



The Water Rat

Newsletter of Leander Sea Scouts

December 2003



editor – Nigel Duffin

Skipper's Scrawl

First of all, many thanks to those parents and members of the Guild who turned up at HQ on a cold, wet Saturday morning to help Robin, Karen and myself to have a blitz on the Boat Deck. At long last we are beginning to see the wood from the trees and, once a few more racks have been built, we can hopefully complete the task of getting the place a bit more shipshape. There were also enough adults there to get the final three gigs off the moorings in anticipation of the usual fast flowing winter flood currents of the river.

Our next task will be to get the upper decks cleaned up and Liz has arranged for the Main Deck floor to be cleaned and re-sealed over the Christmas break ready for the next meetings. So again I would ask parents of Beavers and Cubs to make a new year's resolution to help the leaders by offering to just help with sweeping up and putting cups, etc. away after meetings. The Troop and Explorers will also be reinstating the 'Duty Patrol' for this job after their meetings.

You will all be pleased to learn that we have been awarded a grant of £2500 from the RN fund towards the purchase of four new Coypus. Our present Coypus were new when I was a Patrol Leader in the Troop – so that may give you an indication of their age! The new boats will, to all intents and purposes, be identical to the present ones except they have additional buoyancy tanks fitted and there should be far less

maintenance involved, since there is no exposed woodwork. We are just waiting for the result of another grant application to determine whether or not we can also afford to order the boats with sails and rigging rather than just the pulling version.

The Winter months being traditionally ones for shore-based learning, Sea Scout groups on the Thames from Staines to Putney are linking together to improve training for all sections. This will start in early January with an RYA first aid course for leaders and Explorers being held at Ajax and it is hoped we will be taking up eight places. This will be followed in March with a leader/Explorer junior leader course to be held at Leander on gig and dinghy handling, leading to a formal assessment at the end for Scout Association qualifications. This course will then be repeated later in the year, geared to those of Scout age. Finally, further courses are to be planned, probably at Portsmouth, for power-boat handling and sailing on tidal waters.

Similarly, we have agreed to a policy of better liaison with Steadfast Sea Cadets: both the Troop and Explorers will have access to the Steadfast firing range and Steadfast will be making use of our facilities for canoeing.

There is no question that closer working together between youth organisations will enable us all to have access to more facilities and make optimum use of the

experience of leaders to offer a wider range of activities and expertise. I was therefore pleased to learn that our County Commissioner is proposing to join the Scout Districts of Surbiton, New Malden and Kingston. Provided this is approved, it should enable us to cut down on the administrative burden of running each District separately and again open up further possibilities for making use of the assets both Districts hold and combining such events as swimming galas, night hikes, camping competitions, etc. To this end, a joint meeting of all Group Scout Leaders and Chairs is being called to meet with the County Commissioner and the individual District Executives in early January. Hopefully, this will lead to a positive move forward.

Finally, well done to the Troop which has been successful in its application to the RN Sea Scout Gala to be held at the naval base at Torpoint. I am sure that all the competitors will have a marvellous time – we will await their results!

It is a little late to wish you all Season's Greetings as I expect this edition of the *Water Rat* won't quite make the Christmas post, however I can still wish everyone a happy New Year and as you will see from the above it will hopefully be one which will see a lot of new initiatives and a chance for more enjoyable Scouting.

Keith

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Cubs party after adventurous Autumn programme

This half term we have worked on completing our Adventure badge – this has involved tracking exercises in dark with the associated ambushes of the other Sixes.

The Community Challenge Badge is being worked on slowly, and, as part of this, the Cubs visited the local Mosque in East Road this month. Thanks to Marguerite Bowers-Clarke for arranging this.

We were warmly greeted by a member of the Mosque and presented with a copy of the Koran with English translation and, after removing our shoes, shown around. The Cubs were full of questions as we were shown the prayer area and the rest of the building.

There were children taking their daily studies (two hours every day after school) and two of them recited a short prayer.

We had to leave by 8 o'clock, as that was evening prayer time and I think the questions were running out! Perhaps we can leave the Koran on display at Headquarters for anyone to peruse. Well done to Katy and Becky for wearing a headscarf, a gesture which was appreciated by members of the mosque.

Finally we have worked on the Book Reader badge, which everyone got, based on a number of books and a final presentation to the whole Pack. *Lord of the Rings* may be the world's favourite

read, but it was retold in amusing and inventive ways.

The last meeting of the term was the traditional Christmas Party, with plenty to eat and games – lots of enthusiasm for this, as ever!

Steve & Keith



Explorers getting to know each other

On a drizzly Thursday night late October, five members of the Unit spent the night playing a few wide games up in Richmond Park. But, due to the weather and not many turning up, we decided to call our Halloween night to an early end.

The following week was Bonfire Week, and we had planned to go to see the fireworks at Ember Court in Molesey. But due to the display being held on the

Sunday before Bonfire night, we found another display and took a little journey over to Wimbledon Park.

Many thanks to the few Explorers that attended this year's Remembrance Sunday, but next year I hope to see ALL members looking smart and on show.

