

The Water Rat

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Skipper's Scrawl

First of all, congratulations to Garry and Ness on the birth of their second daughter, Claire Pamela Mary, born on 3rd October, 1:25 a.m. and weighing in at 7lb 13oz. - and Vanessa and Garry wanted to take part in the Great River Race the previous weekend!

What a marvellous day it was for the Race. Congratulations to the Guild on winning the Scout Association Affiliated Trophy and to our under 14 crew (well, actually they were only age 10 and 11) on coming 3rd in their class. All our crews did well - especially the Leander Ladies - I trust a full report will follow.

It was good to see Chief (Mick Chinnock) well enough to wave us all off at the start. I'm sure he was sorry not have been able to go with the boats - never mind, Mick, hopefully it won't be long now!

As we now move into our Winter programme, I feel I must stress the need for more adult help. All sections are full at present - 24 Beavers, 32 Cubs, 32 Scouts and an active Venture Unit again. We are grateful to the parents who have been assisting on a rota basis, but we must search actively for more leaders prepared to take out warrants, particularly in Cubs and Scouts. Instructors are also needed for the Scout section as, with so many members, it is difficult to give enough individual attention for training. In the mean time, we will continue with rotas, but it would be useful if we could have a volunteer to help Robin out, particularly with the administration (updating records, etc.).

Please give the matter your urgent attention and let me know if you can assist.

Keith

Hercules – back on the water

As you will read, we finally finished the refurbishment whilst at Nawaka; it took three of us most of a day to drill and fit a new fender round the gunwhale. One lesson learnt is not to underestimate the amount, of time boat building takes - every piece of timber has to be individually cut and shaped to fit.

All that remains now is to replace the pintle on which the rudder is mounted and the gig should be good for a few more years. The boat now feels completely different, taut, and self contained, it sails well and pulls well, so all the work has been worth doing.

I will be looking at Hermes, the other gig, this winter; it is in quite good shape with some renailing needed, a rotten thwart to replace and new paint and varnish. If anyone fancies some therapeutic sanding and scraping, you will be very welcome.

Finally, Skipper cut, two boat covers out, of old marquee canvas, which were hemmed and finished by two parents, providing us with watertight protection so the gigs can stay out on the moorings in summer, dry and safe from the very messy Canada Geese who love to sit on the boat.

Coxswain

Beavers Briefly

The Beavers are currently at full strength. Tim is now fully warranted and there is promise of another parent, taking out a warrant.

Leander (Kingston) Sea Scout Group

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Chief's Report

With the start of a new term looming it was decided to call a meeting on the Wednesday prior to cubs starting, so that a programme could be worked out, as our numbers had increased from twenty-two to thirty-three it made sense to have something worked out in advance.

Then it happened – I was hit by a heart attack. I can tell you: no one was more surprised than me. I am on the mend now, but I have to take things easy for while. The hardest thing I have found is making that list of what I can do and can't do. Walking is one of the best exercise one could do, so I can now take myself down to the headquarters on a Saturday afternoon and sit on the balcony watching the scouts. Waited years for that, but maybe it would have been better under different circumstances.

I would like to thank every one, beavers, cubs, scouts, parents and friends, for all the get well cards that I received, it is really reassuring knowing all these people have given me a thought.

Enough about me, the crunch is our girls and boys.

As stated, our numbers have grown and I was put in the situation during the summer break of turning away new members, it seems every one wants to join Leander. Of course, this is good news for us. We are now the largest group in our district.

Every section is now full to its capacity, but every section is still short of leaders and helpers. This is the sorry state every scout group is in, I have been kept informed that, with the cubs, help from the parents is there. That is good news – as we now have the numbers, it would be a shame to lose it. Is there anybody or bodies, willing to give the scouts a hand, as handling thirty six is quite a large number for two or three people.

I hope by the time the next report is due I will be reporting on the activities of the cubs.

Chief

Subscriptions

The response has been very good from all sections. Should you be one of the few that have not yet paid for this term, please don't leave it too long as Christmas is looming up and you don't want that additional expense at that time of the year.

Chief

Venture Report

The Ventures are gathering strength, and doing bacon rolls at the North Kingston Car Boot, Sale brings in valuable income for the Unit. They now have a den, converted from the old chair and table store, which is being customised to their tastes.

Publications are being acquired from Gilwell so that the Venture Crest Award can be implemented and then move on to the Queen's Scout Award.

A camp was held at, Polyapes in late summer, with a similar one planned for this coming half term.

Asha has also attended her first, Jamboree Camp in preparation for the World Jamboree in Chile next year.

Ebbage II will be brought onto the boat deck soon, enabling essential refurbishment to be undertaken in winter with workshop facilities on hand.

Ness

(Written on her behalf; she has been somewhat busy with new family)

Cubs win Gala

The Cubs swam to victory in the District Swimming Gala on Saturday 11th October.

