



The Water Rat

The Newsletter of Leander Sea Scouts

March 2017

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Beavers into Space

In the Autumn term Beavers were working on the Emergency Aid and Global Issues badges. We learnt about endangered animals such as the Giant Panda, South China Tigers and the African Black Rhino and made a virtual 'zoo'. Beavers tackled some emergency situations where someone was unconscious or bleeding and learnt how to make a 999 call.

Parents Chris and Ruth Houlden kindly took on the Christmas party for us, complete with disco lights and a smoke machine! Plenty of games and food made a fabulous evening, so a big thank you to the Houlden family and all who helped on the night.



We always fit in one or two 'Log Chews' each term where the Beavers remind themselves about good behaviour rules, look at things they have enjoyed in the past and suggest things they might like to do in the future. We do our best to put some of the

suggestions into the programme and have a 'Beaver's Choice' evening each term. Water skiing wasn't possible, sadly! We are looking for someone to lead a suitable martial arts session for us if anyone has skills to offer.



This term we have been tackling our Space and Teamwork badges. We learnt about some constellations and spent a few evenings outside star spotting with and without phone apps! The Explorers ran a great evening about the International Space Station with games and challenges, and the Beavers



made ISS junk models in their lodges with great success.



After half term we are concentrating on teamwork and what elements make a good friendship and how we can show others friendship. We managed to put in a Rice Krispie cake making session, lead by our wonderful parents, and a games evening.

We are looking forwards to the Summer term and with the support of parents will get out and about again this year; Silly sports in Richmond Park, a walk to Ham House for insect and tree spotting, learning our Green Cross Code, fire lighting, putting up a tent, Holly Lodge activity session in Richmond Park and going to Walton Firs activity site for a day.

Cathy Johnson (Beaver Leader)

Leander (Kingston) Sea Scout Group

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www.leanderseascouts.org.uk — Registered Charity Number 290029



Scouts toast, climb, navigate ...

A lot of water has passed by the HQ since the last Water Rat instalment in October. As the winter months starting drawing in the programme was tailored to conventional Scouting activities, with an emphasis on keeping warm and keeping moving.

With that being the focus, the Scouts had a fire-lighting night to coincide with November the fifth. We resisted the temptation to set off Chinese lanterns, but couldn't forgo the absolute necessity of toasting marshmallows on the fires and even got away with no-one getting it stuck to their (or someone else's) clothes for a change.



The patrols had to follow a dead reckoning compass course in the dark around Canbury Gardens the following week, which they all managed to negotiate quite successfully and they absolutely didn't go on the swings in the playground on the way round!

The next two weeks were taken up by splitting the Troop into two and, whilst half were cooking in the HQ, the other half went climbing at White Spider in Tolworth. The groups then flipped round for the right date, which is always a worry for me when we run separate activities.

Ham House and its environs were the venue for our next activity. The Scouts had to negotiate their way around a navigation course in the dark and gather various pieces of information along the way. My thanks go to the parents who gave up their evening and helped out to ensure that the exercise went safely.

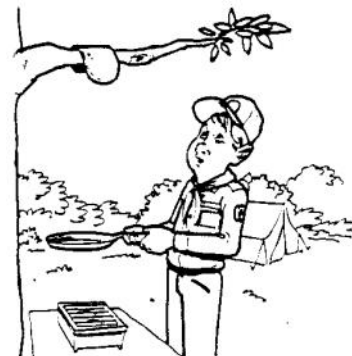
Air rifle target shooting at the HQ was the activity for the next meeting and then on the last

meeting before Christmas, we all went to the bowling alley at the Rotunda in Kingston for some fun.

After the Christmas break we've done some knots and pioneering practice to lead us into an equipment race, bridging a gap using the skills and techniques we had learnt in the previous weeks.



After half term we resumed with a pancake making and racing night, to coincide with Shrove Tuesday,



Then for following two weeks we completed the Cyclist badge, teaching and assessing their riding and bike maintenance skills.