Over the next few months the Unit will be spending a bit of time down at TS Steadfast, where they have been

allowed to use the rifle range. As Coxswain, Jon B and myself are range officers, we are able to take up to eight Scouts/Explorers and to take full advantage of their facilities. As the Unit's shooting abilities improve, an officer of Steadfast has offered to show and teach them how to shoot a 2.2.

This term has been a time for me to look into the Explorers' minds and to see how they would react in certain

situations. In the past few weeks I have been putting them through a series of 'Dilemma' and 'Knowing Each Other' questionnaires. They have also looked through some pictures of past Leander members and events, as an observation exercise. And believe me, I thought I knew some of them.

Finally, the unit is in the middle of its first experience of what it will be like when it loses half of its members due to GCSEs. I would like to pass on this bit of advice, to current and future Explorers: Leander's doors will always be open and the Unit will always be there, and however hard and stressful the next few months may get, I will always be there for you to talk to.

I hope you've had a Very Merry Christmas and wish you a Happy New Year.

Kaz.

Dates for your Diary

- January 7 – Troop meetings start
- January 11 – HQ Working Party:
*Paintin, Pearn, Peto, Pope, Pratt
- January 19 – Leander Executive Meeting, 8pm at HQ
- January 25 – HQ Working Party:
*Sibley, Smith, Steele, Taylor, Waller
- February 8 – HQ Working Party:
*Walters, Whitfield, Wingrove, Woods, Young
- February 29 – HQ Working Party:
*Aviram, Barley, Barnard, Bate, Beedham
- March 14 – HQ Working Party:
*Biddulph, Bowers-Clark, Bradbury, Burley, Byrd, Cantello
- March 28 – HQ Working Party:
*Chapman, Cockle, Corlett, Croft, Edwards, Exworthy

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Pick of the Bunch,
140-142 Richmond Road, Kingston
020 8549 5000,
also Upper Ham Road, Ham Common.
www.pick-of-the-bunch.com

Beavers ready for a colourful 2005

At the end of October, the Beavers had a Halloween party when they all dressed up. We've also all been for a night walk along the River.

Everyone has achieved their Discovery Challenge Badge, which involves finding out how things work, knowing about keeping healthy and showing creativity.

The last meeting before the Christmas break, each Beaver made a calendar for 2005, with lots of poster paint and glue going everywhere.

Amanda



Coxswain's Corner

Every Winter the Troop is usually busy learning new skills, doing seamanship and badge work. With the change of ages in the Scout section and the requirements of the new programme, our approach has been somewhat different this term. What is quite clear is that we have to substantially modify the programme to suit Sea Scouting needs. With the much valued assistance of Karen and some of the Explorers, we will be able to continue passing on the skills necessary for boating and water activities.

We were somewhat short of events this term, as the Chess competition has been postponed to January and the Joint District Night Hike did not take place – a victim of the changes in sections. Hopefully it will take place in early Spring.



Scouts enjoy the 'traditional' games

Attendance at meetings has been very good, and we have invested Rachel Bungey, Lizzie McAllister, Alistair Hetherington and Andrew Chappell, and we also look forward to the next Cubs due up after Christmas. The linking with Cubs seems to have worked well, with Sixers and Seconders each attending a Troop meeting to get a feel for a typical Scout night.

We sometimes feel that some Cubs feel a little apprehensive about joining Scouts; hopefully the linking now in place will help reassure them that coming up to Scouts is actually worthwhile.

A special thanks to Ian, for his assistance, when available, with the Troop



A new Scout invested

and to Liz who is now regularly helping and will be looking after all badge requirements – and other matters in the future. Finally, thanks to all parents for persevering with brothers and sisters, rushed meals and the Kingston traffic to get sons and daughters to the meetings on time.

Have a nice relaxed Christmas and don't forget – first meeting in 2004 is Tuesday 7th January

Coxswain

Sunday Morning Working Parties

Parents – don't forget – we rely on you to keep the HQ 'ship-shape'!

Parents' working parties on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month are for regular cleaning and maintenance of the HQ, allowing our Leaders to get on with planning and running programmes.

All Leander families (except leaders) are divided into groups of four or five and one parent from each family is asked to come along from 10:00 to 12:00, arranging swaps if necessary. A new rota starts at the end of February (moved to 29th to avoid half-term).

Please would the **first named* on the list arrange to collect a key from Mike Freeman (020 8549 8634).

January 11 – *Paintin, Pearn, Peto, Pope, Pratt

January 25 – *Sibley, Smith, Steele, Taylor, Waller

February 8 – *Walters, Whitfield, Wingrove, Woods, Young

February 29 – *Aviram, Barley, Barnard, Bate, Beedham

March 14 – *Biddulph, Bowers-Clark, Bradbury, Burley, Byrd, Cantello

March 28 – *Chapman, Cockle, Corlett, Croft, Edwards, Exworthy

April 25 – *Foster, Freeman, Gardener, Geraghty, Goodall

May 9 – *Harrison, Hazard, Hearn, Howe, Kersey

May 23 – *King, Lawley-Gibbs, Lear, MacAllister, Manson

June 13 – *McDonagh, McGuinness, Paintin, Pearn, Peto, Pope

June 27 – *Pratelli, Pratt, Pratt, Sankey, Sibley

July 11 – *Smith, Steele, Troullides, Waller, Walters

September – *Webb, Wheller, Whitfield, Wingrove, Woods