



# The Water Rat

The Newsletter of Leander Sea Scouts

May 2019

editor – Nigel Duffin – [info@leanderseascouts.org.uk](mailto:info@leanderseascouts.org.uk)

## Pack Pack Pack!

It really feels like summer is with us now. After our first evening on the river was rained off, we've had two lovely evenings of water activities to make up for it. The Cubs have tried their hands at pulling (that's rowing with a fixed seat – I get told off if I call it rowing!), kayaking and bell boating.



We've made a real effort to increase the water activities we offer the Cubs, and thanks to the hard work of our Leaders getting qualified and the generous help from other Sections we're now able to take full advantage of our amazing location and Leander's great facilities.



This summer we're running close to every other week on the river, leading up to our end of term silly-race night and barbecue.

It's been a while since I wrote anything for the Water Rat (sorry, Nigel!), so here are a few highlights from recent terms.

Back in February, we had a night-time cycle in Richmond Park. It was exciting cycling in the dark with the roads free of traffic and only the occasional deer to watch out for. We split into three groups, with one group managing a full lap of the park, including getting up the impressively steep Broomfield Hill.

Some of the Cubs managed an even more impressive feat with our recent Thames Path cycle from Leander HQ to Parliament. In fact, some of our Cubs will be returning to Westminster this half-term for a tour of Parliament. A big thank you to Ben for organising both these events.



We've had a successful year in District competitions. Our swimming team achieved first place in the District Cub Swimming Gala back in November.

More recently in March, Leander also came first place in the Scooter Rally. For those unfamiliar with this event, imagine the Le Mans 24-hour

race compressed into one hour and on scooters! Our fast pit-stops and strong teamwork paid off.



We try to run a varied programme for our Cubs. In addition to the usual fun and games, our Cubs have been doing DIY (making a fabulous fried egg clock), learning about science, looking at nature in the local area and even making a start on the gardening badge.



So here's looking forward to a fun rest of the term, followed straight away by our summer camp.

Tim

Leander (Kingston) Sea Scout Group

Headquarters: 92 Lower Ham Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 5BB

[www.leanderseascouts.org.uk](http://www.leanderseascouts.org.uk) — Registered Charity Number 290029



# Whitewater Rafting



Hurling down fast frothy rapids in an oversize rubber dinghy, who knew whitewater rafting could be so much fun! We had a tremendous response to our first Leander rafting day, with 34 Scouts, Explorers and leaders taking part.

After getting kitted up in wetsuits, helmets and buoyancy aids, it was time for our briefing with the experienced instructors at the Lee Valley White Water Centre. We learnt what to do if we fell out, or what we all had to do in the event a raft flipped over.



But before we could get in a raft, we were told we'd all have to do a swim test. Of course the Sea Scouts can swim! What he actually meant was jump in at the bottom of the Olympic course and hurtle down the last rapid freestyle, and then swim to



the bank. At this point I expected a few Scouts to start looking very anxious, or possibly get cold feet. Oh how I always underestimate the fearlessness and bravado of our young Leander members! One by one, like proverbial lemmings they jumped in the frothy water, legs forward and arms out to the side, swooshing down the rapid. Had that scared them? Of course not. "Can we do it again," they shouted. In again they all went.

Then it was time to get in our rafts. The Explorers got to do the Olympic course, with grade 4 rapids, the younger Scouts went on the slightly less wild Legacy course. Our instructors who steered our rafts shouted commands, "Paddle forward, paddle backward, in the boat, lean left, lean right," as we crashed down the rapids. We took shelter in an eddy, and then paddled back into the rapid and surfed the wave, before almost being flipped over, and then backwards we went down the next rapid.



At the end of the course we took an ingenious conveyor belt back up to the start and did it all over again and again and again. A few



fell out and were thrown safety ropes and pulled onto the bank. Unshaken they would get back in the raft and carry on. By the end, many were actually a bit disappointed not to have fallen out. But they weren't to worry. They were all allowed to jump in and hurtle down the last rapids – a great way to finish a fantastic day rafting.

*Neil*

## Leander AGM 8th July

The Group Annual General Meeting will be held on Monday 8th July, at 7.30pm in the Headquarters.

The annual report and accounts will be presented, with opportunity for questions. Officers and members of the Group Executive Committee for the coming year will be elected.

The meeting is expected to last about an hour and refreshments will be served.

## CARA Litter Pick



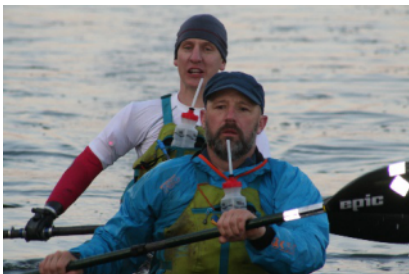
Leander supported the Canbury Area Residents' Association litter pick event on April 27th, removing waste and debris from the river and surroundings.

## 'Heroes' Journey

Would you paddle 100 miles for breakfast at Leander?!

