



The Water Rat

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Skipper's Scrawl

As weather improves, we are now fast approaching the time when the Troop will be able to get back on the River. Thanks to grants from the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, we now have six new canoes, which will greatly improve facilities. Toppers and Coybus are in good condition and, thanks to the Guild, the wooden gigs have been maintained in a seaworthy state.

We do, however, have a problem with the fibreglass gigs, which have failed boat inspection. Principally, this is due to worn and loose crutch housings and broken knees which need replacing. Clifton Joinery has offered to make new knees, but we need someone competent in woodwork to fit them. Do we have any budding boatbuilders or carpenters amongst our parents or supporters? If you can help, please let me know, as we need the gigs for the Regatta, Summer Camp in Holland and, of course, the Great River Race!

The Scout Association has now sent out Regatta entry forms to all Sea Scout Groups and, this year, the Sea Ranger Association will also be

joining us for the Regatta. This will almost certainly mean it will be a two-day event, so keep the first weekend in July free, as we shall need all the support we can get for setting up and dismantling, and selling refreshments on the towpath. Please let me know **how** and **when you** can help with the event.

Bruno (Peter Burton) recently celebrated his 75th birthday with a party at Headquarters and it was marvellous to see so many ex-Leanders present. Special thanks to Madeleine and Anji for their work on catering for the occasion. If Bruno is 75, it must mean I've been GSL for ten years and also that the Beaver section is almost ten years old! If my maths is right, it must also mean that 120 boys have benefited from being Leander Beavers during this time. I must, however, stress the need for leaders for this section as, without them, Beavers won't be able to continue. Jan won't be helping after her son goes up next month and Ian has also moved to helping with Cubs when his son moved up. Can **you** help on a Monday evening or do you know anyone else who could? Please let me know.

Keith

Coxswain's Corner

As always, Winter sees our main activities based at HQ, making as much progress as possible with Scout and Seaman proficiency awards and boat maintenance.

Since Christmas the following have been gained: four junior seamen, three seaman, two leading seaman, two explorer and two pathfinder awards, six swimmers, four advanced swimmers and two

helmsman badges. In addition, a number of cyclists, artists, cooks and hobbies badges have been awarded. Once we are back on the water, the practical elements of various proficiency awards and badges can be done, so there should be continuing progress.

We have been ice skating again at Guildford, somewhat spoilt by railway engineering work so

Leander (Kingston) Sea Scout Group

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

Telephone: 0181 549 6286



South West Trains cancelled half the services. We eventually ended up returning to Wimbledon hours late — more cancellations; finally Danny Wileman's dad came to the rescue and took us back to Surbiton station in his camper van.

Ness and Gary organised a surprise event, in which a fire drill was held as scouts were changing. It was worth seeing the look on their faces as, in various stages of undress, they lined up outside the HQ, where a fire engine had arrived. The crew then gave a brilliant talk on what they do and current fire fighting techniques. Consequently a fire safety course will be held at Kingston Fire Station in the near future so that the new fire safety badge can be gained.

Michael, Jonathan and Danny for the last few months have been shooting on Monday evenings at 1st Malden HQ — they will soon have their master at arms badges. Alex, Alexis and Matt plus Karen, Gary and Cowswain held Winter Camp at Walton Firs in February; the weather was actually quite reasonable.

Welcome to Alexander, William and the two Richards who have all come up from Cubs, they are very keen and have certainly made their mark already.

A lot of hard work has been done on the boats on Saturdays. One of the home counties gigs, "Hercules", will be going to Holland for Summer camp and has been stripped out so that rotten woodwork and loose fixings can be replaced. (If any body would like to help with nailing, please give me a call, it is a two-man job). "Ebbage 2" is out of the water so that some essential work can be done when the weather is drier.

A final plea — if you know someone who wants to join Scouts, we do have a tried and tested procedure. The first step is for them to get in touch with a Leader, preferably by phone, rather than arriving at a meeting expecting to join straight away.

We are all looking forward to the longer days and getting back on the water.

