



The Water Rat

Newsletter of Leander Sea Scouts

October 1999

Skipper's Scrawl

Due to various delays in section accounts being submitted to the Treasurer, there was unfortunately insufficient time to present full audited accounts at the A.G.M. Consequently we have to hold an extraordinary meeting to formally adopt the accounts and this will be held immediately prior to the Executive meeting at 8pm on Monday 15th November (**members of the Executive please note**). A copy of the final accounts is at the end of this *Water Rat*.

Despite all parents and supporters being sent invitations to the A.G.M., attendance was poor and consequently there were no nominations from the 'floor' to be on the Executive. In order to achieve a balanced and democratic input into running the Group's affairs I do feel we should have at least one parent representative from each section, i.e. Beavers, Cubs Scouts and Ventures, rather than only those nominated by myself. The executive meet about five times a year and decides matters of finance, administration and capital expenditure, etc. I would therefore be pleased to hear from any parent who would be prepared to represent their son or daughter's section interest and also help members of the Executive keep their finger on the pulse.

At the moment I have two major concerns about the H.Q., namely the state of the carpet on the Main Deck and also building security during meetings. The present carpet has been down for six years now and new floor covering needs to be considered. We have also suffered a couple of 'walk in thefts' during Scout meetings and additional security measures need to be taken. Regrettably both these matters require funding and you will see from the accounts that there is not much held in reserve. Thanks to Nick and Jan's 'Subscription Chasing' many of the overdue subs have now been paid but to those who

Leander Sea Scouts
Extraordinary General Meeting
Monday 15th November, 8.00pm
at Headquarters

Business: to approve accounts for 1998/99
(see end of *Water Rat*).

are still not up to date can you please send in your payment A.S.A.P.

Having got the moans out of the way, I will finish with *congratulations* to the Scouts in coming first and third in the District Night Hike competition and also joint first in the Swimming Gala. Well done also to the cubs in winning the Gala. Finally, welcome to the new Beavers and another well-done to those who gained their 1st Swimmers badges.

Keith

November Working Party

Parents' working parties on the second Sunday of each month have been very successful this year in keeping up with regular cleaning and maintenance of the Headquarters. In March, all Leander families were divided into eight groups and the working party on **November 14th** from 10:00 to 12:00 is the last in the current rota. Families are: *Wileman, Williams, Williamson, Wingrove, Woodhouse, Woods, Young*. If you are unable to have someone attend on that day, you are asked to *arrange a swap* with another family.

A new rota for 2000 will be sent out with the December *Water Rat*.

Leander (Kingston) Sea Scout Group

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Coxswain's Corner

Quite a few events have taken place since the last *Water Rat*. Summer Camp was a great success, held at Downe in Kent. This very pleasant woodland site provided us with lots of activities – there wasn't a spare moment. Archery, shooting and the climbing wall were all tackled and we now have some very accomplished climbers and abseilers. A novel attraction were the cycle karts, which were raced round a short course – more difficult than they look, though the scouts had soon worked out which were the faster ones.

The swimming pool was very popular at the end of our days out, as this time we decided to take mountain bikes with us. It was quite a complex load on the trailer, but well worth doing. We had one day out along the North Downs – quite a lot of hills, which some people, who said they were fit, found a little tiring. We then had a great day out on a terrific mountain bike trail through the local woods, which was slightly shortened by our only major incident of the camp – Miles King decided to take a closer look at the tarmac without getting off his bike. I took Miles off to casualty to be X-rayed and cleaned up – nothing serious – whilst Karen took the rest back to camp.

We had an invigorating night hike around the local countryside – lots of glow worms to be seen, and we went to Chislehurst Caves and the Thames Barrier – these made a great day out. As planned, we took advantage of the wooded site so everybody made a bivouac and slept outside – some were visited apparently by friendly foxes. Cooking without utensils over an open fire meant that Survival Skills badges were earned as well as camp Cook and Camper. Karen sorted out athletes badges on the nearby sports field and of course Cyclist and Advanced Cyclist were awarded.

As Surbiton Sealions Cubs were also camping at Downe, we joined them for a camp fire and then on the last night we had our traditional end-of-camp barbecue. Luckily we managed to strike camp with all the canvas packed away dry, for as the minibus and trailer left the site the heavens opened. Many thanks to Nick Wileman and Pete Mitchell for helping with essential transport.

