your energy levels up, today is going to be a 3 litre day. Our water comes from a natural spring close to our camp area, which has been capped but continues to flow all the time. Apparently scientists have analysed it and come to the conclusion it is 800 years old by the time it travels through the aquifers and we get to drink it, it doesn't taste 800 years old!!



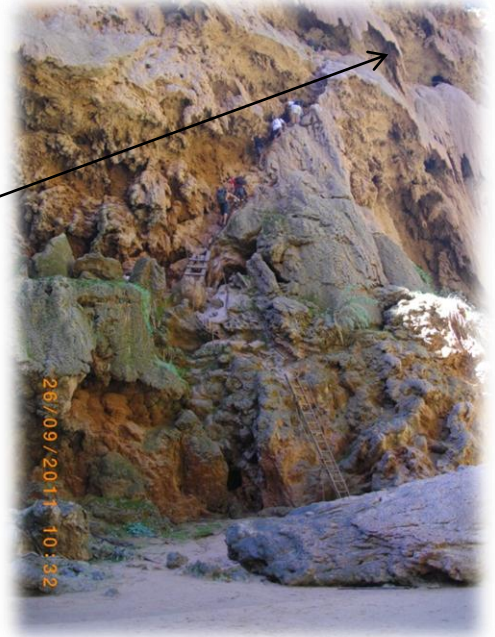
Zac and Jimmy ensure that our packs are not too heavy; apparently we will be doing some climbing today.

We leave camp and head towards Mooney falls. Mooney was an explorer, who tried to find a route beyond the falls. He attempted to climb down the falls but fell to his death. Later, it was noticed that a native Indian was wearing Mooney's boots; he was persuaded to show them how he got to the bottom of the falls.



Before the descent at Mooney Falls

We descended by the same route but now there are chains and ladders to help. Jimmy went first advising us to ensure we had three points of contact at all times. We had to take our hats and sunglasses off



and go down backwards, to

keep our weight forward. It was very slippery. First we climbed through small caves, looking all the time for the next foot or hand hold. We then came out into the sunlight, using the chains to support us. It was a relief to get to the bottom but I enjoyed it.

Short legs are definitely a disadvantage!!

When everyone has made it down we continue down the Canyon towards Beaver Falls. Passing an expanse of naturally growing grape vines, the grapes are ripe and we pick them as we walk through.

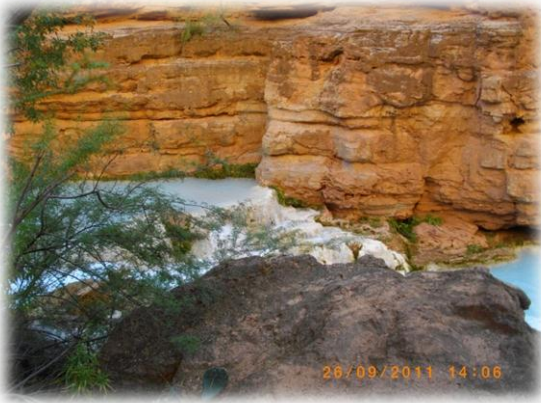
A lot of the trail is rocky, clambering over old waterfalls. We pass an old



mine shaft high up on the rock face. When in use the mules would be lowered on ropes from the top to enable them work in the mine. A long metal ladder, rungs 6 feet apart, remains on the rock wall; this was used as scaffolding for the wooden ladders.

We carried on the hike further into the canyon, following the river, crossing it from time to time, a great way to cool the feet!!





After a swim at Beaver Falls we started our hike back. Further up the trail a very angry rattlesnake blocked the path. We were quite happy for Zac and Jimmy to persuade it into a crevice with water sprays, giving us instruction to look on the way past but no stopping. Close to Mooney Falls again we stopped at smaller falls to have a shower and wash our hair, everything used is biodegradable, the water was really cold but so refreshing. Then we were ready to go back up the way we came down!!

We arrived back in camp close to 6pm. Tonight was Asian night in the 'restaurant', it was amazing the food they cooked for us, always starting with appetizers. We were frequently joined by tarantulas underneath the table but they never bothered us. There are no real fires allowed in the Canyon but we had a propane gas fire pit in camp and we would sit around that after our meal, looking at the amazing stars, joined by frogs below the pit and bats above our heads.



The following day was to be two 2 litre hikes, with lunch in camp between the two. Firstly we hiked the short distance to the bottom of Havasu Falls and then through the Canyon to the left.

Here the boulders got bigger and bigger as we 'rock-hopped' over them.

It was amazing to think about the force of water that was needed to shift them to their current positions.



When the Canyon narrowed to shear walls we retraced our steps and explored a disused mine, it was nice to escape the midday heat.



After lunch in camp, we hiked back up towards New Navajo Falls, which we had passed on the first day, hiking in. The climb from camp to the falls was steep and hard work in the heat but a refreshing swim was our reward when we arrived.



New Navajo Falls



Rock Falls



Rock Falls

The next morning we hiked out. To ensure we arrived at the switchbacks before the strong heat of the day we had a really early start. We had packed our lunches and snacks the night before and stored them in the cool box. This was a 3 litre hike. Zac and Jimmy would stay behind to pack up camp and load the horses, following on later.

We started at 5.30am, it was still dark and we used our head torches to light our way. The trail is not marked but it's fairly easy to follow previous foot prints and look out for the horse poo to know you're on the right track. We only made a few small detours!! It was surprising that when you're flagging and it's getting tough a quick snack of trail mix or dried fruit soon spurs you on and lifts your energy levels. We learnt over the previous days that it's better to drink little and often rather than a large amount all at one go. Carrying a water bladder in my rucksack and using the drinking tube clipped to my T-shirt was far easier than getting a bottle out.



Climbing back up the switchbacks was really tough; the end was so nearly in sight. Zac and Jimmy had told us not to keep stopping but take little breathers for a drink, if we needed to, at the bends.

We were all expected to make it out within 6 hours and we all did, then we were waiting for Zac and Jimmy at the top.

I managed it in just under 4  $\frac{1}{2}$  hours and arrived at the Hualapai Hilltop at 9.55am - mission accomplished!!



I really enjoyed the whole experience but it was physically challenging. The Havasu Canyon has its own unique atmosphere, you feel cut off from the rest of the world but there is so much life down there you have no time to miss it. Hannah would have loved the Canyon .... but probably not the spiders or snakes. It's a trip I made for her, I truly wish I could have made it with her but I really felt that she was with me.

Our trip was nearly over. We travelled on to Las Vegas, taking approximately 5 hours, through Arizona and into Nevada, what a contrast awaited us!!



We stayed at the New York, New York hotel and casino - what a pleasure to have a hot shower and a soft bed but part of me really missed the exhilarating, turquoise waters to bathe in and even my tent! We concluded our adventure with a 'gala' dinner at the Hard Rock Café and were free to view the sights of the Las Vegas strip. We met up with Zac and Jimmy one more time for breakfast before they headed back to Arizona to unload the van, have a well-deserved day off and then start out again on another adventure!!! They had looked after us so well.

Now that my year of fundraising for **Refuge** is drawing to a close I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has supported me. I have a few more bits and pieces to add to the total. When the gift aid is added it looks like I will have raised a total of around £7000.

My Just Giving page [www.justgiving.com/inhannahsmemory](http://www.justgiving.com/inhannahsmemory) is due to end on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2012, after that date if anyone would still like to donate please send to: -  
Refuge, International House, 1 St Katherine's Way, London. E1W 1UN and let them know you are donating in memory of Hannah Louise Fisher.