Coxswain

Bruno's 75th Birthday Bash



On Sunday 23rd February, the Group organised a 75th birthday lunch for Scout, Second, PL, Senior Scout, ASM, SM and GSL, now janitor, gofer, caretaker, etc., known to all as *Bruno*.

Between 60 and 70 people attended, from near and far, some not seen at Le-

ander HQ for years and years. Notable amongst these: **John Blackmore** and his wife, ex Group Chairman and father of the Blackmore twins and their younger brother, Peter, **Ivor Hunt** and his wife, Gillian, whom **David Grigg** helped to contact, unaware that they lived in the same village. Former Scouters included **Bev** and **Janet Williams**, **Gordon Biden**, **Paul Duffin** and **David Blundell**.

There was, of course, a large number of Guildsmen and their spouses, all looking a lot thinner on top than in their Scouting days. Thanks are due to them for the liquid refreshment provided. Catering was by Madeleine and Anji, up to their usual high standards and enjoyed by all.

The entry of an unofficial old Scouts' guild was a pleasant surprise: Ian Chinnock, Russel Constable, Neil Quincy, Harvey Maurice and Robert Payne. What I didn't know was their intention to get me out in a gig with them. I was very grateful for the anorak loaned by Gary Smith as I was hustled below and carefully assisted into the boat. Away we went into the teeth of a strong wind to go round the island and return safely alongside.

There were lots of 'Do you remember's and 'Haven't seen you in ages', and my thanks go to all for the cards and gifts, especially the pirate lapel badge with the winking eye and my very own boat, all of three inches long.

Bruno

Cub Report

The section is alive and well – lots of badges have been gained since the return from the Christmas break and a lot of energy has been burned up playing the games.



Congratulations to:

Luke Veillet for gaining his sixer Badge plus Scout Family and Bookreader badges.

Harry Blackhurst, Tom Pemberton and Tom Richards have gained their Secunder Badge.

Jamie Pemberton gained his Sportsman and Scout Family Badges

Daniel Wingrove gained 2 Scout Family Cub, Scout Award, First Aid, and his Secunder stripe.

Edward Barnard gained his Scout Family and Artist Badges.

Well done all of you! Our aim is to have every arm full of badges for St George's Day Parade.

As I said, every week a lot of energy is burned up playing games. I am still not sure who goes home the worse for wear, leaders or cubs, all I know is that we all sleep well on a Wednesday night. We had a pancake night on Wednesday 12th February and I have to admit when John asked me to do the mixture there was a bit of apprehension as to how it would turn out. The first one was fit only to be used as a sole on a shoe, however Ian came to the rescue and between us we managed to make around twenty pancakes. They must have been alright because it was like a scene from Oliver Twist: "Please sir, can I have some more?"

We also had an observation night when the boys had to try to remember fifteen articles on a tray in thirty seconds. The Sixers had to try to remember what the Venture Scouts were wearing when they walked through the main deck. I can assure all parents that your sons have a very good memory box.

During the half term, John and I with any volunteers are meeting to work out a full programme for the coming weeks leading up to

summer term. We will at all times keep you informed of any major events that may take place.

Just a reminder to all parents that subscription for this term should be sent to our treasurer. The period is from January to the end of April, covering 13 weeks, and the amount is £16.25. Please make cheques payable to Leander Sea Scouts and sent to:

Mr G Goodall
8 Lime Tree Avenue
Thames Ditton
Surrey KT7 0NA

The next movement for cubs to scouts will be in May and parents will be notified.

Mick Chinnock (Chief)

Home Counties Gig Refurbishment

One boat, "Hercules", has now been stripped out, sanded down and there is quite an amount of work to do.

- ◆ 18 new knees required (now being made)
- ◆ scarf in new timber to replace rotten inner gunnel
- ◆ replace rotten backboard
- ◆ refix crutch housings
- ◆ replace worn crutch plates
- ◆ renail gunnel and secure bow and stern joints
- ◆ replace fender and securing strip
- ◆ replace pintle and skeg bracket
- ◆ seal all woodwork/fibreglass joins (keel runners and keel plate)
- ◆ recoat fibreglass
- ◆ varnish woodwork.