Since we have been back this Autumn, we put a team into the County Camping Competition, where they

were commended for the use of the site and gained a bronze award. We won the District Incident Night Hike, held around Bookham Common, coming first and third. Although one team got a little off course for a couple of hours, it was a most successful event, with the teams camping at Polyapes afterwards. Just a pity more troops were not represented.

The District Swimming Gala did have more entries, which made it a better competition and we were joint first with 7th Malden. There will be a District team going into the County Gala, which takes place at the Shell Centre very soon.

Badgework and seamanship are once again being instructed and applied, and we have a trek cart race in Richmond park, ice skating, dry slope skiing and a cooking competition to come.

Thanks to the Ventures, especially, Michael King, Jonathan Burr and Matt Freeman, who have been assisting Karen and myself with the many activities that Leander provides.

In the New Year we are expecting a large intake of Cubs, so we will be very busy then.

Coxswain

Beavers

The Beavers welcomed five new members this term: Rory Lightfoot, Dominic Mellett, James Kimber, Peter Thomas and William Pearn.

The older Beavers have been working towards the Beaver Challenge badge and already this term, six more boys have gained their first swimming badge: congratulations go to Nicholas Whitaker, Thomas Williams, Peter Thomas, Dominic Mellett, Andrew Chappell and Barney Blackhurst.

After half term we have scheduled a special 'Emergency' meeting where we have arranged for visits from St John's Ambulance and the Police, and on December 6th we plan to go to sing carols to the children in Beaver Ward at Kingston Hospital – all parents, brothers and sisters are welcome to come along and swell the numbers so please make a note of the date if you are able to join us.

Ros and Catie

Great River Race

Once again the Great River Race was early this year, in the first week of September, which made matters quite difficult, as many Scouts were still away on holiday and school had not started. Getting hold of people and organising practice was not easy, somewhat complicated by the large number of boats we needed.

Outside Leander on race day is quite a sight, with with over over 60 crew getting ready for the tow down to Ham House – with the usual Scout and Guild boats, plus entries from Kingston Rotary, Bentalls and Dysart School.

The conditions were not as favourable this year, the tide was much lower and, once past Richmond half lock, the wind was against the tide almost all the way to Greenwich. All the crews had a good race with the Guild racing away as usual to win their class and the Ventures keeping a cracking pace up. The Juniors, with one short in the crew, had a tough race and did very well, and the Seniors put in a good time. The Dads/Leaders crew, looked very polished this year, as they had an impressive training programme, with a lot of pulling practice and rigorous team building sessions at the Swan and the Boaters.

The Race finish was quite dramatic. Because the race was on Saturday, all the Thames trip boats seemed to be at Greenwich, and the water was absolutely heaving with boats landing passengers, turning and going astern – some of these vessels are enormous and not too keen to give way. There was no organised disembarkation procedure this year, so it was somewhat chaotic. Our safety boat, kindly loaned by Surbiton Sealions, made endless trips ferrying crews, from where the boats were secured on the stern of the Grand Turk, to the Greenwich landing stage. The occasional volleys of canon fire from the Grand Turk helped make it quite a lively occasion.

All the crews returned safely to Leander by bus, whilst the ten gigs were split into two tows and taken back up river. The river at night is very dramatic, the water was flat calm, like a mirror. After a long delay at Richmond half lock, the boats were back at Leander, stripped out and on the moorings by midnight. Next



year the race is in late September, which makes practice for the Scouts a lot easier.

Coxswain

Ventures

David King has raised £1500 towards the £3000 he needs for the Operation Raleigh trip to Ghana in Summer 2000. In November he aims to do a sponsored 'Vertical Challenge', climbing the equivalent of Mount Everest, which is 50,000 steps in the Guy's Hospital tower.

It has been said that the Ventures' challenge for the Autumn is to get both leaders to one meeting (Wednesday, in case they've forgotten!).

Water Rat dates

Reminder for all contributors.

Copy due: December 11th;

2000 – March 12th, May 14th, July 16th.

Contributions to Nigel Duffin, tel: 977 8305, fax: 255 3121, email: nigel@duffin.demon.co.uk. Electronic form preferred, or I will quiz you over the phone and give expression to aquatic burblings. Also photos of activities can be scanned in for printing.

The embryonic Leander website, where you can relive those past Water Rat moments electronically, is at: <http://www.leanderss.free-online.co.uk/>