

when Oban high pupils hit the USA where they stayed with their Laurinburg partners.

But before they Americans reached Scottish shores, duck races, raffles, cake stalls, race nights and a sponsored fancy dress run were all organised by Oban pupils to raise vital funds that would help lower the cost of the trip.

With the cakes eaten and raffles drawn, all the pupils could do was wait until June before it was time to meet their Laurinburg counterparts. The Scottish youngsters were each given a profile of their partner to give them a small insight into what he or she was like. Some members of both groups also began to contact each other via e-mail and internet chat services.

But even with some contact made beforehand, the Oban pupils still worried that the Americans might find it difficult settling into a new environment.

'We thought it might be uncomfortable for them as all we really knew of each other was what we had read in a profile, so we had to make them feel really good about being here,' said Oban high pupil Steven Brady.

And the Scottish youngsters had no bother making their visitors feel welcome. 'The Americans settled into our homes too well!' joked Robbie Kupris from Oban high.

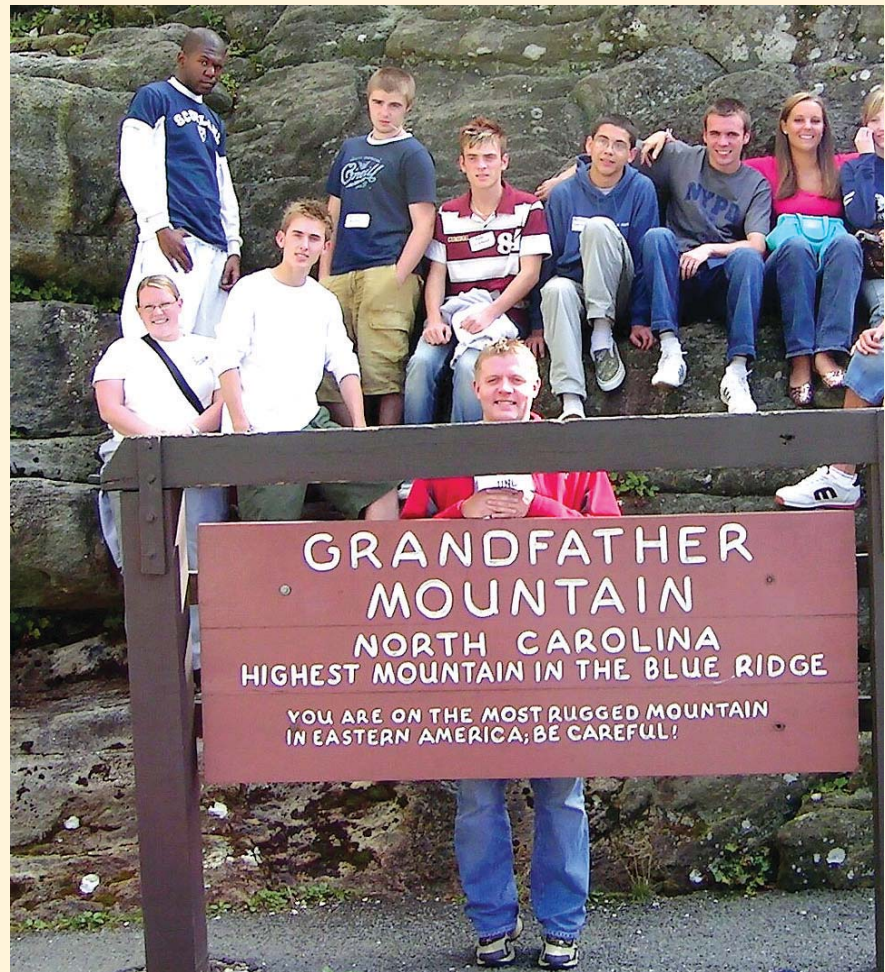
As well as attending Oban High School, the American pupils embarked upon a huge variety of activities during their time in Scotland, including a Sea-Fari trip, visit to Edinburgh and a ceilidh. One of the highlights of their stay was a weekend trip to the Isle of Tiree.

'Going to Tiree was a good experience as we just got to hang out and had the chance to get to know each other better,' said Steven.

When it was time for the Americans to return, it wasn't just the pupils who found it hard to say goodbye.

Oban's Steven Kersley said: 'My mum cried when the student who was staying with me went home!'

Four months later it was time for the Oban pupils to say 'cheerio' to Scotland and back their bags for Laurinburg with chaperones Donald



McLeod, a Gaelic teacher at Oban High School, and his partner Jillian Gibson.

It was an action packed two weeks for the young Scots. Before arriving in North Carolina the pupils stopped off in New York where they saw the 'Big Apple's' most famous sites; the Statue of Liberty, Wall Street, the Ground Zero site, Macy's store,



*The Oban high pupils who organised the fun run to raise money for the Laurinburg*