

April 2016 to March 2017 AGM Report – 1st Wargrave Scout Section

Scouts have had another amazing fun-packed year of adventure! It was a record year with 350 badges awarded, including 4 Chief Scout Gold Awards. Congratulations to Thomas Hicks, Christopher Fry, Jamie Howells and George Luckwell for achieving the highest award in Scouting.

In April, we visited Wargrave Fire Station and learnt how to safely use a CO2 fire extinguisher! Our night hike along the River Loddon was particularly memorable due to the amount of mud! In May, the Scouts enjoyed Family Camp at Youlbury near Oxford. We had a fun evening at 1st Twyford HQ taking part in a pistol, rifle and archery competition against our local rivals. In June despite the wet weather Scouts played wide games, built rope bridges and cooked sausages and marshmallows on sticks in Bowsey Woods. We also took part in the 'A Million Hands' Community Impact Programme, the 21st Century equivalent to the 1970's and 1980's 'Bob-a-Job Week'. For 2017 Wargrave Scouts chose to learn about and support mental health and local charity Camp Mohawk. We made a dozen bug hotels using recycled baked bean tins and bamboo canes and installed them at their site. The Scouts also collected wood, and weeded paths around the centre's camp fire circle. Camp Mohawk were very grateful for the Scouts commitment and enthusiasm to help children with additional needs.

In July 12 Scouts and 3 Leaders participated in the Finland International Jamboree. It was a truly unique outdoor immersive experience camping in a pine forest surrounded by lakes, and joining in activities with over 17,000 Guides and Scouts from 45 countries. Overall Finland was an unforgettable experience, our Scouts will have lifelong memories of this camp. After 2 years of planning and fundraising over £2,000 towards the total costs, it was well worth the large amount of organisational effort. Many of the Scouts have been so inspired by the trip that they plan to apply for selection to attend the World Scout Jamboree in the USA in 2019.

The Autumn term started with a Finland Exhibition and it was great to see the Scouts chatting so passionately and proudly about the trip and their achievements, as well displaying the badges they had swapped. In September, we ran a very successful hammock & survival camp at Paddicks Patch. For many of our Scouts this was the first time they had spent a night outside in a hammock between trees, under a tarp! The experience was particularly interesting given the heavy rain that fell overnight. During the camp the Scouts completed an orienteering exercise, ran an assault course, prepared and cooked their evening meal backwoods style on an open fire and learnt to safely use a hand axe and bow saw to chop and cut wood. They also practiced bush craft in-particular friction fire lighting using forest materials. Scouts also took part in one pot cooking, completed a night hike and played wide games in Bowsey Woods. Scouts battled each other in an indoor NERF Gun challenge. We repeated the popular Halloween Frite Nite and the Great Wargrave Xmas Bake Off Challenge this year making rice crispy Christmas trees.

In October Wargrave Beavers, Cubs and Scouts joined over 1 million Scouts and Guides worldwide to participate in JOTA (Jamboree On The Air) and JOTI (Jamboree On The Internet). Scouts made contacts worldwide on the radio's and sent Morse code messages to each other. November and December were very busy months with the Scouts giving back and supporting the local village community. We proudly marched in the village Remembrance Parade, sold glow sticks at the village fireworks and sorted and delivered 1,500 Christmas cards to 400 houses as part of the village Christmas postal service. Scouts rehearsed and took part in the Fourth Almost Christmas Show.

In January Scouts enjoyed an Astronautics evening and listened to some fascinating hobby badge presentations. We cooked a vegetable stir fry, hiked from Dinton Pastures to the Twyford chip shop and flipped pancakes. February was YouShape month, and Scouts brainstormed ideas and activities for our programme and camps. For the fourth year running we held the Winter Camp @Hut. The troop pitched tents inside, hiked to Bowsey Woods for wide games and a camp fire. They returned to sleep and cooked breakfast in the morning. For many this was their first camp away and provided a great introduction to Scouting.

Throughout the year, the Scouts have taken part in several Loddon District competitions. Our teams achieved 3rd out of 17 in the Great Breakfast Chase overnight incident hike, and 7th in the Cooking competition.

We continue to focus on the new Challenge Badge programme, and completed tasks towards their Teamwork, Skills and World Challenge Badges. Each Scout made a commitment to change, as part of the Personal Challenge badge. We will review if they have achieved their commitments later in the summer term.

Summer Camp 2017 will be at Walton Firs Activity Centre near Cobham from Thursday 27th to Sunday 30th July. Activities will include Caving, Crate Stacking, Rifle Shooting, Low Ropes, Adventure Assault Course and Pioneering. Scouts will prepare, cook, wash-up and tidy-up, and every Scout will have an opportunity to demonstrate and improve their camping, cooking and bush craft skills. There will be a full day's hike offsite to the Brooklands Motor Museum to take part in a Concorde Experience and visit the 4D Theatre.

Lastly, I'd like to say a big thank you to the Assistant Scout Leaders - Richard Arnold, Paul Worthington, Caroline Atkinson and Julia Perlich. They invest a lot of their time each week to provide young people with development experiences which help them grow into confident rounded adults. Caroline retired (again!) and Julia leaves us in July to travel back to Germany, so we will soon be back down to 3 Leaders. This means that help and assistance from parents will be needed to run some events and evenings. We welcome parental help to expand our programme. If you are interested in helping formally or on an ad-hoc basis on a Monday evening or at camps, please do let me know.

Pete Walsh, Scout Leader