

1st P&P Post

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GSL's Report

A somewhat belated "Happy New Year" but nonetheless a sincere one with exciting times ahead for the Scout Group as we continue to grow!

This term sees the opening of a new, our third, Scout Troop on Thursday evenings at The Barn. This demonstrates that we are keeping our members for longer as well as recruiting new ones. However, this development can only happen because we have had someone come forward willing to be a new Leader – with the support of two existing Leaders willing to give up even more time. Our grateful thanks must therefore go to Craig, our new Scout Leader supported by Fran and Liam.



With your help, we can increase this growth still further and so I make no apology for saying that this year we will be asking for your help and support again – so perhaps a New Year's resolution to get involved, whether it be once a year, once a term, once a month or once a week.....? We'll be in touch!

Suzanne Stout, Group Scout Leader

A Word from the Chair

It's January already – where did the autumn term go?! But, even more importantly and on behalf of all members of the Group Executive Committee, welcome to 2017.

Since the last newsletter, there has been a lot going on,

including a spy-themed Group Camp at Earleywood, Section nights away (Explorers and Beavers), our AGM and a Family Ramble. It was great to draw the P&P family together at the Carol Service – and also to be able to recognise the achievements and service of many Beavers, Cubs, Scouts,

Explorers and adults with Awards. Many good things are already happening in 2017, including the first meetings of our third Scout Troop.

Three other quick mentions:

1. In the first week of February you will receive requests from OSM to pay membership subscriptions. Your prompt attention to this will be greatly appreciated; remember that you can choose to automatically pay them on-going via a Direct Debit arrangement, or to pay each

term as an individual payment – just click your preferred button on the screen!

2. It would be great if every family could help at one or two events each year. These are always fun and just take a few hours. For example, the monthly Farmers Market needs 3 or 4 people each month. If every family could help once or twice, that would be a fantastic support.

3. Please put the weekend of 16/17 September firmly in your family calendar. It is the next Group Family Camp, even bigger and better than before!

Finally ... enjoy spring term!

Hamish Stout, Group Chair



BEAVERS

Water Voles Colony

Water Voles started back in September with an evening celebrating Roald Dahl day. We made dream jars from the BFG and sugar mice from The Witches. Lots of fun was had and the children and Leaders went home very glittery! The theme of imagination continued with an evening on inventions. The Beavers invented their own machines and then presented them to a Dragons' Den style panel of parents. Thank you to those parents who gave up their evening to help.

We continued the term with evenings on noodles (involving making self-portraits with noodles and also pasta making), an evening on raft making (making paper boats and rafts using breadsticks and strawberry laces - which they then enjoyed

eating!) and an evening on Scotland (where the Beavers took



part in a mini Highland games - searching for Nessie in porridge, caber bottle toss and running like haggis - to much hilarity)

A very cold evening was spent bouldering at 79th Reading Scout hut. The Beaver Scouts really enjoyed their evening and were quite nippy around the wall.

The Beavers also spent the term working on their Navigator, Communicator and Personal Challenge badges. They learnt about the compass points and showed us their map reading skills. They also learnt their home phone numbers which they used to call home. All the Beavers did amazingly well and all managed to get hold of their parents. They also used walkie talkies to communicate a Lego design to another group.

We were very pleased to welcome 7 new Beavers to the Colony and achieved 4 Bronze Awards this term.

Tic Tac (Colleen Hughes), Beaver Scout Leader

Polecats Colony

The Polecats Colony returned to Scouting with plenty of energy in September. We were delighted that seven of our Beaver Scouts joined us for Group Camp at Earleywood. They had lots of fun taking part in all the activities and spending a night in a tent with all their friends!

Our weekly meetings have involved plenty of fun too. Early on in the term, before the evenings got too dark, we showed the Beavers how to build and light fires and they had a lovely time toasting marshmallows. We also managed to get outside for a minibeast hunt. Although it was a rainy evening, careful hunting found a variety of small creatures sheltering in the bushes! We also spent an evening learning how to keep healthy, washing our hands to prevent the spread of germs and brushing our teeth to keep them strong.

