

## **Rugby in the Rainbow Nation**

Douglas Kyle [S6] reports on the Hutchesons' 1<sup>st</sup> XV's inspiring tour to South Africa, for which the boys raised funds in order to support local charities.

7 August 2008: Twelve hours and a couple of bouts of travel sickness after we left Glasgow Airport, the 28 bleary-eyed members of our tour party made their way to Milnerton Rugby Club, just outside of Cape Town for the first of four consecutive training sessions. For our first three nights in South Africa, we stayed at the waterfront of the Cape, where we would return again for the final leg of our tour. Despite the heavy rugby schedule, we found time to take in some of the well-known sites of the area, starting with a trip up Table Mountain. However, due to some unfortunate conditions, the view from the top was minimal to say the least! Thankfully Mother Nature was on our side when we took a trip over to Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 18 years, and we were given an insightful and enjoyable tour, picking up some native language as we went.

We then moved north to the small town of Hopefield, where local families acted as our hosts for two nights. Some boys were luckier than others; some having to put up with no cutlery or a proper bed, with others enjoying swimming pools. It was against Hopefield High School that we played our opening match. Prior to the match, the school presented Hopefield with £3,000 of new kit for those who wish to play rugby, but do not have the funding to do so. Although it was winter in South Africa, soaring temperatures began to take their toll and despite our impressive performance, Hopefield ran out winners, 19 points to three, making our second night there a little less pleasant!

From Hopefield, we returned south to Somerset West where we stayed with our second set of hosts, with everybody feeling a little more relaxed about the concept, having experienced a relatively trouble-free stay in Hopefield. Prior to

our second match, against Parel Vallei High School, a school similar to our own, we visited a cheetah reserve and the Huguenot town of Franschhoek. Despite a scrappy performance, we managed to win our first game of the tour, beating Parel Vallei 19 points to three.

The culmination of our tour was a visit to the Langa Township in Cape Town, an eye-opening experience for us all; houses made from nothing more than corrugated iron and rags, children as young as five out begging in the streets. We were therefore delighted that we had been able to contribute £2,000 to the Friends of Warmth charity, whose work involves improving these people's lives. It was here that we played our final game against Tygerberg Rugby Club where I'm afraid to say we had to concede defeat once more, losing 38 points to 26. It was however a fantastic match in which the Hutchie squad rose to the occasion against a fast, free flowing and talented rugby side who sealed their victory with a breakaway try in the closing moments of the match.

On our final night in Cape Town, the whole tour party, staff included, enjoyed a selection of typical African food in a local restaurant. At the end of the evening and our tour all the team members agreed that it had been a wonderful experience, with our sincere thanks going to Mr Dewar, Mr Wyatt and Mr Russell who made the trip possible.

The team agreed that the remainder of the tour funds – £1,000 – should be donated to the school's chosen charity for this year, the Children's Hospice Association Scotland.