

The Water Rat

Newsletter of Leander Sea Scouts

September 1998

Skipper's Scrawl

Following the "Admiralty Inspection" in June, the group has been recommended for continuation of its M.O.D. Recognition, and you can read some of the comments from the excellent report from Lieutenant Commander Millington later in the *Water Rat*.

Well done to the under-14 crew (all in fact under 12½) in the Great River Race, who came second in their class and also beat the Venture Scout and Dads crews! Special thanks to Robin, who towed the boats back up river at 2.30 in the morning.

We have now taken delivery of two new fibreglass gigs, and a third is due in October. These boats will all be capable of sailing, although at present we will only be having one set of spars, rigging and sails. They have been purchased with the aid of grants from Kingston Rotary Club, the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and the Royal Navy Fund, and donations from many sources, including Keith Quinon, one of our great fund-raising Guild Members.

The boats will be named "Gordon Talbot" (a benefactor from Kingston Rotary Club), "Chief" (in memory of Mick Chinnock) and "Hero" (a boat's name with a long history in Leander). Hero was a priestess in Greek mythology who lived on the oppo-

site side of the Hellespont to her lover, Leander. You might also be interested to know that the two wooden gigs are named "Active" and "Alert", and our two older fibreglass gigs "Hermes" and "Hercules".

These grants, donations and money we had in our own funds have totalled £14,000, which leaves us about £1500 still to raise. I must thank Katie Grant for organising a major fund-raising and social occasion, the Summer Ball, which has made a big contribution to raising this extra money. Can I encourage you all to pay subs promptly this term so that we will be in a position to pay the balance when required.

The date of this year's AGM has still to be finalised. It was not possible to find a date in the busy months before the Summer and we are hoping to combine it with a rather special presentation to the Group. More details later.

My thanks to Victoria Ward for the help she has given Buffy with the Beavers over the last year and a welcome our two new Assistant Cub Scout Leaders, Ian Chappell and Simon Reeves. Also congratulations to Alex Newman who has gained his Instructor's certificate and continues to help with the Troop.

Keith

Leander Summer Ball

This must rank as the biggest Society Event of the year. Things you've never seen before – the Headquarters decked out like the Café Royal, a live band getting even the greying GSL and Chairman boogying, Venture Scouts immaculately turned out and ultra-polite as waiters. You can't believe it? Seeing was believing. A triumph for Katie! Don't expect to be invited to the next one – expect to FIGHT FOR TICKETS!!

Water Rat dates

Reminder for all contributors. Copy due:
December 5th, March 13th, May 15th, July 10th.

Your friendly editor and wielder of the cat-o-nine-tails is Nigel Duffin, tel: 977 8305, fax: 255 3121, email: nigel@duffin.demon.co.uk. Electronic form preferred, or I will quiz you over the phone and give expression to aquatic burlblings. Also photos of activities can be scanned in for printing.

Leander (Kingston) Sea Scout Group

Headquarters: 92 Lower Ham Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey

Telephone: 0181 549 6286



Coxswain's Corner

Despite the indifferent weather this summer, we managed to get everyone out boating as much as possible. With the size of the troop, every boat we have is in use. It is our intention that everyone who has been learning Seamanship during the Winter can put into practice what they have learnt – it is very encouraging to see new members of the Troop enjoying themselves and becoming skilled boat users within a few months. Our only regret is that canoeing instruction has been much reduced this year, since Laurie retired to Dorset, but we do have high hopes of a very qualified instructor being available next season.

With the continuous rain in June, the additional water coming down the Thames produced some quite strong current, as we found out with our regular trip in the wooden gigs up to Hampton Court – we never got there at the first attempt, the current at Raven's Ait was too strong to row through. Instead we paid a surprise visit to Surbiton Sealions on the island.

This period was extremely busy, as we were informed, at short notice, that our Royal Naval inspection was to take place in June – just before the National Sea Scout Regatta. That meant that Regatta practice was much reduced and we did not do quite so well this year, although it was good to see the Ventures taking part. (Aquameet, the Venture water activity camp at Longridge Scout Boating Centre, did not clash this time.)

We will be looking at a more constructive approach to the Regatta next year, putting the crews together much earlier and really training properly. We have the talent – we can do it.