On Saturday the 11th of March we entered a team in the County night exercise. This didn't exactly go to plan for the majority of the 44 Troops who entered, due to some organisational and personnel issues but the Scouts all had a good time none the less. We camped overnight near Box Hill and – true to my word – the Scouts had breakfast cooked for them by the Leaders. A good end to a fun Saturday night / Sunday morning.

Explorers

The Leander Explorer Unit now has two dozen members in various states of activity, but meeting regularly on a Thursday evening, getting up to all sort of mysterious things.



Christmas brought a £5 Secret Santa challenge. Memories are vague as to what was in Santa's sack, but some of those toys look desperate to avoid being given to their intended recipient.

They have spent some time planning a weekend away, including budget, kit list, menu, etc., but this is currently at the experimental/theoretical stage and may be beta-tested as The Sims go Glamping.



I was told they had made a giant Turk's Head, but I think that some exaggeration may have been involved.



In preparation for the boating season, they have serviced the kayaks and there have been sessions on rules of the road at sea, knotting and navigation.

Russ

Pack, Pack, Pack!

It's been a while since we wrote a Pack report for the Water Rat, and I won't try to squeeze in everything that the Cubs have done over the last two terms – there's just too much. Instead, here are a few highlights from our recent activities.



As part of the new Our Skills Challenge Badge, Cubs have to try out two new sports. This can be a challenge for the Leaders too, since our adventurous Cubs seem to have already tried out pretty much every sport under the sun! Luckily, we did find one sport which was new to all our Cubs and that was fencing. So thanks goes to the Kingston Fencing Club, who provided three sessions, enabling all our Cubs to have a taste of this fantastic sport. The sessions ended with a series of fights (as they are known), which lacked a certain finesse but were certainly full of enthusiasm. If readers have any suggestions of other less mainstream sports which are likely to be new to the Cubs, please get in touch.

We put a lot of emphasis on having fun in our meetings, but we also want the Cubs to think about how they can help others, both in the local community and further afield. The refugee crisis was in the news a lot last year and we felt it was important for the Cubs to have some awareness of why people leave their homes and the trials they

face as refugees. We covered this through a range of activities over a few weeks. The most engaging part was when we had a visit from an African journalist and human right lawyer who described his false conviction, subsequent escape from his home country and his experience living as a refugee in Britain. The Cubs demonstrated excellent listening skills; we hope that they learned a great deal from our visitor's compelling testimony.



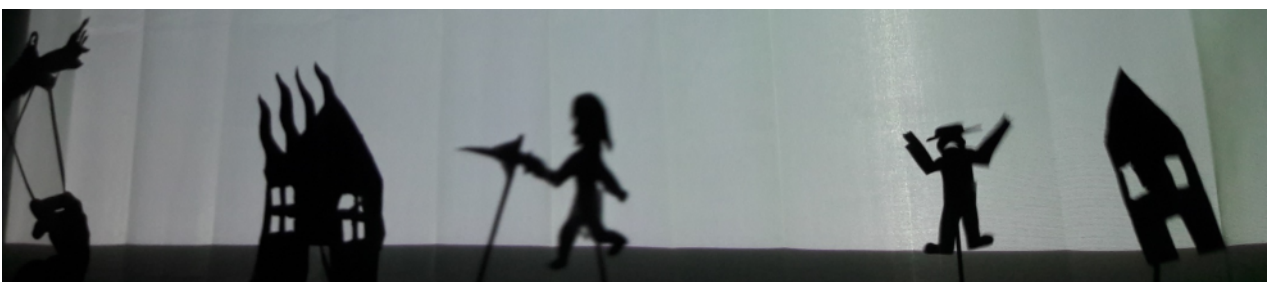
The Cubs have also been taking part in a range of District events. In November, we were immensely proud to win the District Cub Swimming Gala. Leander has been steadily creeping up the leader board at the Gala in recent years, but this year we had quite a young team,

and I wasn't sure we could continue this pattern. The Cubs proved me spectacularly wrong when our team grabbed the top spot. Many congratulations to Layla, Ellie, Eddie, James, Naomi, Ollie, Joshua and Charlie.

