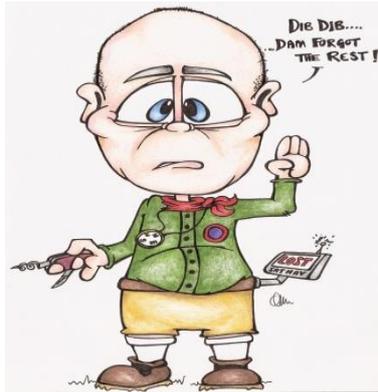


**Group Scout Leader
4th Newbury (St Johns) Scout Group**



AGM 2012

Firstly thank you for coming today and supporting your Scout group and the young people within it.

So I guess most of you by now know who this bald, svelte figure of a person in front of them now is!.

To perhaps our newer parents and members I'm Nigel and I'm the Group Scout Leader, posh title so what does that mean! Ah a Manager! We've all seen them, the one that sits on the back seat and telling people how it should be done.

I am responsible for the group as a whole and everyone in it. Hopefully making sure that all the members young and slightly older are enjoying scouting and getting the most out of it while operating within the rules of scouting in safe environment.

Those who know me well and have seen me around the group also know that I just can't sit back like that, some say I'm more of a hands on GSL others say I like to be involved but really most say that I like to interfere.

Personally I just do not like to miss out on the fun. The serious point is that if you ever need to discuss anything related to the group or scouting and for whatever reason feel that you can't approach a section leader or Committee member then I'm the person you need to be talking to.

As the longer term parents and members of the group know we try to vary the format of the Group AGM so that it does not just become another boring meeting, we have in recent years been around the camp fire – on Group Camp and now during our first ever Group Quiz. These AGM / Reviews do end up just being one list after another of great events & activities, especially around this Scout group and sometimes I know it feels like you have heard it all before. But I think it's important that we realise at the moment young people in West Berkshire, probably have a better chance than ever through organisations like scouting, guiding, boys brigade etc to learn about and become valued members of the society around them while having a huge amount of fun and adventure in the process (far better than sitting in front of the iPod all the time).

I'm sure they all come home raving and shouting about all the fun and exciting activities and sometimes perhaps miss the value and point of some of what they see as the slightly more boring or dull items. Don't get me wrong I love the fun events best as well. However the scouting program is structured to give them a balance of learning and fun and the chance to perhaps work in peer groups slightly outside those they would find elsewhere. With everything they do working towards developing them a good citizens and valued members of the community around them and of course earning a few badges to keep along the way.

Of course none of the great things you have heard about them doing in their respective sections and the rather exciting ones coming up in the next 12 months are possible without the fantastic time and effort put in by the Leaders and supporters of the group. You have had reports from Kate, Gerard and Bruce to tell you about what the young people have been up to and it is thanks to them and the rest of the leader team that all these activities happen. We are exceptionally lucky at 4th Newbury that we have a balance of very experienced (Some very very or OLD!!) leaders and then new fresh leaders coming in. This year we are glad to welcome Matt Shaw back as a new leader in the scout section, Matt having been a Beaver, Cub and Scout with 4th Newbury we packed him off to another group to serve his Young Leader apprenticeship so to speak.

He now returns to help us develop the next generation. Special thanks also go out to Amy and Joe who have worked with us as Young leaders over the last 12 months. Depending on Joe's plans in the near future we hope to see him becoming a full leader very shortly. I know Kate and Sue are very grateful to Amy for all her support and I hope in a couple of years we will see her moving up to become a leader. We have had now for some years a strong and very stable leader team which I feel has reflected in the achievements of the group and the young people that have come through. Although in essence we have lost Sean in a recent transfer window from our Cub Pack as we accepted a request from 1st Newbury to give them one of our highly experienced and trained staff many of you will have noticed he loves 4th so much its hard to stay away and he remain a valuable member of the team. What is good news is that this also means another group in the District will be offering the same high quality of scouting that 4th do meaning even more young people in West Berkshire benefit.

Saying that we have a strong stable team does not mean we are not open to new faces to bring even more ideas and flexibility in the program we can offer. You could be next! Just put your hand up or come and have a chat with one of the current team . It's perhaps worth mentioning that leaders do not just arrive "readymade" like a microwave meal. Although some do come through scouting like Matt recently has, others arrive full of the most important ingredient to us- **enthusiasm**. They then commit to undertake a very good flexible training program. It is designed around you own available time in order to ensure they are able to deliver the type of scouting we all like to see plus of course they are supported by the experience of the leader team around them. You are not volunteering to commit to every Monday or every activity we can offer flexitime to suit the time you can offer us. The Rate of pay is commensurate with the enjoyment the young people get – you are paid in smiles, thanks and knowledge that you have put something into the community (sadly no cash).

So while you mull that over and decide which section you would like to come and help with I would like to say a huge thank you to all our leader team for the time they put in and the enjoyment our young people get from it.

