

4th Newbury Scout Group AGM 2012

Scout Leaders Annual Report

As even 2011-2012 has been a busy year for the Scout Troop. We have been operating at more than our intended maximum during the last 12 months due to the rate of Cubs moving up into the Scout section and our high rate of retention, hopefully due to the wide and varied programme we aim to deliver.

As always, looking back through the Scout programme for the last 12 months has reminded me of some of the things we have been doing over the last 12 months, and I'd like to take this opportunity to share some of those moments with you.

May 2011 saw us camping at Thirtover for last year's AGM where Scouts tackled their Athletics badge and made a climbing frame that some of you may remember testing last year. June saw the annual Kennet District Scout Football competition come round again and we had 2 great teams entered for the event and I'm pleased to say, we brought back the trophy for the Scout section.

We had a second weekend camp at Youlbury, Oxford in July, with pleasant weather for the weekend it made the cooking on wood fires quite simple, and we also had an Air Rifle shooting activity while we were there. July also was time for our annual Rafting excursion on the Kennet and Avon canal. As usual, those knows we had practiced in the hall went out the window at the sight of water and rafting equipment, so more time was spent building the rafts than paddling them, but by the end of the evening all Scouts were thoroughly wet having tested various methods, some better than others, of attaching the barrels to their raft.

Isle of Wight, August 2011 – The Scout week long summer camp. A very successful week, day one of camp the Scouts found the mud flats quite entertaining at low tide. I'm sure the parents didn't enjoy the washing up after they got home. During the week we had a session of tree climbing, rib boating out to The Needles at 40 knots, rafting and cycling amongst other activities. Ah yes, the cycling... how can I forget! Scouts on bikes, they use the front brake – they fall off, they try to change gear – they fall off, they bump up kerbs – they fall off, they indicate right – and turn left, road junctions with give way signs – they don't apply to bikes, they get tired cycling up a hill – they stop in the middle of the road. I appeal to all the Cubs and Beavers sat here today, when you come to Scouts, show me you can cycle better than this lot. It really was an eye-opening experience to be a Scout Leader during that activity.

Scouts started back in September, still with a full attendance as with some of the older Scouts moving up to Explorers they were quickly replaced with eager Cubs moving up to Scouts. The Archery competition was the first event of the new term, and we made a pretty good effort on the day, but alas, didn't win – so this year as the event is running again we're hoping to do better.

We tackled our Fire Safety proficiency badge in October, with a little help from Advantage Fire Services, Reading who provided the extinguishers we used, with all the Scouts getting an opportunity to try water, foam and CO2 extinguishers on different types of fires. The older Scouts had an opportunity to tackle their Expedition Challenge, navigating from Great Bedwyn to Kintbury with an overnight stop in Hungerford while carrying their own equipment. The weather was favourable and the navigation was acceptable, meaning they made a pretty good job of turning up in the right place at the right time

November saw us camping again, this time making use of the log cabin at Thirtover as a HQ because the weather can be somewhat unpredictable at that time of year. The Scouts tackled their mechanics badge. A number of leaders looked on rather apprehensively as the wheels were taken off their cars and the oil, water and washer levels checked. Sweat was seen to be breaking out when the top-up oil almost ended up in the washer bottle and vice versa. November also saw the Scouts on Parade in Newbury as part of Remembrance Day and as always, I was pleased to see a high turnout of well dressed Scouts for the event.

December as always is a busy month for everyone, and the Scouts were no different. They tried their hand at some festive crafts and were in fine vocal form for the 12 Days of Christmas at the annual carol service.

2012 was looming all too quickly

The first few months were pretty busy, no camping but we were still outdoors. Either honing our navigation skills in preparation for the Alamo, or cutting down trees as part of our service work at Snelsmore Common. Snelsmore this year was the first time we've had to work in a blizzard, but it's fair to say we still got a fire going, but the inclement weather meant that common sense prevailed and an early halt was called to that day's work.

The Alamo, what can I say – we were robbed. We were the only team to navigate the course without any phonecalls for help, without getting lost, and helping other teams get to the right place. Needless to say, next year we will be back to winning form.

All the Scouts had a chance to do a Sub-Aqua Try Dive session at Mare Hare pool in March, the opportunity saw lots of interest and 19 Scouts (and 1 leader) had a go in the pool.

April was pretty quiet due to Easter holidays, but again the Scouts paraded through town as part of their St Georges Day service. Many of them getting somewhat damp during the torrential hail storm 50 yards from the Church doors, but we survived the weather well and again the Troop had a good turn-out at the event.

That pretty much wraps up a year to our traditional AGM date of May, this year the weather has meant it's been delayed to September, but I'd hate to steal material from next year's report by bringing this one up to date.

So a final thank you to the Scouts – who I don't tell I'm proud of very often, to the parents who drop them off and collect them from here, there and everywhere in all weathers, and the rest of the Scout leader team, without whom – organising this programme of events every year wouldn't be possible.

Here's hoping we can offer the same level of programme, if not better in the coming 12 months.

Bruce, 4th Newbury Scout Troop Leader

