



The Water Rat

The Newsletter of Leander Sea Scouts

March 2018

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Mayor's commendation for bravery



An RNLI inshore boat arrived, complimented the two Explorer Scouts and checked that they were in good condition.

Police Chief Superintendent Sally Benatar, Kingston Borough Commissioner, wrote expressing her thanks for the assistance given. She said that the officers were extremely impressed with the way in which the young men had acted. She complimented their bravery and commitment to help.

Ed and Ben were presented with certificates of commendation by Councillor Julie Pickering, Mayor of Kingston, at a ceremony in the Guildhall on 13th March.

On Thursday evening, 28th September 2017, members of Leander Sea Scouts Explorer Unit were rowing in twos and threes in dinghies, upstream from the Headquarters, between Kingston road and railway bridges. When opposite the John Lewis store, they were aware of blue flashing lights on the bank.

head of the other, who seemed to be unconscious, above the water.

Ed Paterson climbed into one of the skiffs and Ben Longhurst jumped into the water, grabbed the unconscious man and pushed him into the skiff, with Ed's help. The man became conscious and reacted violently. Ed and the other man in the skiff held him down. By this time, paramedics had arrived and lifted the man onto land.

They were called and went over to the Kingston side of the river, where Police were on the bank and two skiffs were on the water, attending to two men in the river. One was standing up, holding the



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Beavers come up with wonderful ideas!

At Beavers in the Autumn Term we did our My World Challenge and Faith badges for the Autumn Term. We thought about what we are grateful for in our world and wrote some reflections and prayers. We learned about the countries in the UK and had activities for each of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. The craft daffodils we made for Wales were displayed on our noticeboard and we printed shamrocks for Northern Ireland with recycled corks, but ate all the Scottish shortbread, of course.



We had an amazing visit with Tam and Green Watch to Kingston Fire Station, where we learned about Fire Safety in the home and clambered all over the fire engines and tried out the hoses. I have never had so much great feedback about a session: it was fun.



Beavers collected Autumn natural items and did some beautiful leaf rubbings to take home.

Before Christmas we learned about Switzerland, with the help of two parents who have lived and worked there so thanks to them. Switzerland is also the home of the International Scout Centre Kandersteg and the Guide

'Our Chalet'. Maybe our Beavers will be lucky to visit Kandersteg when they are Explorers! I certainly hope so.

We visited St Luke's Church in Kingston to learn about a place of faith, the distinctive building and the celebration of Christmas and we had a Christmas party with disco (thanks to the Houlden family!).

We have had a good Spring Term despite the dark evenings, working on our Communicator and My Skills badges. The Tudor Ward Community Police visited us to remind us about staying safe, they showed us their uniform and equipment and answered questions (wide and varied!).



We learned to use Morse Code and deciphered a message sent to the Beavers by the Young Leaders and also learnt about the Phonetic alphabet, who uses it and tried to learn to spell out our names with it.

The Beavers were challenged to design a useful or amazing machine and came up with some wonderful ideas I would like in my home. The Tidy Up machine was particularly useful but many revolved around food, clearly hungry children wishing for treats this winter. One or two not only drew out their designs with labels about the functions to be

carried out, but also made their machines to demonstrate how it might work which was great!

The Beavers have a Log Chew at the start of every term to see what they liked doing in previous terms and what they might like to do in future. The Beavers Choice evening used their ideas for obstacle and team races ending with the game Search Light/Light House as scurrying around in the dark by torchlight is always popular, thanks to our great Young Leaders.

We have learnt to iron and roll our Leander Scarves, light a candle, checked we have all learnt our address and telephone numbers and sent a text message. We have also focussed on healthy living, reminding ourselves about healthy foods versus treats, cleaning teeth and that taking exercise is important and fun. Some fun problem-solving missions were undertaken.

A few of us were lucky to go to the District Explore session to earn another badge. It is always great to join in with so many other Beavers from around the District and feel part of the wider family of Scouts.

I am very grateful to our wonderful parents who come along to help on the rota, for getting involved, making drinks, sitting on the floor and joining in games. This is a great way to get to know other families, and to those who take on session tasks I delegate and bring in materials and their enthusiasm.

I am delighted to say that we have two volunteer Assistants, Joanna Gaskell and Helen Farrell who are busy helping out at weekly meetings – a huge thanks to them. We still need another one Assistant to sign up, especially if we want to join in with the District events at weekends, so do come and join the team! Please speak to me or Robin if you think you could help.