Raft making usually produces some ingenious but somewhat unseaworthy craft. This time the rafts were made up in one meeting, then finished off and paddled at the next one, the standard of design and construction being much better. Of course, the rafts eventually come apart with everyone in the water – good fun and good preparation for raft making at Summer Camp.

Preparation for the National Sea Scout Camp at Hawkhurst Adventure Centre, Northumberland was rather like Nawaka last year – assembling enough tents and equipment for 40 Scouts and Leaders takes

a lot of work. The quartermaster's team of Garry Smith, Alex Newman and Danny Wileman carried out sterling work making new pieces of equipment, refurbishing and checking every piece of kit. A barbecue rounded off the summer meetings; all we had to do then was to set off for Northumberland a few days later – little did we realise what was in store!

Coxswain

Beavers

Beavers has started once again and we hope that activities this year will be as interesting and successful as last year. In our calendar will be Halloween, Firework Night, swimming (of course) on three occasions, and much, much more! The term will finish with a Christmas Party, so I hope that there will be lots of helpers for that and ideas for games.

Four of the Beavers have moved up to the Cubs and I wish them good luck in the Pack. We welcome five new Beavers to the colony: Alex Barley, Jack Carter, Ben Hudson, Nicholas Whittaker and Thomas Williams. I do hope they will enjoy their time with Beavers as much as the others.

Sadly, we've had to say goodbye to Victoria Ward, one of the Beaver Leaders. So if any parent is interested, we'd really appreciate a fourth leader to join the team. Next Summer, we shall be looking for new Beaver Leaders, as all our sons will be going up to Cubs and I expect we shall be going with them! Enthusiastic parents – we will be looking out for you! It's good fun.

Congratulations to the half a dozen Beavers who have gained their first stage swimmer badge recently. This involves jumping in, swimming 25 metres, putting your head under water, gliding on your back and front, swimming a width on your back, amongst other things, so it's a really good achievement.

Having completed my teaching course at Roehampton, I have now started teaching at Eliot School, which is quite a challenge. Early in October I shall be attending a course to give me a first aid qualification to help with my work with the Beavers.

I look forward to seeing all you parents on Monday evenings and please remember to sign your names on the list in the porch.

Buffy

Cub Report

On Saturday 13th June we entered the District 5-a-side competition. Unfortunately, due to the weather, water polo would have been more appropriate! It was postponed to the 25th of July; we turned up on this beautiful hot day and entered two teams once again. Both teams were of equal strength and ability.

Leander A: Chris Pearce, Alex Snow,
Jonathan Freeman, Nick Pratt, Niall Origo,

Leander B: Jack Grant, Joseph Yates,
Mark Sollis, Jamie Pemberton, Sam Whitfield

After the group matches both teams progressed through to a semi-final. Each semi-final was decided on penalties, Leander A beating 2nd Malden for a place in the final, Leander B losing to 7th Malden in sudden death. The final was between Leander A and 7th Malden – this was a closely contested match ending up with a dreaded penalty shoot-out once again. Tension was very high as it went on to sudden death with 7th Malden winning in the end.

We entered a team for the District Sports Day but unfortunately this was cancelled. Hopefully it will run again next year.

We are looking forward to the District Swimming Gala on 10th October at the Malden Centre. I would very much appreciate a volunteer to be Team Manager as I have a work commitment on this date.

I would like to welcome to the Pack from Beavers: Callum Lightfoot, Christie Hunt, Angus Mandale and Toby Lewis. Also from the long waiting list we welcome Nicholas Pratt.

This half term we are working towards the community badge as a Pack. Last week the Cubs made emergency calls on a '999' training exchange, loaned to us by the Met Police. The boys enacted scenarios that required help of the emergency services and carried this out with great enthusiasm and maturity. The badge work will culminate with a visit to Richmond Police Station, where a senior officer will award their badges.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ian Chappell and Simon Reeves who are taking the warrants to become Assistant Leaders – it is the dedication and commitment of parents like these and yourselves which makes our cub pack so successful.

