

1st Wargrave Scouts

Annual Report - April 2015 to March 2016

2015 was another great year for Scouting in Wargrave! Badge work continues to be a big driver for our programme, and an important aspect of everything we do. We strive to offer a balanced and fun programme, allowing boys and girls aged between 10.5 and 15 to learn new things and be rewarded for participating in a wide range of activities, enabling young people to gain new and interesting life skills.

In April and May 2015 we completed the Hobbies & Interests, First Aid, and Navigation Badges. We also entered a team into the Loddon District 5-A-Side Football competition, and came a close 2nd.

As part of work towards the Global Challenge Award, Scouts learnt about Scouting in Africa, completing an activity with the 'Project Uganda' team from Berkshire Scouts, which involved each patrol researching and presenting back on key topics. These included the impact of tourism, water supplies, sanitation, diseases, and medical assistance. Around these topics we also spent time thinking about the differences between growing-up in Wargrave, and growing-up in Uganda.

During May, June and July we made the most of the fine sunny Monday evenings, spending as much time outdoors as possible on the recreation ground and in Bowsey Woods. We also practised tent-pitching skills with the Icelandic patrol tents, and made some useful camp gadgets. In May we had the chance to test our camping skills, joining 100 Scouts and Leaders at the Loddon District "Big Camp" at Dorneywood, Burnham Beeches. After the usual camping, cooking, pioneering, orienteering and campfire entertainment activities, we learnt that we were overall joint winners - a superb result!! We were very proud of the Scouts, and took home a nice shiny silver trophy to add to the ones the cubs have been collecting! The engraving on the trophy revealed that since 1969 1st Wargrave had won the Loddon District Camping Challenge only three times - in 1985, 1991 and now 2015.

Our Summer Term Evening Hike from Dinton Pastures to Twyford was particularly memorable; we encountered several species of butterfly, dragonfly, and a heron, a kingfisher and heard a woodpecker. The hike finished at Twyford Station where we all tucked into bags of chips, courtesy of Nige! We visited Bowsey Woods on several occasions to play wide games, build fires for one stick cooking, and shelter building. We also practised map and compass skills with navigation exercises around the Rec and Village. In June we visited the new Fitness Trail facility at Stanlake Meadow, Twyford running around and over the various apparatus, followed by a game of rounders. For our troop "night out" we returned to the Longridge Activity Centre in Marlow for an evenings Dragon Boating on the Thames. We had a fabulous sunny evenings boating on the river, which was enjoyed by all.

Wargrave Festival was busy with the Scouts providing the water stations for the 10k and at the Village Fete we had two stalls selling strawberries and raspberries, and also a NERF gun shooting alley, both of which raised funds for Finland.

Autumn Term highlights included the Elastic Band Car Construction & Racing Night, 3D Maps, Halloween Fright Night, Sweets Bake Off and practising for the Third Almost Christmas Show. We also fielded a team in the Loddon District Great Breakfast Chase and Bowling competitions. In November the Scouts sold glow sticks and sweet kebabs at the Annual Village Fireworks to raise additional funds for Finland. We had a good attendance of Scouts at The Remembrance Day Parade and we were particularly proud of the Scouts that read prayers so eloquently in the Church.

In December the Scouts delivered the Christmas Post around the village and we also entertained family and friends at the Third Almost Christmas Show with a sketch and running the charity tombola. This was a special evening, which was attended by Loddon District Commissioner Mark Ballard. Mark and Nige Board, Scout Leader, awarded 1st Wargrave's first Chief Scout Gold Award in over a decade to Nathan Walsh, a fantastic achievement.

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That evening we also said goodbye to Nige. Group Scout Leader Pete Fry presented Nige with an engraved sheaf knife as a thank you, on behalf of the whole troop, for over 24 years outstanding service as Scout Leader. Nige has been a great mentor to me over my past 2 years as Assistant Scout Leader, which simplified my transition to become the new Scout Leader from 1st January 2016. Thank you Nige, we will miss you!

In January we had a professional chef visit and the Scouts learnt how to bone and cook a chicken. We also refreshed our Navigation skills and started on our Fire Safety Badge. In February we held our extremely popular Winter Camp @The Hut with 18 of our 24 Scouts camping inside the Hut. We also enjoyed playing Laser quest, built marshmallow catapults at our Indoor Pioneering evening, and for our Leap Year Engineering Challenge we built spaghetti cantilevers! The Scouts going to Finland also delivered leaflets around the village raising further funds for the trip.

In March we started our regular challenge event series versus 1st Twyford Scouts and we hosted their Monday troop at Wargrave to play Wide Games. In June we have the away match at their HQ, and they have a fun night planned, which will involve us trying Air Rifle, Pistol and Archery target shooting.

We also recently changed our Monday evening meeting times. Following feedback from parents, from the 1st of February we implemented an earlier start time of 7pm, and an earlier pick-up time of 8.45pm. We have a young pack of Scouts and we recognise the impact that a late night can have at the beginning of a school week. So far the feedback has been positive from Scouts and the Leadership team, so we will continue with these new times.

We have a busy and exciting year ahead of us in 2016. During April and May, we will start on our "A Million Hands" project. UK Scouting's "A Million Hands" programme involves mobilising half a million Scouts in support of four social issues chosen by our young people. From dementia to those disabled by society, from improving the mental well-being and resilience of our communities to ensuring everyone, everywhere has access to clean water and sanitation. These are big issues of our time, and young people want to tackle them head on. The objective of the programme is to help our young people keep their promise to help other people. At 1st Wargrave, we will be focusing on exploring mental well-being and we have plans to help a local village charity 'Camp Mohawk' that supports children with special needs and their families. This is an exciting youth-driven and youth-shaped national programme, and at 1st Wargrave we look forward to making a difference!

In July we are looking forward to taking half the troop, so 12 young people, to the Finland International Jamboree. This is something that we have been planning for the past 18 months. The Scouts have fundraised over £2,000, and this coupled with a generous donation by the group will significantly lower the parental contribution required, ensuring the trip is affordable and accessible. It will be an amazing adventure and a memorable trip for the Scouts, and we hope this will provide an aspirational event to our future Scouts that are currently progressing through the Beavers and Cub sections. We are keen to participate in International Scout Jamborees every 4-5 years.

Finally, I'd like to thank say a big thank you to the Assistant Scout Leaders: Richard Arnold, Paul Worthington and Caroline Atkinson for helping to create and run our Monday night programme and various weekend activities. Also a mention to our Section Helper George Atkinson who has been in a supporting role since September, assisting us as part of his involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, thank you George! We are always looking for, and welcome, new Leaders and Helpers so we can expand our programme. This can be on a formal or ad-hoc basis, and if you are interested, please do let me know.

Pete Walsh, Scout Leader