Thanks to all those who are working so hard on this.

The other boat, "Hermes", needs rather more extensive replacement of rotten woodwork. Both boats are needed for the Regatta in July and for the Summer trip to Holland.

Coxswain

From the Chair

There was a meeting of the Leander Executive on 17th March. A number of requests for volunteers this month! Please offer help through the Section Leader or to Keith, 399 5846.

The **Ham Fair** is on Saturday 14th June. Volunteers for help on the day are wanted as well as bric-a-brac, which can be taken to Headquarters.

Sunday Teas made about £300 for the Group last year and a new volunteer is needed to organise the rota for this year. There is already a number of families which help regularly and it's a pleasant way to spend a Summer Sunday afternoon.

We also have the "hot-dog franchise" for monthly **car-boot sales** at the North Kingston Centre (Richmond Road) and two people can make up to £100 on a Sunday morning here. Materials provided!

If you want to arrange use of the **Headquarters** or **equipment**, please contact Chris Osborne, 546 5401 (answer-phone when no-one in).

The **Leander A.G.M.** will be at Headquarters on Thursday 15th May at 8 p.m. We hope that you will be able to attend to hear reports of Group activities, proposals for next year's subs and budget, and partake of some wine and refreshments. In due course parents will receive the annual report and accounts.

You may have noticed that the concrete slope alongside the Headquarters is now finished and the gate will soon be fixed at the front. Many thanks to Mick and all his helpers.

Concern amongst Sea Scout Groups that safety should be of paramount importance in water activities will mean that all Leaders will this year be getting nationally recognised B.C.U. (canoeing) and R.Y.A. (sailing) qualifications in place of their existing Scout-based "charge certificates". The Scout scheme for classification of waters will also be replaced by an existing national scheme.

Please send any items for the *Water Rat* to me by fax, on 255 3121, or by e-mail at nigel@duffin.demon.co.uk.

Nigel Duffin (Chair of Executive)

That terrible Turk's head

There used to come a time in the life of every growing lad when his father would take him aside and, with much humming and haing, teach him the facts about Turk's heads."

"It's perfectly natural for a lad to tie Turk's heads," father would explain, a bit falsetto. "It's a normal healthy urge, nothing to be ashamed of, nothing to giggle about either." And the lad would go off and begin tying (or more properly 'making') Turk's heads everywhere.

It doesn't seem to happen any more.

I remember when I mastered the plain five-bight, triple-part knot. Thereafter, my bicycle handlebars, the garden rake, the legs of my school desk (briefly, prior to discovery, and a belt around the starboard cathead), the dog's lead, all sprouted Turk's heads. My mother had a flattened version as a kettle stand, there were napkin rings, Turk's heads on granddad's walking stick — he whipped his pipe out of reach with an agility which surprised me — and a Turk's head chain-pull in the outside toilet. This was in fact strongly traditional, for the multi-knotted, coach-whipped and Turk's-headed 'hauling-off rope' was a common feature of the heads in barges and coastal ketches and schooners where the bucket was set athwartships in the whaleback. There seems no end to a lad's ingenuity; the search for new and novel uses can lead to unhealthy speculation.

Turk's heads, so called from their resemblance to a turban, have been in use at sea for at least 300 years, mainly as a working knot or 'binder', also wherever a secure grip or foothold was needed. The *Ashley Book of Knots*, the ultimate bible, devotes an entire chapter to it in its many and often complex forms. Traditionally, the centre wheel spoke in the midships position sports a Turk's head, and so should the boathook, booming out spar, dinghy paddles, frying pan handle and, for that matter, loo handle.

Nobody seems to have time any more to sit in the sun and work a Turk's head. No doubt our chandlers will stock them in little plastic bags, ready to be shrink-fitted by adding hot water. Teach your child to tie a Turk's head then stand well back.

found in Yachting Monthly, August 1994, by Bruno