On 21st April, Leander played a small part in the adventures of two incredible men – Jon and Lee – who were taking part in the Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Marathon.

Paddling 125 miles non-stop and through the night is difficult enough, but what makes this even more incredible is that these two former Royal Marines, Lt Jon White and CSgt Lee Waters were both injured in combat in Afghanistan.



In 2010, Jon stepped on an Improvised Explosive Device or IED, and the explosion resulted in the loss of both his legs and his right arm at the elbow. Lee was John's troop Sergeant and was shot three times – in his jaw, in his hand and in his foot.

As the athletes passed Kingston Bridge at about 6:30am on Easter Sunday, the support crew waiting at Leander HQ could make out a distant cry from the approaching canoe ... "Bacon butties!" Jon and Lee's 8-strong support crew included family and friends and medical staff.



These guys were simply amazing – they'd been up all night meeting at various stops to provide physical and emotional support, and each one of them had been a crucial part of Jon and Lee's entire journey of recovery. Jon's surgeon was part of this team and said " ... these guys are not just patients, they

are like members of our own family."

Leander's very own Cub Leader Tim, and helpers Andrew, Fiona and Thomas were also on hand to provide food and drinks ... including a few bacon butties too!



They didn't have long with us – the paddlers were soon back on the water and sent off with a huge cheer from the bank. They made it to the finish line in Westminster around 10am after over 26 hours on the water!

This was a genuinely humbling experience for all of us involved, seeing the extent to which determination and ambition can overcome physical difficulties; it was an honour to be able to play a small part in this.

We're hoping that one of the team will come back to Leander

and give us a talk about their experiences.

Dave Davenport who was in charge of the support said afterwards "Jon and Lee's inspiring effort was nothing short of magnificent. This would have been impossible without the backup of an incredibly resourceful support crew who kept them fed, watered, sheltered, repaired and amused throughout their 125 mile epic."



"Leander is very proud to have been able to support this epic event," said Robin Burr, Leander's Group Scout Leader.

*Andrew Jackson,  
Trustee and Helper*

## Explorers expanding skills

The Explorers have been expanding their skills on the water particularly in canoeing and kayaking during the spring term we have also gained several new members allow us to do more activities and games on the water.

Our recent trip to Lee Valley White Water Centre was great fun and most of us managed to stay in the boat.

*Written by the Explorers*



## Beavers

Beavers have been working on the My Adventure Challenge Award and the Camp Craft Badge this term. We started with some Green Cross Code practice and moved to knots and lashing (with some learning on the job for session volunteers, which went quite well!).

We lost some valued Beavers who swam up to Cubs to continue their Scouting journey with more challenges and fun ahead but gained some new members who are eagerly joining in at meetings already.



Five lucky Beavers were able to come with me to the District Beaver Sleepover at Polyapes, which is always great fun. After a wide game, campfire and hot dogs they did actually go to bed quite well.



The next day there was a huge cooked breakfast and lots of activities to try, including fire lighting, blindfold string trail, assault course, indoor caving and toasting marshmallows!



A great lunch selection complete with ice lollies was provided and a full roast dinner with pudding before home. We love camp food!

After half term we are getting out and about with walks, fire building, cooking, putting up a tent and some time on the water when we need the help of our great parents to enable these activities.

We sadly said Goodbye to Joanna our section assistant as her children move up from Beavers. We are eager to replace her with someone who can come most weeks to help and someone who may wish to facilitate our attending more of the great District events at weekends. Speak to me if you want to join in the fun, we are a friendly team!

*Cathy Johnson (Yogi)*

## Coxswain's Corner

At last the HQ heating has been fixed, just as the weather has started to warm up. Huge thanks to Dick and Chris for battling with the slow moving and bureaucratic way that it took to get the system working again.

We have finally given up on seeking planning permission for the back yard. Three and half years of 'negotiations' with the council has resulted in the imposition of requirements that we cannot meet. (Many thanks to Andrew for his perseverance during that time). An initial start has been made on clearance, a small working party soon discovered how tough it is to remove the ground elder that has invaded the site. Further work is in hand to get the area cleared and levelled.

We were very lucky to receive a grant from the Royal Navy 100 fund (celebrating 100 years of

partnership between Scouting and the Navy). This has enabled Scouts to go white water rafting on the Lee Valley Olympic rafting course and off-shore sailing next October. Comparable activities are planned for Cubs and Beavers.



Our old tow boat "Ebbage 2" needed replacing and through Russell's skilled negotiations we have acquired a very useful rib (rigid inflatable boat) with a decent sized 40 HP outboard.

This will also provide us with a second safety boat, now essential with the number of Scouts we have and activities that are taking place.

Finally, we have had a very good response to our call for help with the many different tasks that are essential to running the Group. It is not just a local Scout Group, Leander is a business and has to be run on that basis; it may take a little time to get everything we would like in place, that is what need to do to continue providing top quality Scouting and water activities.

*Coxswain*