Tim

Great River Race

The Race was very early this year, the 5th of September, which made matters quite difficult, as many Scouts were still away on holiday and school had not started. Getting hold of people and organising practice was not easy, made somewhat more complicated by the large number of boats needed – ten in all! In addition to three Scout crews and the Guild, Kingston Rotary have now become keen competitors.

Getting all the boats to Leander was somewhat of a logistical nightmare; apart from our two wooden gigs and our three Home Counties gigs, boats had to be sourced from far and wide. Longridge Scout Boating Centre's gig was trailed from Marlow, then gigs were towed back from Surbiton Sealions, 1st Hampton Hill and Molesey Sea Scout Groups and an ASC from Steadfast Sea Cadets.

We spent quite a few late evenings going up river to get the boats, bringing four back from Greenwich and then returning back up river. It was a great display of Leander strength, all the crews acquitted themselves extremely well, especially the Guild and the under 12½ crew. A special mention for the Dads' crew, who, because of holidays and commitments, were not able to get enough practice – they completed the course and equalled last year's Mums' team in tenacity and perseverance. How about a mixed Parents' crew in '99?

Coxswain

Spring Camp

On Friday night we set off to camp at Buckmore Park Scout Centre, Chatham. The camp was very good, the camp fire was great and the food was nice. I especially liked the climbing. The swimming pool was great because you were allowed to chuck people in backwards, dive in the pool and do everything you weren't allowed to do in a normal swimming pool. At night it was cold but in the daytime it was nice and hot. The worst part of the campsite were the hills – to get to the assault course and the activities you had to go up and down, up and down.

The tuck shop was big and sold things cheaper than they are in other sweet shops. My favourite activities were rifle shooting and caving. I also liked watching the go-carts and betting who would win.

I had a great time and I came back totally tired.

Patrick Hazard (Seal Patrol)

Scout Camp at Kielder

We assembled at the scout hut at 8am, put our kit on the bus and left. We made two stops on our journey. When we arrived we got our kit and walked for what seemed an age to the site. When we got there we set up. We had a spare field so a football match was started.

I skip straight to Sunday, missing out Saturday, to tell you about the raft building. Well, we were taught how to make the rafts and we made them! Then it was the race. We were going to the island and back, We managed to get across but there is always someone who has to splash someone ... well this led to us all getting sunk.

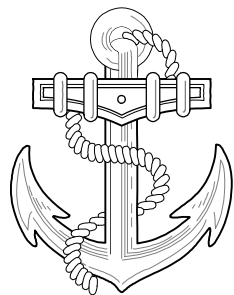
On Monday we had the climbing wall indoor and outdoor. The indoor you went across and the outdoor you went up. It was harder than most walls. We also went to Kielder castle to help us get our local heritage badge.

The day hike was on Tuesday. The advanced walkers went all the way to sunny Scotland. The 'not so' advanced group went on hike somewhere and back. Wednesday was a fun day – wind surfing in the rain great fun! There was also pioneering and we went on a zip line. That night we went swimming; there was a sauna so that kept us warm. On Thursday we went to Kielder dam by boat. It was good fun and interesting, the 255 stairs did not please everyone.

On Friday the bird of prey centre, a new centre but not short of birds, fat and thin, small and large, they had them all. The regatta in the afternoon was only a pretend one with loads of silly events. You just got wet and had fun. On Saturday we went open top canoeing and packed up our bags ready for the 5.00 get up. On Sunday the midges were there. So we went very quickly ... only one stop on the way back.

To Sum up this camp you could do it in four words ...WET, COLD AND MIDGES!!!!!!!

Oliver Seeley (Seagull Patrol)



Apart from the rotten weather and incessant hordes of midges, our mixed group of Leander and Surbiton Sealion Scouts got on very well. We were very privileged to have a visit from the Chief Scout, who attended the first day of the camp and chatted to our patrols. At least he saw some very good rafts being properly constructed and paddled, our sessions at Leander earlier in the year having been most useful.

Camping in good weather is easy; this was very much a survival camp, because people were boating, wet gear did not dry out and the ground was totally waterlogged. Well done to all those who took part, they got on with it in the right spirit and did enjoy themselves.

Next year perhaps we ought to head south for a change.

