

Robbie ensures Leith links to faraway Fiji

Some of the sunshine that according to the song falls on Leith has been reflected as far away as the Pacific Island of Fiji thanks to the enthusiasm for rugby coaching of 19-year-old Robbie Greenan.

Son of Derek, a former Leith captain, Robbie started assisting coaching the youth section of that club, known as the Hawks, along with his dad and others over four years ago making him one of the youngest tutors in the game.

But, armed with a qualification in Sports Coaching and Development, Robbie spread his wings three months ago through the International Volunteering HQ.

Mum Lynn says: "As he comes to the end of a 12 week stint in Fiji this has been a fantastic experience for Robbie.

"It took him 40 hours to reach Fiji but he quickly fell into a (coaching) rhythm."

As well as being able to watch close-up the Fijian National sevens squad training on sand dunes in preparation for defending their Olympic title next year and even being invited on to their team bus another highlight has been providing kit to some of the youngsters courtesy of the Leith club.

Lynn added: "My husband and I got a phone-call from Robbie asking for help with kit as the kids he is coaching are very

poor.

“It cost us £110 to send the kit but it was worth it to see photographs on the faces of the Fijian youngsters when Robbie arrived at training looking like Santa with his big bag of jerseys, shorts etc.

“There has been anxious moments too, though, such as when a cyclone hit and everybody was effectively placed under house arrest for three days!”

Winner of Scottish Rugby’s “East Region Young Person of the Season” award in 2021 for his commitment to coaching Robbie, who has also worked with the Edinburgh Badminton Academy, says:

“I’ve been in Fiji for 11 weeks now volunteering with International Volunteer HQ, delivering a sports education programme to kids in a local village called Vatukarasa.”

Vatukarasa village only received electricity in 1978 six years before a visit from Sir Edmund Hilary, the first climber to conquer Mount Everest, in another well documented moment for the area.

Robbie said: “Every day we go to the village and meet with the children at the local rugby pitch. Kids of all ages come along.

“We play a range of different sports but mainly rugby and volleyball. Their rugby / volleyball posts are made of bamboo branches and kicking tees are made from the bottom of plastic bottles!

“I have arranged a sports day for them too. The kids had loads of fun. They loved it. I’ve also been training with the local men’s team as they were preparing for their 7s season as well as watching the Fiji 7s team train on enormous sand dunes. I ended up on their team bus!

“It’s been the greatest experience of my life immersing myself in a new culture and seeing how happy people are even though they don’t have much. The children are so grateful and love the volunteers being here.

“They are great kids and I’ll be really sad to leave.

“It was really important to me to try to get some kids’ rugby kit over here to give to the kids. Leith Rugby kindly donated the kit. It took a while to get here but the excitement it has created has been amazing!”

A stand off who represented Portobello High in his schooldays, Robbie will spend the next few months travelling in Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines and Vietnam.



Fijian youngsters proudly display the Leith rugby kit provided through coach Robbie Greenan



A local lass models the Leith Rugby colours in Fiji



Coach Robbie Greenan and Fijian friends



Rugby posts on Robbie's pitch are made of bamboo and have to be erected pre-match