

The Shackleton Scholarship Fund - Shackleton Scholar's Report 2009

Funding support for student players to attend Island Games 2009

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FI Badminton Club Junior Team
Stanley

Our journey to Åland began on the 19th June as we left the Falkland Islands via the RAF Airbridge to England via Ascension Island returning to the Falklands on the 7th July.

On arrival in Brize Norton, we headed to family for a few days before meeting up with the majority of the Falkland Island Team on the 24th June where we overnighted at Heathrow Airport. The Heathrow bus picked up the FI team of about 45 to transport us to Terminal 5 at about four in the morning. A two and a half hour flight to Stockholm, followed by a bus trip for two hours to the ferry terminal, and then a two hour ferry crossing lapsed before we arrived in Mariehamn, the capital of Åland, where we were booked into the Esplanade Hotel at about 6 pm to be our home for the next ten days.

The weather was fantastic, bright sunshine and little wind. The sun dipped to twilight for a couple of hours around midnight but otherwise endless daylight.

We only experienced the warm heavy rain at the closing ceremony on the final night when the waterproof ponchos and umbrellas came into good use from the welcome packs provided to all team members.

The scenery was amazing ~ many houses would look at home in Legoland and trees were everywhere.



FI Badminton Club Junior Team '09



Laura and Sonia show their support

With twenty five islands taking part in the Games, this little Island of 27,000 inhabitants (10,000 approx in the capital) suddenly increased with five or six thousand athletes and supporters to house and feed. You can about circumnavigate this island in a few hours so an incredible achievement by the organisers with many volunteers coming from neighbouring Scandinavian countries to help out. With their English as good as their native language, communicating was never a problem.

The Badminton venue was just half an hour from Mariehamn. The Badminton schedule for the competition meant that we were either practising or competing every day. Sometimes full long days from leaving the hotel at 8 in the morning to catch the bus, and finishing about 4 pm, and other times just for a few hours. With the hall & outside temperature reaching approx 30+ degs most days, this was a challenge considering the zero temperatures left behind in the Falklands.

We were the only junior team so competition was very hard. We learnt such a lot and made many new friends and supporters for the Falklands. The place we were given in this competition will be a great memory for us all.

When time permitted, we supported the FI Football Team, watched some athletics at the main stadium, enjoyed the outdoors with swimming in the warm Baltic Sea, played mini golf, fished, went to a circus complete with elephants & donkeys, and to Games Street, the main focus for shopping and evening entertainment.

The opening and closing ceremonies were incredible and we felt very proud to be representing our country along with the rest of the FI Team.

Back in the Falklands, we are still training hard and will hopefully form part of the Badminton Team heading to the Isle of Wight in 2011, and look forward to meeting up with many of the friends made in Åland.

The support of the Shackleton Committee secured this venture for which we are incredibly grateful.