

1st P&P Post

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GSL's Report

With a busy term over, and another busy term already started all the Sections have been out here, there and everywhere having fun and enjoying themselves. From Visits to see some lambs, to the big bang science fair, to camps, all the Sections have been off having some great fun and it's all thanks to our great collection of Leaders.

The end of term was marked with sadness due to the closing of the Otter Beaver Scout Colony after 12 years. While this does mean a reduction in the number of Beavers we can currently take, it means we can concentrate on providing great programmes through the other Colonies, and building the Leader teams.

By far the biggest success of last term was the coming together of the Group to co-ordinate the collecting of toys and fundraising for the Toys for Syria appeal. Together as a Group we managed to collect just under £200 to support the toys' transport costs, and collect together a massive 1/4 ton of toys. Thanks to Suzanne for co-ordinating everyone in this, and the Explorer Scouts in their promoting, collecting, packing, testing, weighing and labelling of all the toys. Most of all thanks to all those who donated toys and bought cakes to make this all possible.

Here's to another fun packed and busy term.

Richard Goodyear, Group Scout Leader (07786 285045)

Chairman's Ramblings

The boathouse and the Water Activities team are moving ahead and shortly activities will start out on the water. We still have a bit of work to do over at the boathouse but plans are in hand to ensure everything is completed this spring.

The biggest challenge the Group faces at the moment is the lack of support. We have loads of young people wanting to be involved in Scouting and enjoying the Scouting that they are doing but this is only able to continue if we get more adult help. Our Leaders do a fantastic job but they cannot do it alone. We need more help so if you can spare an evening a month or better still a week and would like to better support the Group then please step forward and speak to your Section Leader. Similarly we need more help with the management of the Group.

So many people speak to me during the year saying what a great job the Group does and how much their children love their Scouting and what benefits Scouting is doing for their children. I agree totally but without more help we will struggle to continue to provide this.

If you can give up some time to help whether it be helping at the Farmers' Market, helping out on a Section evening or indeed becoming part of the management team of the Group then please get in touch.

Yours in Scouting,

Andy Williamson, Group Chairman



Three Towers 2014

The Three Towers hike was great. Our team consisted of Thomas, Mikey, George and me. It was a great experience and the weather did not let us down. We walked 27 kms (plus slight detour!), the hike was hard but enjoyable. We completed it in 6h 50 minutes. Next year we will do it even quicker!

Joshua Smyth, Scout



Hannah.T, Duggs and I set off at 11:27am for our 45 km hike. We finally arrived at 79th Reading's HQ in Tilehurst at 1 am, after

13.5 hours of virtually non-stop walking! We walked through amazing countryside and up some never ending hills. It was very challenging but we are glad we did it. We might even do it again next year ;-)

Maddie Ham, Explorer Scout

Jamboree Report

Recently I have been very busy fundraising to attend the World Scout Jamboree in Japan 2015. Last Saturday I helped run a stall at the 79th scouts "fun day", which included watching various leaders in the dreaded stocks enduring the pleasure of having wet sponges thrown at them! A few weeks ago I bag packed at Tesco's with some of the Scouts who are also fundraising to go to Uganda next year, as part of "Project Africa," and we managed to raise over £700! This weekend I am walking a sponsored 5 mile hike in my onesie which will be a breeze after the challenging 45Km Three Towers hike! Meanwhile the whole Tolson family is contributing, with my Mum currently growing a range of cucumbers, tomatoes and courgettes to sell at "Purley in the Park", and my Dad running "sketch a pet". I am very touched by the generosity of the public and in particular the Purley community. Many thanks to everyone who has helped!

Hannah Tolson, Explorer Scout



Water Voles Colony

Our term has been a fun one as usual. We enjoyed an evening on space, where the Beaver Scouts made constellation biscuits and learnt about the planets. Our science continued when we had an evening learning about magnets and circuits and how they work as part of our Imagination badges. These badges were completed with an evening of Hama beads where they Beavers had great fun creating their Hama pictures.

We also gained our Emergency Aid stage 1 badges with an evening on first aid and safety. The Beavers enjoyed wrapping each other in bandages and placing each other in the recovery position. They also learnt how to make an emergency phone call and how to keep themselves safe in the home. This concluded with a fun game of bandaging their lodge leaders with toilet roll!



We were lucky enough to be part of the Toys for Smiles campaign and the Water Voles were very generous in their donations of toys and cakes. Our lodge leaders did a great job of selling the cakes and made a great donation of £28.75 for a very worthwhile cause. Thank you for all your help.

It has been a lovely term and our highlight would be the trip to Rushall Farm to see the lambs and mix with the other two Colonies of the Group. It was a great evening out and we were even lucky enough to see a lamb being born! We look forward to a fun filled summer term.