The Pack now numbers 32 and, although Chief has been much missed recently, parents have been stepping in to help wherever possible.

Coxswain's Corner

Since the last Water Rat our main event has been the trip to NaWaKa, (see report) but, as always, Autumn is very busy with a lot of activities crammed into a short period.

Preparations for the Greet River Race started as soon as meetings recommenced, with the gigs out practising as the nights got darker. Eventually, a junior crew and under-16 crew were ready for the race, the juniors were all under 12 and did well, gaining third place in their section. The under-16 crew, our first mixed crew, rowed steadily, keeping on the tail of the Ventures' boat until the last few miles.

The District Swimming Gala, making a welcome reappearance, saw a good performance from Leander, as we gained second place. Our practice on the Tuesday before at New Malden was close to being called off as some of the pool staff took a dislike to us – must be something in the water there. Thank goodness for Teddington pool – very friendly and very cooperative.

We have started Seamanship and Badgework in earnest, so that, everyone can do as much as is possible during the winter months. A word of thanks here to the Ventures for their help as instructors and with running meetings – Karen and I could not manage without them. Not forgetting the patrol leaders, who are helping to instruct, as well.

We now have a predominantly very young Troop, but full of enthusiasm and I am sure they will develop into a strong group. After half term, we will be making quite a few changes so that, new PLs and APLs will be able to take on responsibilities for their patrols.

The four week cycle we introduced last year seems to work well, with each meeting devoted to one activity – Seamanship, Games, Badgework and Special Activities – the last one replacing Patrol Activity, which we never actually got to work satisfactorily. Hopefully, we should soon be running a fire safety course at Kingston Fire Station – a very worthwhile proficiency badge to acquire.

Coxswain

NaWaKa 1997

At last we were off, as a large number of parents waved goodbye to our luxury coach as it left Richmond Old Deer Park on a very warm July night. An articulated lorry had been loaded at Leander the day before with boats, canoes and camping equipment from Leander, Feltham, 14th Richmond, and Surbiton Sealion, which meant we could share the costs of transport and the coach.

After a smooth ferry crossing from Dover to Calais, we crossed France, stopped in Belgium for a very welcome breakfast, and arrived late morning at Roermond in SE Holland.

What a sight – two large lagoons fed by the River Maas and bisected by a long tongue of land on which over 6,000 Sea Scouts were busy setting up camp. Divided into nine sub camps, named after famous rivers, we were a long walk away from the central camp facilities, but we had a very good site in Schelde Sub camp, carefully selected by Garry Smith and the Ventures advance party who had come across to meet the lorry and distribute the equipment before we arrived.

The organisation was quite amazing, with a complete headquarters for each sub camp, first aid stations, cafes and discotheques spread throughout the site. All the food for six thousand people, was delivered in huge refrigerated lorries twice a day, with the next day's menu printed in the daily camp newspaper. The only items we had to go outside for were orange squash, corn flakes and cooking oil.

Virtually every inch of the shore was filled with lines of boats – the Dutch Sea Scouts' national boat, is a "lelyflat", a heavy virtually indestructible steel craft which can be sailed, rowed and sculled. There were probably around four hundred of these plus over forty huge Dutch motor barges owned by Scout groups from all over the Netherlands and used as their floating headquarters.

The camp opening ceremony was in the centre of Roermond, so everyone walked in some five miles, along beside the River Maas, completely filling the streets with Scouts. Excellent ice creams and refreshments were consumed, then we all walked back again – except for the girls who cleverly got themselves a lift back on one of the barges.

We had earlier decided to have a joint camp with Sealion, so, as the numbers were almost, equally divided, we made up four mixed patrols. This proved to be a very good idea, all the Scouts got on with each other and really made the patrol system work extremely well.

The programme was packed full, with hardly a spare moment. Each day Bernie, our contact at the very well staffed and equipped sub camp headquarters, would brief us on the day's activities. There were sailing games, (we hired two Lelyflats, which took some time to get used to), games on the water and games on the land, with every patrol moving around to compete in different games. With 25 groups in our sub camp, the games were pretty exhausting for the leaders who had to run them – it worked out, about four patrols every five minutes.

There was a very intensive day of rowing and sculling competitions, with a somewhat complex final marathon event consisting of a marked out course down which two swimmers, starting from a buoy, swam a 100 metres, climbed into the boat, which was then sculled 100 metres, then a runner had to jump out and run about, 300 metres to the finish. With two strong Sealion swimmers, Michael King sculling like a demon and Jonathan Burr running very fast, we won the event.

Our big trip out was to Efferling, an amazing theme park which made Chessington World of Adventure look small and tacky. There were lots of rides but of course, everybody went on the big roller coaster, which was very fast, went upside down, looped the loop and rearranged your insides! This was followed, naturally, by large portions of chips with mayonnaise.

The troop was in and out of the water all the time, the coypu we took was sailed and rowed, but the most satisfying for us was that we finished the work on Hercules and went sailing. What a delight, the gig sailed beautifully and we were able to make long tacks and run back for a couple of miles clear – great, fun.

