

April 2018 to March 2019 AGM Report – 1st Wargrave Scout Section

It's been a truly outstanding year at 1st Wargrave Scouts with a record five Chief Scout Gold Awards, the highest award in Scouting being achieved.

In April, Scouts started the term off with a trip to Bowsey Woods to cook sausages and toast marshmallow digestive biscuit sandwiches, and to play some wide games. A highlight was a trip to St. Mary's Church to learn about bell ringing. This was kindly organised by Bill our AGSL for Monday 23rd April, St. George's Day. What an honour it was to ring the village bells. The scouts enjoyed climbing up the various steps and two sets of ladders to ring and then view the 8 bells.

At the end of April five of our older Scouts took part in an independent hike and camp as part of the Expedition Challenge Badge. The Scouts had been planning this adventure since January and decided on the route, food menu, data recording, created a risk assessment and organised all of the equipment themselves. They set off from Reading station travelling by train to Southampton then took the ferry to Hythe Pier to complete a study on the UK's oldest continuously operating pier railway.

After taking photos, completing their vlog using GoPro's, audio logs, taking notes and pictures, they started a 10km hike across the New Forest to the Ferny Crofts Scout Campsite, capturing details of the wildlife they encountered including wild ponies, frogs, tadpoles and lots of cows. The Scouts set-up camp and met the leaders, built a fire and cooked their spaghetti meatball supper whilst trying to dodge the downpour experiencing one of the worst storms to hit the south coast with extreme rain, lightning and thunder. In the morning the Scouts cooked a pancake breakfast before breaking camp and walking the 6km to Brockenhurst to catch the train back to Reading. Joe, Lucy, Luke, Jacob and Matthew really enjoyed the weekend despite sore feet and getting lost a few times. As a follow-up In May the five Scouts presented back to an audience of parents, siblings, the troop, Loddon District Commissioner, Assistant County Commissioner and our 1st Wargrave Leaders using slides and animated videos and were duly awarded their Expedition Challenge Badge.

For four of the Scouts, this was the last of the nine Challenge badges needed to complete the Chief Scout Gold Award. The Chief Scout Award is the highest award in the Scout section and recognises a significant personal achievement and contribution to Scouting. At 1st Wargrave for the first time since the Group was started back in 1909 we were able to make a quadruple award to our then current Patrol Leaders: Joe Tubbs, Lucy Hucker, Luke Walsh and Jacob Worthington. These awards involved a new syllabus that was introduced only 2 years ago. Our District Commissioner highlighted the individual effort required. As Leaders Richard, Paul and I were really proud of the commitment and effort Joe, Lucy, Luke and Jacob have demonstrated during their time at Beavers, Cubs and Scouts culminating in this award.

During June and July, Scouts built bridges using pioneering knots, staffed the Wargrave 10k water stations, played Danish Long Ball, hiked a loop along the Thames from Aston Ferry to Remenham, competed in Dragon Boat Racing at Thames Valley Park and battled with NERF guns at our traditional Summer BBQ.

In September, Scouts cooked vegetable pizzas from raw ingredients, even making the bases. As part of a big structure pioneering evening, Scouts built and raced chariots and then constructed a giant see-saw on the Rec. Making use of the last of the light evenings, Scouts took part in a night navigation hike from Knowl Hill to the Kissing Gate, and on another Monday enjoyed making and cooking biscuits using a barrel oven in Bowsey Woods. We also welcomed a new Assistant Scout Leader Annie McDermott to the leadership team joining us from Puma Cubs. Annie has been a great addition to the section. We also held our "Summer Camp" at the Youlbury Scout Activity Centre near Oxford. 15 Scouts worked in 3 teams sharing all food preparation, cooking and washing-up. Scouts experienced Jacobs Ladder, Axe and Tomahawk Throwing, as well as a 16km day hike to Farmoor Reservoir and back along the River Thames in the glorious sunshine.

Just before October half-term, we held an International Evening as part of the World Challenge Badge. The Scouts debated Brexit. It was interesting to hear the view of 10.5 to 14-year olds as they presented back their own understandings of the advantages of “Leaving” or “Remaining”. Later that evening we welcomed back Daniel Dowling and Thomas Hicks both ex-1st Wargrave Scouts now at Loddon Explorers. Daniel and Thomas have been selected to take part in the Berkshire Scouts Project Africa. This involves spending 3-weeks in Uganda next July 2019 as part of a team building a new school classroom.

In October and November, Scouts enjoyed a Halloween Frite Nite, Home DIY skills evening, a Sewing evening making Poppies, a Christmas Craft evening, a review of Personal Challenges that Scouts set themselves last term, and a Dragons Den exercise. Wargrave Scouts also participated in the Remembrance Day parade. In December, Scouts sorted and delivered the Wargrave Village Christmas Post.

At the end of December, we held our Christmas Party where we said goodbye to Paul Worthington who has been involved as part of the leadership team at Beavers and then Scouts for the past decade. Paul was presented with various gifts by our GSL. We will miss Paul and wish him well with his next adventures.

In January, Scouts restarted with a game’s night, a session on the importance of camp hygiene and basic first-aid, a night hike across Bowsey Woods, and cooking pork dumplings (Jiaozi), as part of the Chinese New Year celebrations. In February whilst there was snow on the ground, Scouts built a giant bridge indoors using wooden pioneering poles. Square, diagonal and shear lashing knots were deployed to brace the spars and to provide strength. The whole scout troop and various leaders managed to cross the bridge without it collapsing!

Scouts also cooked pancakes and we held an International Evening to remind ourselves that Scouting helps young people to develop, listen and learn new skills and experiences, to make a difference on a global scale. Scouts also presented various hobbies and interests and built spaghetti cantilevers. Just before Easter, for the 4th year in a row, Scouts camped inside the hut as part of our popular “Winter Camp” activity.

At the end of March, we had a visit again from Geoff Barnes the District Commissioner for Loddon Scouts, to present another Chief Scout Gold Award to Matthew Savin. Over the last four years Matthew has diligently attended nearly every Monday evening session and has attended a number of camps and hikes. Matthew has also represented 1st Wargrave on the Great Breakfast Chase an overnight Incident hike on many occasions. The Leaders were very proud of Matthew’s efforts and the contribution he has made to the troop, a job well done!

The Spring term ended with a much overdue trip to the new Wokingham Climbing Wall where Scouts received instruction on bouldering, belaying and indoor rock climbing!

Once again, I am indebted and extremely thankful to Richard, Paul and now Annie for their support and dedication every Monday - helping Wargrave Scouts learn and experience so many new skills and activities over the past 12 months. This past year we have also been grateful to have various parents volunteer their help on an ad-hoc basis. Nigel Board our AGSL and x-Scout Leader returned for a couple of evenings which was great. All of this has helped us get through the year. We do need more adult help and support and also new Leaders, to take us through the next 12 months.

What an amazing year of 1st Wargrave Scout achievement with five Chief Scout Gold Awards! Here’s to another year of fun and excitement at Scouts. If this report has inspired you to help give young people in Wargrave “Skills for Life”, please do volunteer your time and effort – it’s a very rewarding give back to our special village community.

Pete Walsh, 1st Wargrave Scout Leader