Coxswain

Waiting List

There is currently a list of fifty people waiting to join Leander. Beaver, Cub and Scout sections are all full. Also, the Beaver list has more names than we can accept for the next *two years*. This means that there is at present no space for anyone born 1983-1994! There are places in the Venture Unit and occasionally spaces occur in the Troop when Scouts leave. Although this ensures a thriving number in the Group, it is a difficult position to be in.

We do try to give priority to brothers and sisters of those already in Leander, but it is important that they are 'registered' as soon as possible. I've attached below a list of those brothers/sisters who are already on the list, so please check and let me know if there are others.

These 'healthy' numbers mean that our leaders are going to be fully stretched for years to come and so we do have a need for parents to step forward and make the commitment of taking out a warranted position in the group. Needless to say, sons or daughters of our valuable leaders are at the top of the waiting list!

Please refer all waiting list enquiries to me, but there is no need to actively recruit members currently aged 4-15.

Nigel Duffin (977 8305)

Brothers/sisters of Leander members on waiting list: Danica Barley, Daisy Blackhurst, Michael Osbourne, Nicholas Patterson, David Pearce, Ian Mandale, Huw Walters, James Irons, Dominic Mellett, James Kimber, Rory Lightfoot, Charlotte Pearce.

Royal Navy Inspection

This is always a very important event for the Group, as we are assessed, quite strictly, by the Staff Officer for recognised Sea Scout Groups, who then reports on Leander's continuing suitability for Naval Recognition.

RN recognition is not just a badge on the uniform, it means that we meet a high standard in our activities and leadership. The group also receives funds that go towards new equipment, only available for recognised groups.

On Inspection night the Headquarters was absolutely full with Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Ventures, Leaders and parents, awaiting the arrival of the Inspecting Officer. Arriving outside the HQ absolutely right on time, Lieutenant Commander Henry Millington, as is traditional, had been rowed down from Kingston Bridge by a very well turned out and practised Scout crew.

After colours, the Beavers and Cubs got on with selected activities whilst the Scouts put the boats out and demonstrated canoe, sailing, gig and coypu pulling skills. In particular, Laura Packer, in a Topper dinghy, demonstrated, on demand, perfect half and full controlled capsizes, whilst Alex Newman, warmly wetsuited, patiently acted as man overboard and was hauled in over the gunwale of a gig a number of times.

A lot of activity was crammed into a short time and was all carried out very well. It was all worth while, as a short time later we received a very commendable report and renewal of RN recognition.

Coxswain

Some extracts from the Inspecting Officer's Report:

The inspection programme commenced with the Inspecting Officer being collected by a most proficient gig crew at Kingston Bridge and being conveyed ... to the Group HQ. On arrival [he] was piped aboard and invited to witness the activities of the Beavers and Cubs. The smart and enthusiastic youngsters displayed their exuberance and skill involving themselves in games, knots bends and hitches instruction, and the building of crows nests with straws and string.

... Scouts and Venture Scouts engaged in water activities. ... the most capable pulling gig crews improved their ability in a rudderless boat ... the lone sailor displayed a fair level of boat handling skills ...

The Coypu's crews displayed confident and competent boat handling skills whilst the novice canoeists were instructed through a series of basic paddling skills ... Ashore Ventures and Scouts were also involved in Boat Maintenance ... instruction in basic knots and Junior Seaman training in river safety and buoyancy aids.

... the Inspecting Officer then conducted the formal inspection. The parade was well turned out. Responses to questions ... were dealt with articulately and knowledgeably, indicating clear understanding and undoubted enjoyment of Sea Scouting.

Adult Leaders and Instructors are keen, enthusiastic and very well qualified. Finance and administration appears to be most capably handled by a dedicated and efficient Treasurer and a committed Executive Committee.

... the Ventures, Scouts, Cubs and Beavers performed well, fully justifying the trust placed in them by their Leaders and Instructors ...

Leander Family Camp '99

By popular demand, Leander is once again holding a family camp at Chalfont Heights Scout Camp and Activity Centre, Bucks. Everyone will be very welcome – especially brothers, sisters and parents. The same site that we used before has been booked for the weekend of 21st/23rd May. The camp was a great success in 1995, with just under 100 Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Parents attending.

