

Tapescript - SURVIVAL SCHOOL**Interview with Jonny Crockett, June 2006**<http://www.britishcouncil.org/kids-listening>

Jonny: Hi there my name is Jonny Crockett from Survival School. Today I'm here in Escot Park with 2 friends of mine. So guys, would you like to introduce yourselves?

Interviewers: I'm John, hi. I'm Olivia. I live in Devon and I'm 12.

Jonny: Right guys, you wanted to ask me a few questions about being out in the countryside and not just this country from what I can gather, but you want to ask me about different places around the world. What would you like to ask me?

How would you cope if you were on holiday and you got lost in the woods?

Jonny: Getting lost in the woods is a tricky one, can be a frightening experience, but what you need to do, if it is in the day, is to locate where the sun is, and if you have a watch, point the hour hand at the sun, and then you take the angle between the hour hand and 12 on your watch, and split that down the middle, and that will point you either north or south so at least you can work out which direction you need to walk in ..

But the best thing you can do is to head downhill. Water goes down hill, so if you follow water downhill, a little trickle will lead into a stream, and the stream will lead into a river and along rivers that's where people live, so you can at least get yourself to civilisation again.

If you were trapped there overnight, how would you provide food for yourself and a bed?

Food is really really tricky. You can go without food for 3 weeks, believe it or not, but you can't go for any more than 3 days without drinking - so water and heat and shelter are going to be your main priorities.

For shelter, you need to get as many leaves as possible and create a little shelter for yourself, cover it over with leaves, lie on lots of leaves. Anything to keep you off the damp ground.

And for fire, there are lots of different ways of doing it, but you are looking at rubbing 2 sticks together, and you need the right sort of sticks. And that is where you need to learn your trees. We are surrounded by willow trees, alder, we've got some Scotts pines, and we've got a nice holly tree over there as well. Some of those trees are really good for rubbing the sticks together to make fire, but others aren't. If you can identify the ones you need, like willow or birch, then that would be absolutely fantastic.

With regards to your water - if you've got no way of filtering it, then you need to try and find things like moss, maybe charcoal from your fire and try to sieve the water through that, and that will help purify it.

So guys just here on the right hand side we've got a number of different things we can start eating. We've got these thistles here. You can actually eat all of it. You'd need to boil the main part of the thistle just to make the prickles go soft. But it's the roots which are really good. You get big long roots which are called 'tap roots' which can be anything up to a foot or so long and you just use them like carrots or parsnips.

And then you've got this one here with a long, matt, mid-green leaves and what will grown out of the top of that is going to be a long woody stalk and on the top of it is going to look like a sausage, and that is a bullrush and you can eat the roots of that as well and you can also use the fibrous, really fluffy seeds from the sausage on the top you can use that to help you light your fire. So you've got something to eat, something to light your fire with.

Got some poisonous plants here as well. This one here - yup - that's Dropwort Water Hemlock and that's very poisonous so you see you don't want to be playing around with that... you've got to know which plants you are looking for. The thing to do, for anybody setting out learning these things, just learn 5, 5 plants you know you are going to be able to identify every single time and get it right...and if you can do that then the next time you go out you learn one more, and then one more and then by the end of the year you've got 55 rather than just the

five. You just keep learning it. You have to learn these things from books and also from seeing these things and having them pointed out to you.

You see we've also got...oh here we go, nettles as well. You can make tea out of the tips of the nettles, and with the rest of it you can make nettle soup, but you can also make string. If you take the inner bits of the stalk, then you can make it into tiny little fibres and in fact during the 2nd world war German army uniforms, a lot of them were made out of nettle fibres.

Where is the most barren landscape you've taught on?

Probably the Sahara desert, there was absolutely nothing but sand and rock, but having said that, there was lots to eat there because there were scorpions, lizards, snakes, huge spiders, as big as your hand and bigger, but it was the water that was the problem, but at least we could rig up some shelters using the rocks. You pile up the rocks like a dry stone wall effect and then you can put a bit of clothing or sheeting over the top. That affords you a little shade, but the Sahara desert has got to be one of the most difficult environments to live in. It's a nightmare!

How did you cope with the heat in the Sahara desert?

What you've got to do is get out of the sun and you've got to try and drink lots of water, as much water as you physically can. We were drinking about 10-11 litres a day so you only work first thing in the morning which means you have to get up about 4 o'clock and you work through until about 10 and then you take a break until about 4 in the afternoon and you work in the evenings as well, so a lot of the things you're doing it is pitch black because it is night time

What do you do if you can't find any supply of water?

There is always water around somewhere, it is just a question of how you go about finding it. For example if you are anywhere near an old dried up river then go to the outside of a bend in the river and start digging down and if you've got green plants that's a really good sign that there is water somewhere. You might have to dig down where the roots are to try to squeeze the last few drops of moisture out of the soil.

Or maybe you could put a plastic bag over the top of the plant, and what happens is the plant soaks up all the moisture for the plant through the roots and it does something called transpiration - it gets rid of all the water through its leaves. If you put a plastic bag over the leaves then you can catch all that moisture in the bag, and you can drink from the bag

If you have to eat things like scorpions, and stuff, how would you get the poison out?

With scorpions what you tend to do is cut off the tail, because that's where the venom sacs are, and with snakes generally speaking you're talking about cutting the head plus 2 inches behind the head. If you cut that off and discard it, then the rest is pretty good to eat! And snake is DELICIOUS, it is fantastic - you don't believe me, do you?

What is your favourite snake?

Oh, a bit of python!

Have you ever been bitten by anything poisonous?