Tic Tac (Colleen Hughes), Beaver Scout Leader

Otter Colony

Despite not having its own Leader, the Otter Colony had a great term, being run by the Leaders from the other Colonies, kind volunteers and Young Leader, Tic Tac (Harry Archer), who provided a constant familiar face over this period of change.

The Beaver Scouts ate lots of chocolate to try to distinguish between Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade and tried welsh cakes and Caerphilly cheese, made handprint dragons and learnt some Welsh for St David's Day. Acknowledging the RSPB Birdwatch Survey, we played Bird Bingo, guessed bird songs and made some 'fat' bird feeders to take home. Following World Water

Day, we learnt about water and tried soap carving (no knives needed!). We made a start towards the Animal Friend Activity badge and must say a big "thank you" to Joolz and Albi Barry, who visited the Colony to tell us all about Buddhism. We also joined with the other Colonies for a great evening of lambs and tractor rides at Rushall Farm and took part in the Explorer Scouts' Toys for Smiles appeal, collecting toys and planting seeds and decorating cakes to raise money.

In the penultimate week of term, the Beavers very sadly said goodbye and thank you to Tic Tac, who was a brilliant Young Leader in the Colony for several years. The very last meeting was a scavenger hunt and lots of games on the field. As no Leader had been found, it was decided that the Colony could not continue to run after Easter and sadly it has been closed down. Some of the Otter Beaver Scouts have now moved up to Cubs and the rest have transferred to the Polecats Colony. We wish them lots of fun in their new Sections.



The Beaver Scout Leader Team

Polecats Colony

Early in the New Year, the Polecats Colony learnt all about birds ahead of the RSPB Garden Birdwatch. We went on to work on the Global Challenge Badge, with evenings on Burns night, Chinese New Year and Scouting in Spain. A big thank you must go to Nacho's dad for coming and telling us all about the Spanish "Castores"; he taught us the promise, law and sign and a great Spanish game about ping pong balls.

Continuing the global theme by thinking about how we can look after our world, we visited the recycling centre at Padworth, for a fun evening learning all about how we should dispose of our waste. A couple of weeks later we did some of our own recycling, making models and useful things out of our old junk. We also made a start on our Animal Friend badge and took part in the Toys for Smiles appeal.



Out and about again, we enjoyed a super trip to see the lambs at Rushall Farm with the Otters and Water Voles. We also had an opportunity to visit the Scouts' Patrol Camp, where we got to see what the Scouts were up to and toast a few marshmallows!

Sunshine (Fran Jones), Assistant Beaver Scout Leader

cubs

Kingfisher Pack

Following the Christmas holidays the Kingfishers, like many of us, spent the first weeks of the New Year trying to focus on health and fitness. We learned about healthy eating and improving our fitness, and went on to try two new games, Goal ball and Kabaddi (Kabaddi Kabaddi Kabaddi Kabaddi Kabaddi Kabaddi.....). The Healthy eating took a turn for the worse on Burns night when we enjoyed haggis, Irn Bru and the work of Britain's second greatest bard (I'm biased!).



The second half of the term had a scientific theme with an Astronomy night, fun and experiments with vortex cannons and a trip to the Big bang Science fair in Birmingham. We opened up the floor to the Sixers to lead our first ever Cub forum, with Cubs expressing what they like and dislike about Cubs, and explored issues around bullying. The results of the forum will inform our programme choices over the next few months. Cubs told us what they liked best included "The mud" and "walks" and what they enjoyed least "the end" and "walks". Future activities they'd like to do included going to Reading music festival and Visiting the Microsoft HQ in Seattle.....we'll see.

Towards the end of the term we had a great visit to St James the Less and talked about faith, Easter, and the community we live in as well as performing some of the most raucous Hymns the church has ever witnessed

Akela (Matt Shakespeare), Cub Scout Leader

Heron Pack

2014 saw the start of a fitness campaign in the Pack!! It started with a horse race night, which linked both sport and Chinese New Year as 2014 is the year of the horse. Within their sixes the Cub Scouts made their own horse and jockey outfits, complete with tabard and hat. The following week saw 'A night at the races!' Taking it in turns to be the jockey they had to race down the home straight and across the finishing line. Race moves were determined by a throw of a dice! The betting stations were opened and if you picked the winning horse you could exchange your token for a sweet. The evening involved lots of shouting and cheering especially during the Leaders' race!!

With energy levels at a high we continued the term with some circuit training. We were very lucky to have Simon Gibbens, personal fitness coach, come along and set up the circuit with us and introduce all the exercises to the Cubs, ensuring they were all performed correctly. Individual scores were recorded and improvement monitored over a three week period. I am sure



there were some very tired Cubs during those weeks, as the adrenaline kicked in with determination to better the previous week's scores. The focus on fitness concluded with healthy eating, fruit kebabs, pizza and homemade fruit smoothies.

