

4th Newbury Scout Troop - Annual Report, 2011

It's fair to start by saying the Scouts have had a good year - we won a few District Events including the Football and the Alamo. Over the last 12 months we have again ran a rich and varied programme, confirmed by the high numbers of Scouts taking the opportunity to take part. A few of the highlights of the last twelve months would include a Midsummers Camp at Angels Corner where we had a go at a dusk-to-dawn hike, with it's fair to say, limited success. Backwoods cooking on open fires - cooking with no utensils a variety of dishes including mince cooked in peppers.

Summer brought us to our week long camp and in 2010 we headed for the Lake District, Great Towers Campsite just outside Windermere for Red Rose 2010. This was an international Scout Jamboree with Scouts from all over the world offering the Scouts the chance to meet and find out about Scouting from mother countries as well as a healthy serving of activities to keep them entertained for the week, including Dry Stone Walling, proper hill walking, an abundance of water activities on Lake Windermere and a day out to Ambleside and a Safari Park. In some cases I'm not 100% sure if it's the activities that attract our Scouts to such events or the healthy contingent of Norwegian Scouts that also attend most UK jamborees - our Scouts weren't shy at getting to know them. Latest in the year we camped at Thirotver to stay on an International theme to take part in JOTI 2010, or Jamboree on the Internet. With some PCs we operated a 24hour IRC chat station talking to Scouts all over the world and we reached most far-flung corners during the event.

For the first time in 2010 we had a Halloween night. We had the obligatory fancy dress competition and dooking for apples as well as eating the black treacle covered scones strung from the ceiling and various other activities. Each Scout was challenged to bring a trick to perform as the roots of Trick-or-Treat don't come from America but Scotland and Ireland where it was traditional to present a trick to earn your treat - not quite the same as the Americans think - and we had some quite good entries on the night.

Winter was fast approaching and we thought it'd be a good idea to have another Winter Camp, we hadn't had one for a while and after all - how cold could it get. Hmm, well 2010's winter wasn't exactly typical for Berkshire - I woke on the Sunday morning to the thermometer saying -5degC and that was pretty chilly. It's the first time I've seen the washing-up bubbles freeze solid on the plates as we washed up after breakfast. Credit to the hardy bunch of Scouts that turned up and survived the weekend with no ill effects, but maybe a healthy respect for central heating when they got home.

We started into 2011 with some service work at Sneslmore Common, an excuse to chop down trees and have a big fire! Silver birch is really quite good to burn once you get the fire well lit, but you've really got to keep an eye on those eyebrows and fringes if the wind changes unexpectedly. The Scouts also had the chance of a 4 week ski lesson session at Bracknell which quite a few took part in - congratulation to those who braved the worst M4 traffic in months - I found lots of new back roads and a rather deep ford!

Still to come this year we have quite a few activities in the pipeline, including our 2011 Summer Camp which will take place on Corfe Campsite on the Isle of Wight with activities to include a power boat trip round the Needles, outdoor laserquest and a tree walk. Here's hoping for a splash of sunshine thrown in for good measure.

On the subject of numbers, the Scouts Troop is currently a victim of our own success and is bursting at the seams with 30 current members. Whilst the larger Troop size does make planning some activities easier it also has an effect on the regular meeting in the Richard Room. As such I have to say that we expect Scouts to turn up regularly at meetings, if that attendance drops to below 50% then I will be offering the place to someone else who wants to join. Of course we'd like to offer everyone a space that wants one, but in the current situation I feel that's fair.

Lastly I have to pass my thanks on the Nigel, Gemma, Steve and Ali - you all see me standing up here reading this report - but a good Scouts Troop is never due to one person and without their help on Mondays, camps and other events, many of the things we do would simply not happen.

That's all folks.

Bruce
4th Newbury Scout Leader