The most poisonous thing I've been bitten by is an adder and that was in this country and it happened not too far away from here - was bitten on the index finger of my left hand and it swelled up to twice the size and went black and I had tingling feelings in my wrist and my elbows and my shoulder. I felt a bit sick and after about 4 hrs of ice and things on it, then I was fine again after that.

What is the strangest thing you've ever eaten?

Ants? Ants are nice ... ant larvae is really nice, it tastes like prawns .

In the desert do they have safari ants which I believe are quite poisonous? Not poisonous but if they bite you it hurts?

They squirt formic acid at you and that's what causes that burning feeling. And it really irritates the skin and makes you want to scratch a lot. You can get honey ants where you just pick the back bit off and they are quite sweet-tasting. Ants are more of a problem when they want to eat you, rather than you wanting to eat them!

Talking about ice, if you were in the arctic how would you survive if say the ice was broken and you were in the water?

If you get into ice she's cracking and you go through and you go into the water you've got to get yourself out as quickly as possible. Keep yourself flat, so that you are putting your body over a bigger surface area then you roll in the snow. Snow actually absorbs water - but the thing you've got to do then is to get out of your wet clothes and into dry stuff as quickly as possible and in your dry clothes you've got to try to get your body temperature back up and the best thing you can do for that is to have some hot sweet tea.

A lot of this survival and bushcraft stuff is all about being prepared and getting the right kit to the right place.

So John you've brought us to a lovely bit of willow here, and willow is absolutely fantastic because if you cut this willow, you can then stick it in the ground again and it will start growing! The willow grows in such a way that you get nice long, fairly straight branches, and that's really for shelter building. You can use the inner bark for 2 things.

One - you can use it for cordage, so you can make rope and you can start lashing whopways (?) together, and the other thing is that it is full of salicylic acid. Do you know what that is? (NOPE!) Well salicylic acid is aspirin so if you've got a really bad headache, then you go and find a willow tree, scrape off the outer bark and you'll want about 1cm by 1cm for an adult - so about half that probably for a child. There we go, it is the light green stuff. So get rid of the outer bark and you get the light green bark and it has got a really horrible bitter taste..

We've got some lovely, lovely water mint here so...John, it's got to be your turn, what I want you to do I want you to crush it between your fingers, have a really good sniff, tell me what you get from that - have a good sniff.

(It smells minty)

Yeah - that is fantastic. Now the best thing that you can do with that, to my mind, is you can put that inside something like trout, and then cook it slowly over an open fire, which is wonderful, or you can make it into mint tea, and what you do is you get a big cupped handful, and you put that into a cup, pour on the boiling water and leave it to steep for a little while, take the stalk out and all the leaves will come with it and you'll have a lovely cup of mint tea and it's really soothing and it's also very refreshing as well.

Well, what else have we got here? We've got some dock. If you get stung by a stinging nettle, do you know what to do with dock leaves?

What you do is you fold it up and start to squeeze it. You grind it into your hand so all the juices come out - yes that's right - and what's in the juices is something called 'tannin' . Now tannin makes your skin go very tight. If you've ever had a really strong cup of black tea - ah - well it makes your mouth go really dry and it makes your gums and tongue feel really tight and that's the tannin, the same stuff that they have in red wine. And when you put that on to...ah on to... your nettle sting, it makes your skin go tight, and that forces the barbs that were on the stinging nettle that came off onto your skin out of your skin so that they can't pump formic acid (which is the same stuff that ants squirt at you when you annoy them).

How old do you have to be to go on the survival courses that you take?

We take people on courses from age 12 and over. If you are under 18 though you must have either a parent or guardian with you.

The sort of things that you'd be doing will be things like firelighting, learning how to use your knife properly, building shelters, foraging for food. You'd be doing your own game preparation - so you'd be looking at pigeon, rabbit and trout there, and learning how to prepare those for meals. You'd also be doing axe and knife sharpening, you'd be doing actual cordage, you'd be doing water preparation, traps and snares, natural navigation. There's a whole load of things you'd be doing on an ordinary weekend course.

If you're over 18 you can come on one of our more adventurous UK courses up in Scotland. And those courses are really quite arduous which is why we don't take people under 18 on those courses. For example last year we had a course running in Scotland and we were meant to be picked up by boat and taken back across this huge Scottish Loch, but it was so windy, the first lot, as they were going back to the far side of the loch they had to bail out using their cups and their mess tins, and then I got a phonecall saying, 'Jonny, we're not coming back!' And it was an 18 mile walk out, with all the kit and very little in the way of food so we had to forage on our way out and purify our own water as we went - and that was very very hard work.

How old do you have to be to go abroad with you - say to the desert or Arctic or something?

You have to be 18 or over. In the last few years we've been to Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya, we've been to Borneo. In fact we came back from Borneo last week and in the jungle there it was really quite intense and a lot of people were slightly worried as soon as it gets a bit dark...suddenly it gets dark - and I mean VERY dark - so you can't see a thing, and the noise is horrific it can get very, very loud.

Also some people get worried in the desert. We went to the Sahara Desert last year and the year before and you're in a massive open space and there is nothing, nothing - no tree, no building, there's no sign of life for miles, well, as far as you can see!

Canada is quite a good one, which is like a very hilly and tree-covered UK really. It is the same sort of climate. Next year in fact we're going off and doing a canoeing trip down one of the rivers in Ontario, so we do get to go around a bit. We try and do desert, jungle, mountain and sort of er Canadian wilderness in that sort of rotation. We try to do that every 4 years or so.

Interviewers: Thank you very much for your time today and I can say that I'm not trying aspirin again.

Thanks, that was very interesting. I hope to put that to some use!