The Ventures, who had their own sub camp, showed how a gig should be pulled, and got many admiring looks when they took Hercules around the lagoons.

On the final day all the groups divided into eight squadrons of about fifty boats, which assembled on the far side of the lagoon, then sailed in line astern, past a large schooner, to be reviewed by

the Admiral of the Netherlands Navy. The sight of all those boats was quite incredible. When it was Hercules' turn to set off, we were going so fast that we ran a bucket out behind to slow us down.

That evening all the boats, dressed overall in flags and banners with lights on, were towed up the River Maas to Roermond, past huge crowds lining the banks and on the return a spectacular fireworks display completed the proceedings.

Packing everything up and loading the trailer was done very quickly, but so many vehicles were trying to get in and out of the site, there were enormous traffic jams. Eventually, we set off back to Calais at lunchtime, the coach journey though was somewhat trying as the air conditioning didn't, work and so much heat was coming out of the engine compartment we thought our kit was going to catch fire.

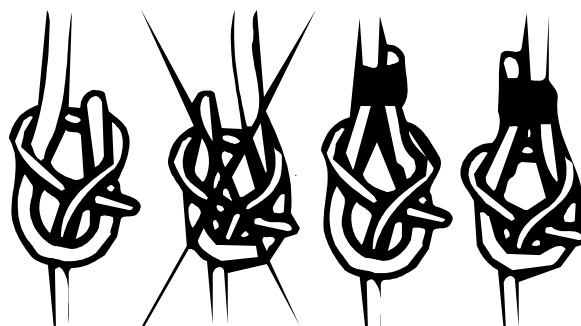
Richmond was reached late evening, completing a very full two weeks.

It was a really great experience; as members of the world wide family of Scouts, we were able to participate in a unique event that we won't forget. Here's to NaWaka 2001!

Coxswain

Sheet Bend

The sheet bend is very useful for joining ropes, but be careful. With the loose end on the wrong side you have another, weaker knot, the left-hand sheetbend. If the knot is well seized it does not matter if it is tied right or left handed. Originally the sheet bend was used to secure a sheet to the clew of a sail.



RN Recognised Sea Scout Soccer Sixes Competition

We have just come back from the first six a side competition held at HMS Excellent at Portsmouth. We entered an under 15½ team, which ended up with some very young players because some of the older boys were not available.

Arriving at Portsmouth Harbour Station on Friday night, we found the transport arranged by the Navy didn't arrive, neither was there a meal for us, which had also been arranged. However we all looked forward to a big breakfast the next morning.

Groups had arrived from as far away as Sunderland, Liverpool, Warwick and Torbay, with everybody accommodated on board HMS Bristol, a destroyer that saw service in the Falklands and is now used as a training base for Sea Cadets and Sea Scouts. It is run as a working ship, so that we were up at 6:30 a.m. the next morning, mustered on the flight deck in full uniform and marched off to breakfast at 7:15.

The programme started at 9:00 a.m. with a full morning of the FA Soccer Star Skills tests, run by very good FA coaches, for which all the participants will receive a certificate. The six-a-side competition took up the afternoon, with an evening session after dinner played on magnificent astroturf pitches. A penalty shoot out and the finals were then played on Sunday morning.

Leander, after an indifferent first game, settled in and played extremely well, against some very accomplished teams, managing to come third in our league. Considering half the team was under-12, the younger boys were up against some much bigger players but they gave nothing away and showed some really excellent skills. Well done Justin, William and Alex Mathew kept goal very well and Michael, Danny and Jonathan spearheaded the attack, with Jonathan getting ten goals, the second highest number in the competition.

We didn't realise that Lt Cdr Henry Millington, our Inspecting Officer, is an FA coach, so the event ran very smoothly. The weather was brilliant, the food was good and staying on board ship was a great experience for everyone. The boys made good friends amongst other groups, whilst the leaders were able to find out what other groups were doing. One point became very clear: around the country, Sea Scout groups are now the strongest group in many of the Districts – we must be doing something right.

We will definitely want to go again next year, we have some very good young players and we should be able to do well. The opportunity for the boys to meet other RN recognised Scouts and to experience time on board ship and on a working naval base is too good to miss.

Coxswain.

Leander Annual Dinner

The Leander Annual Christmas/New Year Dinner this year is Saturday 11th January 1997 and costs £8.50 per head, excluding wine, which is available by the bottle. This dinner is limited to about fifty and is always very popular, so book soon! Please send a cheque (payable to M Duffin) with the application form to Marion Duffin. For further details, contact Marion on 0181 549 2317.

Leander Annual Dinner - Saturday 17th January 1998

Please reserve places for the Dinner

A cheque for is enclosed (£8.50 per person, payable to M Duffin)

Full names of those attending

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To: Marion Duffin, 17 Arthur Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 6BA