

# 'It all comes down to water' says local green entrepreneur

WITH the recent snowfall, the prospect of summer may seem a long way off for most of us.

But for Farnham entrepreneur and artist Gary Waterworth Owen, sun, sand and sustainability are a full-time fixture.

Mr Waterworth Owen is founder of the ResponseAbility Alliance, a collective of environmentally-minded individuals dedicated to social entrepreneurship and improving the way individuals and corporations interact with the natural world.

Through his business ventures Waterworth Expeditions and Lengthen your Stride Ltd, he offers individuals and corporations the opportunity to expand their horizons, by taking part in tailor-made treks across desert regions lasting anything from 10 to 21 days.

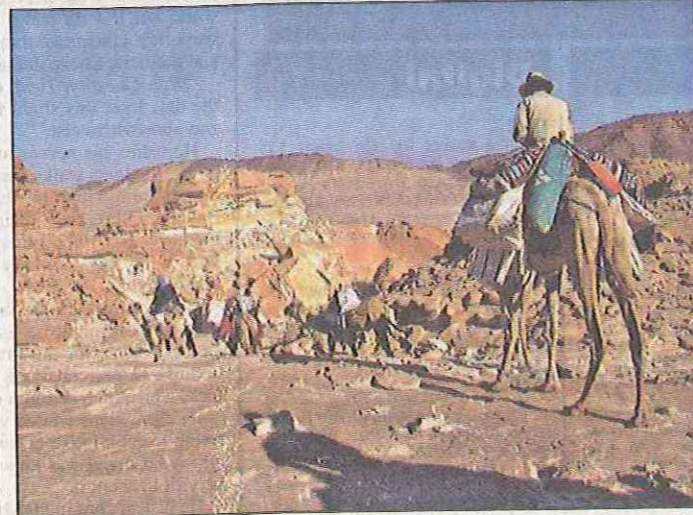
On December 11, Gary and his team completed a special 32-day expedition from the coast of Egypt across the Sinai Desert, ending at the bottom of the Gulf of Aquaba bordering Saudi Arabia.

Launched and funded by patron Guy Powiecki, the expedition represented a new challenge for Lengthen Your Stride Ltd, and an opportunity that the adventurers that took part were keen to grasp.

Accompanied by seven Bedouin tribesmen, 14 camels and a dog, the entire expedition was filmed from start to finish, with a documentary about the journey now in production.

"The purpose of the Lengthen Your Stride programme is to help corporate clients to walk their talk when it comes to climate change and fostering a positive relationship with the environment," said Gary.

"It's about applying the lessons



you've learnt to real life. I could tell you how to ride a bicycle for three years, but until you do it, it means nothing. Only once you've experienced the effects of climate change first hand can you truly walk the talk in order to combat it."

Referred to as 'EcoVenturers', participants in the expeditions are brought face-to-face with the effects of climate change, gaining insight into their own impact on the planet and how they can achieve sustainability within their business and everyday life. The benefits of Lengthen Your Stride expeditions have proved to be far-reaching for many of those involved.

"During the course of a trek, we use no waste; we have a tiny carbon footprint, and only carry what is needed. As well as teaching people about the environment, the expeditions cultivate respect between cultures. People of different religions work together to succeed, finding common ground in the process.

"It's an inspiring, life-changing experience, and they take that respect for bio-diversity and different cultures with them when they return."

After establishing himself as a pioneering green entrepreneur in Southern Africa in the 1980s, Gary started his own consultancy to increase environmental awareness and good practice within the corporate sphere.

In 1992 he founded the ResponseAbility Alliance at Rio de Janeiro's Earth Summit, further developing his green ambitions.

"The expeditions have always been part of what I do," he said. According to the entrepreneur, there is a close relation between his business ventures and his art.

"I'd spent a lot of time previously



with the Himba and the Bushmen tribes in Africa. Going into the bush was my escape from the business world, and I would also paint them, which is where the art fits in. I've held exhibitions at the Royal Commonwealth Gallery and in Paris."

He explained there is a strong philosophical conviction underpinning all of the ResponseAbility Alliance's engagements. "Everything we do is geared around realising water is the most important thing on the planet. Even returning to Farnham's snow after the desert, I'm struck by how everything is related to water - it's one big cycle.

"2010 is the UN's year of bio-diversity, and I think it's time that people and corporations alike woke up and realised that the real issue is water. It's vital we start getting to grips with climate change."

Currently working on a book about his latest journey, Gary is planning to organise an exhibition of his artwork in Farnham later in the year.

He will also be giving a public talk about activities at Farnham's University of the Creative Arts on February 26. Tickets are available from [www.cfsd.org.uk](http://www.cfsd.org.uk).

For more information, see [www.responseabilityalliance.com/index.html](http://www.responseabilityalliance.com/index.html)



Gary Waterworth Owen with tribesmen.