*Cathy (Yogi)
Beavers*

Scouts back on the water

In July 2017, following swiftly on the heels of the last day of the summer term, the Scout Troop upped sticks and set off for their annual Summer camp. The venue this year was Youlbury activity centre in Oxfordshire which is one of the Scout Association's flagship activity centres.

The weather on the first day (and all subsequent days, to be honest) was somewhat inclement, which made the task of setting up camp all the more 'interesting', although – credit to all the Scouts – no one complained and everyone just got on with it.

During the week the Scouts enjoyed a fun-packed programme, including climbing, shooting, zip wire, go-karts, abseiling, Jacob's ladder, kayaking, archery, fire-lighting, wood chopping, shelter building, night hike, bush-craft and – most people's favourite – the 3G swing.



On the first two days of camp the Leander Cubs were also at Youlbury so we all got together for wonderful campfire cooking extravaganza, kindly prepared for us by Chris Stone, one of the Cub Leaders.



It's the first time to my knowledge where there have been Explorers, Scouts, Cubs and Leaders from Leander totalling

nearly fifty people, all enjoying camp activities at the same place and time. When the Cubs first came over to the Scout camp, the Scouts were whittling sticks around the campfire (under supervision) and it amused me that when later asked "what do you think is the main difference between Cubs and Scouts?", the Cubs answered "they've got knives!"

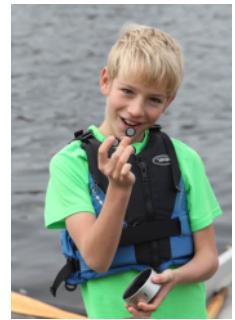
At the beginning of the Autumn term, the Scouts got back out on the water for one last Tuesday before the lack of daylight prevented them until now. The following two meetings saw the Scouts completing their Fire Safety badge with a theory and practical session at the HQ and a visit to the local Fire station on Richmond Road. The remaining meetings were taken up with nautical skills and rope work, map reading and a mini night hike in Richmond Park which although 'mini' still managed to take three hours!

There were also several weekend activities, with progress being made on kayaking and the Paddle Power program as well as air rifle shooting sessions at the HQ.



The Scouts have been involved on several occasions with improving our local environment by taking part in a litter-pick along the river bank using our boats in conjunction with The Canbury Area Residents Association.

Several 'treasures' were acquired by the Scouts taking part, footballs, fidget spinners, thus proving the phrase 'Where there's muck, there's brass'!



This term the Scouts have undertaken mainly land-based activities, brushing up on our traditional Scout skills but with a nautical bias.

We've had wide games and night hikes around Ham House which were cold but thankfully dry.

A quiz night as well as an international trade game have combined fun evenings with subliminal learning and thought provoking real world dilemmas, resulting in partial deafness for the leaders!

We undertook an evening of multi-DIY skills: sanding, drilling, cutting, joining, plug wiring, tap washer changing and pipe cutting and joining. This, combined with our bird-box making last term will qualify the Scouts for their DIY badge.

We had a good evening session on First Aid, with several parents helping us to cover many of the disciplines, including resuscitation and CPR.

We've done some prep work for our upcoming RN inspection as well as reviewing and re-learning our water and navigational skills.

Finally, with the clocks going forward we were all able to get out onto the river again for our final meeting before the Easter break.

Russ

Coxswain's Corner

At last the weather is gradually improving, everyone is looking forward to getting out on the water again. We have certainly not been idle though – in the last few months a huge amount of work has been carried out at the HQ.

The Boat Deck walls have all been painted white, which lightens the whole area significantly, similarly the front and rear stairwells have been painted and with their new sensor-based lighting, they are much lighter and safer. The electrics for the whole building have now been updated as well. We have been very fortunate hiring out the HQ, Ruth and Nigel's skilful marketing has resulted in number of regular users who are delighted with the venue and provide a regular stream of valuable income.

The boat trailer and box trailer have both been completely overhauled with new wheels, bearings, cables and fittings, they should be good for the foreseeable future.

We discovered that two of the Home Counties gigs had patches of rot in some of the woodwork, resulting in a complete strip down and eventual refitting of

new timber and revarnishing. A rather formidable task, ably carried out by the Mutineers on freezing nights on the Boat Deck, (with appropriate warming up afterwards at Boaters!).