The site covers 60 acres, with first class toilets, washing and hot shower facilities, laundry, first aid room and well-stocked shop. There are large areas of woodland, and two huge fields to run around in. Activities available include heated swimming pool, climbing wall, archery, rifle range, mini assault course and orienteering trails, apart from our own organised activities and games, including a Grand Camp Fire!

I would much appreciate the involvement of **two parents from each section** (Beavers, Cubs, Scouts) who could help with the project and relay information back to their section. This would involve two or three meetings between now and May – all the planning is already done.

It really is a great event which everybody will thoroughly enjoy. Put the date in your diary, booking forms will be sent out in October.

Coxswain (0181 549 1599)

Venture Report

We welcome Johnny Burr and Michael King from the Troop bringing the number in the Unit to nine.

Summer Camp was with the Troop at the National Sea Scout Camp at Kielder Water and the Venture Scouts worked hard preparing the kit for the camp. On the whole, what with the midges, the weather, the food and the Scouts, this was a *survival camp*, testing the Unit's motto "Improvise, Adapt and Overcome" to the full. On 5th September, the Great River Race course was completed by our crew in about 3½ hours.

On 19th September, we went on an introductory one-day parasailing course at Priest's Hill near Epsom. Everyone had three real launches, each of which lasted about three minutes, and we did so well that we are thinking of going on to do the full course and get our "wings". (I suppose that should be water wings for Sea Scouts!) Later that evening, we put on our smartest clothes (hang out the flags) and bow ties to be waiters, sell raffle tickets and run the bar at the Summer Ball.

Alex is going on a course this year at Thames Young Mariners to become qualified as a water sports instructor. This will include the whole range of activities: canoeing, sailing, wind-surfing, power boats, etc. Garry has changed his job, so please note that he will soon have a *new mobile phone number*.

Ness

Sea Rangers use HQ

In the middle of May the Sea Ranger Association was able to use the facilities of Leander for its Advanced Rowing Expedition weekend.

Eight Sea Ranger Officers from far and wide and our two instructors arrived on the Saturday morning for the start of a hot, sunny, practical weekend. We were immediately made welcome and, having been briefed on the weekend details, headed towards the boats. We were very kindly lent a Coypu and a Home Counties Gig – both boats being in their usual superb condition. We were honoured to be the first of the season in the Gig. What an excellent way of launching boats Leander has – perhaps some of our crews will adopt this effective "tray on wheels" approach for any size boat.

Saturday was spent on an 8 hour expedition rowing downstream through Teddington and Richmond locks, and partaking of additional liquid refreshment at the "London Apprentice" (along with our own packed lunch). We continued to Kew and then returned, stopping to make an afternoon brew up on the river steps below Richmond Bridge and then a tour of Teddington lock. Once boats were secured for the night we used the HQ facilities for our meal and sleeping accommodation. Sipping drinks on the balcony watching the river as the sun set was a perfect end to the day. What a service Leander provided – even a late night call out service when the trip switch went and we tried the wrong sequence of switches to rectify it.

Sunday dawned as another cloudless hot day. The two boats were again utilised for rowing practice – the Coypu being used for manoeuvring in the nearby backwater. It all ended too soon, but what a wonderful time we had had.

We all wish to thank Leander for their hospitality and for the use of their excellent facilities.

Sea Ranger Officers

Former Leanders

Phil Day wrote to say he enjoys receiving the *Water Rat* and the *Guild Newsletter* to keep in touch with the activities of the Group. He has been a member since the Cub Pack was formed in May 1918.

The Leander Guild is an association of former active members who have monthly meetings and support the group in all sorts of ways, including raising money to fund the current programme. The following two items are from their Newsletter.

Several members of the Guild gave their help at the Regatta held on Sunday 5th July – John Clark and Mike Baker laid out the course and retrieved it afterwards. Chairman Gordon Biden was the Boat Marshall, Ray Taylor manned the Start and Stella the Finish (she tolled the bell). Gordon Dodge added the names to the winners' certificates.

The August Guild meeting was at Sheen Bowling Club, with about 24 members enjoying superb weather to participate in the ancient game. The evening finished with a fish and chip supper, ate sitting out under the stars until late.