In recent weeks we've been getting the Cubs to discover their creativity as we tackle the Artist and Entertainer activity badges. Visitors to Leander have been surprised to be greeted by the terracotta army we created, inspired by Anthony Gormley's 'Field' of small figures. We didn't quite create 35,000 like the original, but the Cubs produced an impressive and varied output in limited time. In other weeks, the Cubs also produced some stunning shadow puppets and some striking pop-up art.

Now that it's feeling more spring-like, we're looking forward to getting outside with the Cubs again and we're currently planning some camping opportunities for the Cubs over the Summer.

The Cubs Leaders



Family Activity Day Walton Firs 20th May

Leander will be holding a Group Activity Day at Walton Firs Activity Centre in Cobham, on 20th May. This will be open to all Leander families and will be a great day for everyone in the Group. Activities will include climbing, caving, air rifle, archery, skittles and lots of others – there will be special activities for the youngest members, with all day drinks, refreshments and a grand picnic lunch.

The event will be subsidised by the Group, with a cost of £10 per person all inclusive.

We need to know who would like to participate, please put your name down and how many will attend, on the booking sheet displayed in the HQ lobby.

More details will be available shortly.

Coxswain

Scouting boosts mental health

Mental health is a major concern in many countries. Researchers from Edinburgh and Glasgow universities found that people who had been Scouts or Guides in their youth had better mental health later in life.

They explored whether youth participation in the Scouts and Guides could protect mental health in later life and whether it might reduce inequalities in mental health associated with socio-economic position early in life.

Over 9000 people born in 1958 were tested, controlling for factors associated with social class. 28% had participated in the Scouts/Guides.

Participation in Guides or Scouts was associated with better mental health and narrower mental health inequalities, at age 50. Scouts/Guides had an 18% lower odds of mood or anxiety disorders.

The researchers said their findings indicated that programmes that help children develop skills such as self-reliance and teamwork, and encourage being active outdoors, may have lifelong benefits.

Attending the guides or scouts may help build resilience against common stresses in life, or it may increase a person's chances of achieving more in life, so that they are less likely to experience such stresses, the team suggested.

Lead researcher Prof Chris Dibben said: "It is quite startling that this benefit is found in people so many years after they have attended guides or scouts. We expect the same principles would apply to the scouts and guides of today and so, given the high costs of mental ill-health to individuals and society, a focus on voluntary youth programmes such as the guides and scouts might be very sensible."

Prof Richard Mitchell, of the University of Glasgow, said "The results that we obtained showed that it did seem to be particular to Scouts and Guides. We didn't see the same protective effect from, for example, volunteering or from church groups.

Chief Scout Bear Grylls said "If you think about what happens at Scouts and Guides, week in week out, you face new challenges. You learn to overcome those with the help of your friends, you acquire new skills.

"You get used to overcoming unexpected situations and we think that's probably at the heart of the effect."

<http://jech.bmj.com/content/71/3/275>



Coxswain's Corner

You may have seen a few changes in the Headquarters recently. We are keen to extend and update the facilities, not only for the benefit of all our members, but also to attract quality hirers.

New wiring and sensor lights are going into the front and rear stairwells, which we also hope to decorate shortly.

The warm air ducting of the heating system has been cleaned and now works much more efficiently.

New notice boards for all the sections have been installed, we will be replacing the chairs and acquiring trolleys for the chairs and tables.

The Main Deck has been acoustically assessed and sound absorption panels will be fitted. That should reduce the noise level when sections meet – hoorah!

We will still be needing some parental help for decorating and other tasks, please look out for and respond to emails asking for your assistance.

As always at this time of the year, nice warm days are followed by cold and wet ones, still, the days get longer and all our young people should soon be able to enjoy activities outdoors and on the water.

Coxswain

Fundraising

A very big Thankyou to all the Scouts and Cubs who came along to the bag packing at Sainsbury's in December. We raised a very impressive £572. Well done! Special thanks to the little assassins (Cubs) who waited at the exit by the Christmas tree!

In the last quarter we also have £78 from *easyfundraising*. Please sign up for Leander if you are not already doing your bit for us.