I am now moving into my 2nd year as GSL here with 4th and I have to say how please I am with the way the group is gelling together and the developing work of our Group Executive who have organised this evening's event.

Some of you will be aware that as a group we closed our waiting list quite some time ago and have been struggling to find spaces for all those who had already registered interest to join. The good news is that a **limited waiting list is now re-open for Beavers** and at present we are managing to offer spaces to all those on it. They are of course times when we cannot offer a space due to numbers and then names are passed onto to other groups in the area to try and ensure every young person gets a chance to enjoy scouting.

Those of you who have ventured beyond the door of the hall and seen the amount of space we are working in will I'm sure appreciate why we can't just flood more young people in. There is of course the Health and Safety restriction but also the matter of ensuring **quality scouting** for our members.

We have looked at the option of opening further sections within the group but restrictions of hall availability means this is currently held to review at a later date. We continue to be victims of our own success and still have no need to actually look to recruit young people as they are literally banging on the door to get in. As I have already commented on, we will always do our best to find every young person who wants to join a space at a Scout group but can't guarantee it will always be with 4th. What we will not do is take people into the group or onto a waiting list with an offer of a space and scouting that can't be delivered. As pretty much the whole of the District is run to a similar high standard I have no worries about the young people we pass on and that they quality scouting. We do however try to ensure that once a young person joins 4th as a Beaver they have the chance to stay with 4th right through to the end of scouts despite the pressure this puts particularly on the scout troop. It's simple maths 2 years in Beavers 2 years in Cubs 4years in scouts means Scouts often has a bottle neck with regard to numbers.

What is the Headline from the sections – We are Active - Adventurous - Having Fun and enjoying everything Scouting has to offer we are 4th Newbury (St Johns) Scout Group. As a certain advert goes _____ don't do scouting but if they did they would do it the 4th way.

On top of all this action within the sections behind the scenes the group has an Executive committee which I mentioned earlier for organising tonight. This group is there to support the leaders in taking some of the admin tasks or running a group like this. So the leaders can concentrate on the delivery of scouting to young people.

Officially the Scout associations says "The Group Executive exists to support the Group Scout Leader in meeting the responsibilities of their appointment" Personally that to me is a little to general and perhaps does not value the work they do high enough. As they are fundamental to the running of the group and ensuring the leaders are able to concentrate on activities for the young people rather than paperwork and fund raising. They also offer a great balance to us leaders who sometimes get a little carried away with what we see as fantastic ideas but perhaps needs a little more thinking through.

Members of the Committee are also the Charity Trustees of the Scout Group.

Those of you who look at numbers etc will have heard from our treasurer that the group has a solid foundation financially. With the current benefit of gift aid payments or otherwise known as a generous donation from the government we appear to be quite well off. Indeed to a degree we are, however that money will not stretch far when equipment needs replacing etc and of course a large amount of the funds held actually relate to deposits and donations already rec'd for future activities like the Scouts summer trip to Somerset this year so in that sense that money has been ring fenced.

We are currently continue to be able to offer a scouting at the lowest subscription rate in the area which is down to our great financial management of course and also fact that unlike other groups we do not have to fully fund a meeting hall and the rent compared to a commercial venue is cheap. Providing the quality scouting we do of course becomes increasingly challenging in the economic times we all find ourselves in and we hope that you will all support any future fund raising activities the group puts together.

I can assure you every penny we get goes into providing the exciting scouting the young people get nobody working in the group takes and payment for their time in fact most leaders do not even claim expenses they are often entitled to.

You have already heard from Stuart our Chair and Sue our treasurer and there are also a number of other parents and indeed non group parents who are working behind the scenes to make sure the group runs smoothly and is able to financially support its self. We will shortly be electing our Executive to take forward again for the next 12 months. So many thanks to those who have supported the leaders this year and helped us run successfully. I know most of the executive have offered their services again for another year which is fantastic news but if they is anybody out there who thinks they can bring a valueable skill or just some time to help please do not be shy, stop looking at the floor and volunteer.

We are very lucky at this group that the AGM is not a meeting where we need to brow beat people into joining in fact far from it we like the AGM to be a celebration of the scouting year and a bit of fun.

So if you know of parents etc who are not here and perhaps were scared that they might be asked to do something please pass on the message that it is not like that. Yes we love a volunteer but also we love the chance to tell you all about the fun and exciting things we have all be up too.

I look forward to working with the next committee to continue and build on the solid foundations this group has.

Finally 3 more bits of thanks –

1) To the Husbands, Wives (particularly mine – who not only puts up with it all but actually comes along on Summer camp to help with the food and QM duties) and Partners of the leaders and committee members of the group for your support of respective "others" giving up time and often joining them on events

2) To all the parents and families of our young people who allow us leaders to take them through the journey that is scouting and hopefully teach them something about life and themselves, and then finally

3) The most important people in all of this, the young people themselves, after all without them we would not be scouting and I for one would not be having the fun I am.