It was then on to some fundraising, in conjunction with the Explorer Scouts' Toys for Smiles Appeal. The Cubs were given the task of organising a mini bazaar to help raise funds towards the shipping of toys collected. They had one week to prepare and the following week was the actual event. There was a huge variety of stalls: raffles, cakes, games, doughnut eating, tombolas and quizzes. Parents, family and friends were invited for the last 30 minutes of the evening to spend some of their well-earned cash!! In just 30 minutes they raised £66.

We finished the spring term with strawberry planting for Mother's Day and a wide game at Sulham.

Baloo (Judie Pickering), Cub Scout Leader



[SCOUTS]

Monday Night Scout Troop

2014 had quite a damp start weather wise, and during the dark

cold Monday evenings we were doing things like first aid, small scale pioneering, global challenge activities and an epic quiz. At the weekends we continued our series of training hikes, along with the Friday night Troop, managing to avoid the worst of the water by careful planning of routes. We did miss the hike in February due to bad weather but we made the most of January and March. In January we headed south from the Barn as far as

Calcot, stopping at the folly tower near Sulham, where we heated water on Trangias and with a Kelly kettle for hot chocolate, soup, and noodles (not all in the same cup!).

In March we walked in shorts and t-shirts as the weather was so nice, although still a bit sticky underfoot. We were also surprised by how fast the Scouts can actually walk when they try! Walking in two teams, a bit of competition spurred them on to finish within the expected time. The now traditional creme eggs at the top of Streatley Hill may have helped boost energy levels!

Also in March several members of the Troop, along with members of the Friday Troop and the Explorer Unit, helped out with a drinks station for the Reading Half marathon, opening bottles, passing them out to runners, and also using the bottles for a quick game of bowling in the middle of the (closed!) road whilst waiting for the first runners to arrive! A Scout makes good use of time...



At the end of March we had a very sunny Patrol Camp at Crays Pond, in complete contrast to last year's snowy and cold Patrol Camp at Earlywood. 40 of the 50 Scouts that now make up the two Troops took part, which was an amazing turn out. The Scouts cooked, played wide games, and made the most of the chance to learn how to work and live together as a Patrol. On the Saturday evening we invested 5 of the 6 new members that have joined the Monday Troop.

In April we entered a team of 4 Scouts in this year's Three Towers Hike. They finished in a great time, but maybe next time we need to do a little more navigating practise beforehand!

Jez Jones, Scout Leader

Friday Night Scout Troop

The Friday Troop came back from Christmas to rubbish weather, missing a week because Adventure Dolphin was flooded. But, when we did get going, everyone was full of energy.

We added fuel to this by holding a chocolate themed night, where Scouts got to try lots of flavours (including sea salt and chilli) and make chocolate cake in a mug.

We had a fun activity hike around Pangbourne which involved eating donuts without licking lips, 'feeling' different substances blindfolded and playing 'wibbly wobbly'.

Our main focus for the term was on bullying and we came up with an anti-bullying policy which all of the Scouts signed.

Following half term we invested James and Ellis who moved up from Cubs, and Jake, Luke and Emily who joined as new Scouts. We took part in the Syrian Toys for Smiles collection - enough to fill Richard's car - and raised £36 towards the transport with a bake sale. Our last Troop meeting was held on Sport Relief night, and everyone dressed up and did a sponsored Maracattackathon! We raised just under £200!

Spring term ended with a very successful Patrol Camp - with 40 Scouts it was the biggest that the Group has ever had and it was a first time camp for some.



The Troop is now at full capacity. I need a full time Assistant Scout Leader before I can take any more Scouts, and I may also have to cancel sessions at short notice if work/family commitments clash with Friday evenings. If you think you could fill this role please contact me. *Samantha Hinkley, Scout Leader*



The Explorer Scouts have enjoyed a real variety of activities over the last term from the physical, the creative, the caring, the edible and the downright bizarre!

At the beginning of the year we undertook a 'Pizza Walk' - a 9 mile walk from Pangbourne to Cray's Pond ending with, as the name would suggest, Pizzas (with film and 'sleepover'). On a walking theme, for the first time we entered a team and Hannah, Julia and Maddie did a fantastic job of completing the Explorer

Route of the Three Towers Hike (28 miles).

One evening we set up 'The Apprentice' studio where two teams were given the task of creating, marketing a presenting new confectionery product to a 'guest' panel and then filming an advert the following week. Food of course also played a part in 'Ready Steady Cook' and 'Wok Wars' - our own version of Pancake evening.

Out and about, some members undertaking their P.R. Badge have visited Radio Berkshire in Caversham and the Reading Post news room, whilst the most bizarre evening had to be 'Maracattack' evening with our own interpretation of Miranda Hart's exercise routines and dance styles.....!

Suzanne Stout, Explorer Scout Leader