Over half term, we ran a sleepover with a holiday theme at St Mary's Purley, along with the Water Voles. The Beavers created their own suitcases and passports, built the Eiffel tower out of marshmallows and cocktail sticks, topped their own pizzas for

tea and enjoyed "Ratatouille" before bed time in tents. The following morning we went for a foot tour of Purley, hunting for flags of the World. We all had a great time and Sunshine gained her nights away permit for indoor events, so we look forward to running more sleepovers in the near future.



The second half of term saw us studying space for the Space activity badge. Unfortunately, we had night after night of cloudy weather, but we were still able to do activities inside, decorating biscuits with star constellations and putting the planets in order. We finally got to see the stars and moon towards the end of term and lots of Beavers gained their badges. We also got to see the Reading Christmas lights when we went on a trip into town. The Beavers loved travelling on the bus and enjoyed a wander through Forbury Gardens' Winter Wonderland. We finished off the term with the Group Carol Service at which 2 of our Beaver Scouts were presented with their Chief Scouts' Bronze awards.

Sunshine (Fran Jones), Assistant Beaver Scout Leader



cubs

Kingfisher Pack

Starting back after the summer we tried to squeeze as much time as possible out of the light nights. In the first few weeks we played a lot of wide games on the school field and in Sulham woods reforming the new sixes into teams. Following on from the Paralympic Games, each Cub researched and presented the story of a Team GB Paralympian, giving us an insight into the challenges they'd overcome to reach Rio. We used this as a jumping off activity into the Disability Awareness badge, learning about the everyday lives of disabled people, how we can be more considerate, and even learning finger spelling.

We themed a night around road safety where we uncovered a fund of stories about parents' driving mistakes! Bonfire night was marked with glow in the dark vinegar powered rockets and a sausage cook out. Our remembrance activities began with poppy selling in Pangbourne; many thanks to all those who helped raise over £250. We visited Reading to see the statue of

Trooper Fred Potts and Arthur Andrews and discussed sacrifice, friendship and bravery. These activities always seem to give the Pack a better understanding of why we remember and it always makes me very proud to see so many Cub Scouts attend the parade on Remembrance Sunday and behave so well.



November ended with a spectacular Thanksgiving evening where we learned the origin of this American holiday, tried pumpkin pie and played some fantastic new seasonal games. As Christmas approached we were joined by florists from the Garden Room, who taught us how to make a range of amazing Christmas decorations and centrepieces. The end of term saw us saying goodbye to seven Cubs, many of whom will form the nucleus of the new Thursday Scout Troop. We look forward to meeting our new Cubs and starting the cycle again.

Akela (Matt Shakespeare), Cub Scout Leader

Heron Pack

We started the term in September with a games evening to welcome some new members. The following week saw the Cubs busy designing and building a wooden catapult using hammers, saws and drills and the week after that we were very grateful to Craig for coming in and teaching the Cubs some important First Aid skills, helping them to gain a badge.



In October, we began with an enjoyable but very messy junk modelling evening, where the Cubs could make a model of their ideal campsite. Other activities that month included a night time trip to Sulham Woods for a campfire where we toasted marshmallows, played a truth or lies game and finished off with some campfire songs.

In November we had a bonfire night celebration with some games, sparklers and a firework display courtesy of Liam. We

also enjoyed a popular night hike from Pangbourne village hall back to The Barn; thankfully no-one got lost. Thank you to the parents that met us at the finish with a welcome warm drink.

Sunday 13th November was our Remembrance Day Parade through Pangbourne; well done to all those Cubs who attended for parading and for excellent behaviour in church. Also during November we had a visit from Sarah Hacker, who gave an interesting talk about what it was like being the Mayor of Reading, and enjoyed a film evening and a visit from Matty, who talked about running the Reading Half Marathon on behalf of the Scout Association.

November was rounded off by The Great Heron Bake-Off. The Cubs baked some amazing cakes, which were then judged by a real chef (he has worked with Heston Blumenthal)!

