

4th Newbury Scout Troop, Annual Report 2018-2019

So, the first question is really where have the last 12 months gone? It doesn't seem that long ago when I sat down to write last year's annual report – or maybe that is just an adverse reaction to doing Scout paperwork!

From a statistics point of view, the good news is the Scout Troop is running at capacity. We have a few more people wanting to join than we can fit it – our comfortable number being ~24 due to the size of the Richard Room. We always accommodate our Cubs moving up before anything else, and occasionally take in someone from elsewhere. But usually, such request are referred back to District to find a space for them elsewhere.



Last time my report finished just after Summer Camp 2018 at Ferny Crofts, Hampshire. This year, I get to pick up the story from there.



Shortly after starting back in September we took 10 of the Scouts to complete their Expedition Challenge. This involves hiking, navigating while carrying their own kit on a 2day Expedition. We had Scouts from the oldest to the youngest taking part, and all finished the route successfully. This is typically something we run on a 2 or 3 year rotation to ensure everyone gets the chance to complete it

Back in the hall on Mondays we also had a

Fire Safety officer visit us for a couple of weeks and get all the Troop through their Fire Safety badge. The highlight of this was undoubtedly the Scouts getting to use real fire extinguishers to put out real fires. The biggest shock being the noise of a CO2 extinguisher.

Unfortunately, due to inclement weather the District Archery competition didn't happen in 2018. We are hoping it will make a reappearance in the calendar soon.

At the tail end of 2018 we had the Kennet District Alamo competition, we entered one team and completed the hike with ease. Unfortunately, due to their performance on the checkpoints we were beaten to 1st place by 1st Newbury Scouts. We intend to win it back and bring it home again next year. However, from a leader point of view, I should be happy that the team that beat us were trained by one of 4th Newbury's ex-Scouts! He knows 'most' of our secrets!

We didn't manage to have an annual get-together in the Church at Christmas last year – it'll be back this year, but we did manage to show off our craft skills in December making some seasonal crafts and the Scouts all ticking a few boxes from their Creative Challenge.

Then it was 2019!



Winter term in 2019 is traditionally inside due to the weather. We ran a mixed programme seeing most of the Scouts gain their First Aid Stage 3 proficiency badge. We did some traditional cooking, Pancake night! And we tried a new activity where the Scouts could make their own personal Fire Steels. This worked really successfully, and of course the Scouts were happy with anything that makes fire – they were later put to good use at both Angels' Corner and on Summer Camp.

Normally we'd also try to find a couple of days to get us to Snelsmore Common and do some scrub bashing – I tried, I couldn't get any dates sorted with the BBOWT, so will try again to make sure this happens next year.

23rd April, as I'm sure the English amongst you all know is St George's Day. This is an important day in the Scouting calendar where all Scouts renew their Scout Promise and Scout Law. Kennet District was due to organise an activity

day to mark this, but it was cancelled last in the day. Not wanting to let this event pass without marking it, 4th Newbury Scouts instead had a campfire at Thirtover where we were joined by other Groups from the District and marked the event with style, noise, and dubious singing.

May saw one of the ever popular programme events, Rafting. There was a couple of nights' preparation in the hall beforehand, ensuring that the Scouts were capable of making the rafts. Then luckily the weather was kind to us and an excellent night of rafting was had on the canal (it has snowed on us before)



We were also out camping in June, back at Thirtover for the weekend. The weather was kind, and the Scouts had a go at Air Rifle shooting, monkey bridge building and of course testing, as well as cooking (with the mandatory washing up) and camp gadget making – a traditional Scouting skill. In the spare time we even found an opportunity to toast some marshmallows by the fire.

The rest of the Summer term saw us out-and-about as much as possible. We had some wide games, hiking, orienteering, chariot racing evenings as well as trying to defend our title at the Berkshire Dragon boat regatta. We put in a mixed team and a very strong performance to be pipped at the post into 2nd place by a team of 14year old giants.

(secretly I think it was rigged – county was jealous of our success 😊). We'll be back!

All the work we do at Scouts ultimately leads up to our annual week-long Summer Camp. The highlight of the year! This year we were off to Blacklands Farm in Sussex where we have camped a few times in the past.

Blacklands is an activity centre – so there were many things on site to take part in. During the week the Scouts climbed, jumped, slid, paddled their way through a Climbing Tower, Jacobs Ladder, Bouldering Wall, Kayaking, Canoeing, Aeroball and Water slide.

All through the week, they cooked for themselves on a mixture of wood and gas – making their own Banoffee pie proved to be a hit as well as the fish finger sandwiches for breakfast and the Sausage and Apple pan fry for dinner.



The highlight activities of the week were undoubtedly the Wake boarding experience at Hove and the Bear Grylls challenge in Ashdown forest. The wake boarding is pretty self-explanatory. The Bear Grylls challenge involved bivouacking in the woods, making their own natural shelters, cooking their dinner on fires without the aid of utensils, and then sleeping out in the shelters they had built. The fire steels from earlier in the year proved invaluable to get dinner on the go. The end of the week was marred by some inclement weather, but we were not to be browbeaten after such a good week.

So what's the plan for this year

Firstly, we remain full – which makes organising things easier as we should get enough numbers

Nigel is taking a step back from the Troop due to other commitments, so Andy will be stepping into his shoes.

We will be looking at giving the Scouts the opportunity to complete both the Creative and Skills Challenge this term

We're looking at another fire and wood cutting session at Red Alert Paintball this term, just trying to sort out a date.

We are looking at an overnight stay in December

The Christmas Event is back on the calendar

Snelsmore Common Scrub bashing we hope to get back in the calendar in 2020

There will of course be a Summer Camp again next year – more details to follow during this term.

Thanks for reading!

Bruce Meldrum

Scout Leader, 4th Newbury (St. Johns) Scout Troop



Class of 2019