Every year our two classic wooden gigs, Active and Alert, are lovingly examined and revarnished by Dick, who has looked after them for many years. They are quite unique: some of the Group's most valuable assets. They will both be out soon, providing the most enjoyable pulling experience for both young people and adults.

Neil has competed some amazingly successful fundraising, we now have a number of new kayaks and canoes to add to our fleet, the most recent were three new smaller kayaks funded by Kingston Round Table and launched at the Scouts' first session on the water this season.

This year, we have restructured the water activities programme, with more instruction and activities at weekends, enabling National qualifications to be gained. Scout and Cub Leaders and Instructors have been busy acquiring additional qualifications in power-boating, sailing

and kayaking, really enhancing the skills level of the Group.

With new instructors and lots of enthusiasm we intend to get sailing back in the programme, it just needs a bit of decent wind to make that work. Leander has always had a reputation for providing high quality water activities, that's what makes Sea Scouting worthwhile and really enjoyable.

All the sections are thriving; in particular, thanks to Cathy, Beavers now has new assistants and helpers. Every meeting is really fizzing – a great result.

It's farewell to Karen this month, who is stepping down from Explorers and has decided to concentrate on her professional career. We owe her a huge thank you for the many years she has been in the Group, as Assistant Scout Leader, Beaver Leader, Group Scout Leader and Explorer Leader. The Explorer section will be starting a new chapter after Easter, with Alex carrying on as their Leader.

As the new season unfolds, here's to 'fair winds and following seas'.

Coxswain

Great River Race



There were challenging conditions, with wind against tide, for the Great River Race on 9th September. The Explorer crew, competing in the under-18 class, completed the 26 mile course,

rowing up from Dockland to Ham in a fibreglass gig in 3½ hours.

The Leander Mutineers, rowing in wooden gig 'Alert' took 3 hours 20 minutes.

Uniform

We are looking for someone to manage the Group's uniform stock. We supply to all the sections, with main uniform items from the Scout Shop in Ewell and local suppliers for other items. We already have substantial stock and stockroom, we just need good management of these assets. Please get in touch if you would like a very satisfying opportunity to be part of the Group.



Leander Paddlers



After shrugging off the Beast from the East, we finally got ourselves back on the water in March. Kicking off the year with a session at Hampton Pool, we had fifteen Scouts from absolute beginners learning basic paddle technique to the more experienced practising capsizing in the safety and warmth of the 28°C pool. We all ended up playing around, standing on our kayaks, and seeing how many Scouts can get on a kayak before sinking. The Scouts had a lot of fun! (I had a lot of fun!!) This was our first pool session, and I am hoping to arrange another one later in the year.

Well done to all those who took part in the Spring CARA litter pick on 24th March. It's so important we care for our local environment and keep our stretch of the river clean. The Scouts are always very enthusiastic and have a huge amount of fun dragging all sorts of junk out of the river bank, which makes it all the more rewarding.



We have been incredibly fortunate to start our boating season with six new boats. We purchased a *Pyranha TG lite* kayak, suitable for younger paddlers,

and four new paddles with the fundraising money from bag packing at Sainsbury's at the end of 2017. Well done to all those who took part and helped raise over £500 (with gift aid). We have also replaced two old canoes with beautiful new *Hou14* canoes. These are smaller and lighter, making them much easier for the Scouts and Explorers to paddle and train in.

We are incredibly grateful to the Kingston Round Table for donating three new *Pyranha* kayaks. After the litter picking we had a short launch ceremony. Members of the Round table came, and Robin Burr gave a short speech. It was great that we had so many parents attend and altogether it was a very sociable occasion. The Scouts and Cubs who came had a very exciting and enjoyable time taking the

new boats out on the river for the first time. Many thanks to those parents who helped with teas and coffees and who brought biscuits and cakes.



Congratulations to Tim Pullen who passed his British Canoeing Instructor qualification recently. It's fantastic we have another *Paddlesport Instructor* at Leander, joining Jon Burr, Andrew Jackson and myself.

After our success last year, we are continuing our *British Canoeing Paddlepower* training this year. This is an excellent staged training programme for young kayakers/canoeists which results in *British Canoeing Paddlepower* awards and corresponding Scout badges. We will be arranging weekend training sessions throughout the season. These are open to all abilities, and we may also run some tea and cake sales to tempt family members to come and watch, and also to raise a bit of money for the group. I'll be sending out monthly schedules.

Happy paddling! – Neil