December started with some Christmas craft, then saw us joining the other Sections for the Group Carol Concert, where Diana Bates (Shere Khan) was officially invested into the Scout Group; a warm welcome to Diana. On 16th December, Cubs around the world celebrated 100 years of Cub Scouting. Pang Valley Cubs were invited to a Promise party at Denefield School where they all renewed their promise at 19:16 and enjoyed a 'Jacko' disco. Our last event of 2016 was a small

Christmas jumper party. The Heron Leader team are all looking forward to providing another adventure filled year for the Cubs.

Akela (Gareth Evans), Cub Scout Leader



SCOUTS

Monday Night Troop

Like much of the Group, we started the term with a number of the Scouts enjoying a weekend away at Group Camp.

Our termly programme included an evening learning about A Million Hands, and one deciding which area of "A Million Hands" we wanted to focus on – we decided to work on dementia. We spent a couple of evenings playing wide games, either on the field or down the woods. We spent one night learning to light fires, and cooking sausages on fires too. In November we had a brisk walk to Ikea where we invested a couple of the new Scouts.

We had a team enter the Big Breakfast competition again this year, they did very well and managed to come third, we have managed to be in the top three for a number of years now.

It was great to see a team of Scouts and Explorer Scouts providing the music for the Group Scout Carol service in December. We have a number of fantastic musicians and are

keen to encourage them.

The Scouts this term set themselves each a personal challenge to try to achieve by early 2017 for part of their Personal Challenge Award, it will be interesting to see if they all achieve this.



Jez Jones, Scout Leader

Friday Night Troop

Autumn term 2016 saw the Scouts learning first aid for burns, all about different types of fire extinguisher, and some very dramatic examples of “stop, drop and roll” in case of clothes catching fire, as part of the Fire Safety badge. We also spent time looking at the effects of diet, drugs, alcohol and sleep as a section of the Skills badge.

At the end of October the Scouts took part in Jamboree on the internet (JOTI) which connects Scouts all over the world on one weekend. We made contact with Scouts as far away as Indonesia and were very excited to have a video call with Scouts from Paris.

We had a very competitive scavenger hunt around Pangbourne, followed by bonfire night with Scout-made toffee apples, fire building and toasting marshmallows.

Fitness was the order of the day when Matty ran an Athletics badge evening which saw the Scouts compete in a number of disciplines and finally complete the bleep test.

The Scouts delivered over 400 leaflets for the parish church as part of their service requirement and, as a reward for being out on a cold night, had hot chocolate with all the trimmings.

We finished off the year with our Christmas party with DJ Liam playing requests and a closely contested Macarena dance off competition.



Graham Green, Scout Leader



EXPLORERS

Explorers heads into 2017 on the back of a positive year in which we welcomed more new members and set out an ambitious vision for the future of our Unit.

From our annual marathon camp to the non-stop fun of Gilwell24, attending District Megacamp to our traditional October trip, 2016 was another year packed with opportunities and experiences. We also laid the foundations to run our own Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme, something that will really come to fruition throughout 2017.

Several of the Unit achieved the Chief Scout's Platinum Award last year with George Archer the most recent recipient during last term's Carol Service. It should not be underestimated how much time and effort goes into achieving these awards, which is why we hold them in such high regard.



During the autumn term, we worked closely with dementia charity My Life Films, aiming to raise important funds for their work. We ran stalls at the Purley fireworks and Pangbourne Christmas evening as part of our activities, and will continue to identify fundraising opportunities throughout 2017. Thanks to everyone who has supported our efforts, especially our 'games master' Kevin Martin!

Capital Camp was a particular highlight of last term with 17 Explorers spending a week in London. We certainly crammed in a lot of activities: a day at the Olympic park included a slide down the Orbit and a behind the scenes tour of the stadium. We took a boat trip as a precursor to a day's hike along the Thames, took in the sights from the top of the Tate Modern and the Emirates Airline cable car, as well as enjoying a unique parkour experience. Our pedometers got a

thorough workout during a fun week!

For the coming year, our plans are even bigger... but more on that as 2017 develops. For the time being, on behalf of the Unit, a very Happy New Year!

Chris Hughes, Explorer Scout Leader