



# The Water Rat

Newsletter of Leander Sea Scouts

May 2002

editor – Nigel Duffin

## Coxswain's Corner

We can never complain about not having enough to do – as the year moves on there are events and activities for everyone to get involved in. This year it was Leander's turn to lead off the annual St George's Day Parade. The Scouts looked very smart and with the Venture section shortly to be replaced by Scout Network, this was the very last time the Leander Venture flag would be seen on parade. It was also very gratifying to be awarded the Marshall Trophy, again for the last time under the old sections. This is a real tribute to all the hard work that Karen has put in coordinating and implementing badges, participating in District, County and National events and of course, to the Scouts themselves, who have taken part in a large number of activities and won a large number of them.

Shortly after that, the District 5-a-side football tournament was held at 1st Kingston Hill, with a very good entry, and our teams, looking very smart in

their Leander strip, winning the Junior and Senior Trophies.

Whilst the Scouts have been out on the water getting in some solid pulling and canoeing – with thanks to Chris Hampton and John Bridger, our intrepid canoeing instructors – the Leaders have been busy getting Family Camp requirements sorted out. This entails raiding all our camp equipment, and that of other troops, for tents, and making sure we have the right poles, pegs and guys for everything. Then we load it all into the trailer and the boots of parents' cars and set off for what is always a major event. (See report on next page)

We have been pleased to offer a temporary home to SRS Frobisher, the Sea Ranger Unit from Putney. Their headquarters is being rebuilt, so they brought their gig up and put it on our moorings, They are out on Tuesday evenings as well, making it a very active occasion around the HQ.

With the National Regatta coming up in a few weeks, we will be selecting competitors for the various events and getting some good practice in. One of our problems is that we do not have enough time, or instructors, to go sailing on Troop nights. We hope to organise some sailing evenings/Saturday afternoons very shortly.

Summer camp in Holland, *Nawaka 2002*, is close, so equipment checking and minor repairs will start soon.

A final note ... the Great River Race this year is early, on Saturday September 7th ... our first meeting of the Autumn term will be Tuesday 3rd September, with some practice sessions for the River Race crews at the end of the Summer holidays.

Coxswain

## Dates for your Diary

- June 17 – Executive Meeting
- June 23 – HQ Working Party  
(\*Pratt, Steele, Thomas, Walters, Whitfield)
- July 7 – National Scout Regatta
- July 14 – *Water Rat* copy date
- July 14 – HQ Working Party  
(\*Wingrove, Woods, Yagnick, Young)
- July 22 – Troop Summer Camp
- September 7 – Great River Race



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## Family Camp at Downe Activity Centre



"When is the next family camp?" I'm not sure I wanted to hear that as camp is being struck, but it is taken as a compliment. This year's camp certainly seemed to be a great success, only spoilt by the devastating weather that battered the tents very early on Sunday morning. It does take some



time to set up a camp for some 90 people, but we have used the same plan before and it does work.

Skipper kindly hauled the trailer to Downe on Friday morning, only just getting it up the steep road to the site, then with the assistance of four adults and a handful of Scouts, the majority of the tents (14 patrol tents, 8 hike tents, the marquee and the Falklands tent), were all pitched by the evening. The next morning the hordes arrived, each family having its own tent.

After flag break, a brief opening ceremony and lunch, everyone now divided into five teams, started on the activities – rifle shooting, archery, grass sledging, assault course, go karts and orienteering were on offer.

The valiant team of cooks then produced an excellent pasta and bolognese, which was much relished. The evening camp fire was soon throwing some warmth out into the cool evening as everyone gathered to enjoy some good old campfire songs, ably led by Karen and the sketches prepared by each team. Who will ever forget the thrilling 'Delilah' from Ian Chappell's close harmony choir or the highly original 'Old Leander had a Camp' from Tony Edwards' equally well trained voices? All the acts were really great and thoroughly deserved the tumultuous applause they received.

After the young ones had gone to their sleeping bags, the parents had time to relax, and as the rain was now falling



steadily, the marquee soon filled up. Without a doubt, the quality of musical offerings from two fine guitarists and singers, Kevin Healey and Tim Whitfield, gave the evening a very special atmosphere.

Around 5.00am the heavens opened with a vengeance and woke everybody up, the rain was so heavy. An executive decision was then made to end the camp early, as there was no way that we could have carried on with the activities, the ground was becoming very soggy and squalls of rain, driven by a strong westerly, swept the site. At this point I must say, I have never seen a camp struck and packed so quickly. Without exception, all parents were MAGNIFICENT, washing up, cleaning, packing away and helping to get the tentage down. Many, many thanks for your terrific efforts, they made all the difference. In addition, the help given to take tents back and hang them all to dry in the HQ was fantastic.







All in all, a great event, it was very gratifying to see young and old laughing and joking through the rains and having a good time.

Perhaps the next camp, with the help of a few parents who are now very experienced, could be held in two years' time – it's your choice.

Coxswain

## Beavers break out of the Hut

With the lighter evenings the colony are making the most of Canbury Park gardens for some games, although the Daffodil planting has forced us to move our normal pitch.



We said goodbye to Rory Brennan, William Bradbury and William Paintin, who have all moved up to Cubs. We

welcomed Adam Merridan and Luke Gerachty, who were invested on 13th May.

This term we have had the St George's Day parade in April, where Adrian Barley had the honour of leading Leander for the Beavers. There will be a small group of Beavers and parents at the summer camp in May, and we hope for good weather.

Later in the programme there will be World Cup penalty shoot-out competition, a Midsummer Barbecue, and of course a Golden Jubilee party to close the term in July.

Keith and Tony will be finishing their stint as Beaver Leaders in July, so we must have some parent volunteers to support Maggie, and ensure the continuation of the colony for the Beavers.

Maggie, Keith & Tony

## A 30 mile Trip upriver in 1938

*Paul Clements, of the Leander Guild, tells in the Newsletter of recently finding a small black notebook, which was the log of a boat journey made in 1938 for his First Class badge.*

06:00pm. Left home, stowed gear in boat and cast off at 06:15pm. Called in at HQ to say 'Howdo' and finally got away by 06:25pm.

07:20pm. Molesey Lock. A very uneventful row enlivened by a fisherman who lost his float and river steamers kicking up an unholy wash.

08:20pm. Reached Sunbury Lock. Even more uneventful!

09:15pm. Arrived at Brownacres, Walton-on-Thames (a sports club with some link with Leander who were allowed to camp there). Pitched tent etc. before dark.

10:00pm. Supper – sausages, bread, butter, jam, biscuits and tea – what a feast. Another camp nearby had a large dog which was very fond of sausages.

06:15am. Woke up by sounds of scuffling and smacking of lips. It was the dog again but I saved the sausages!

07:45am. Got up and had a swim and also washed in the process.

10:00am. Packed up camp and set off again upstream.

01:30pm Arrived at Chertsey Lock in a shower of rain. (Here lived some distant relatives with a wild garden by the weir stream where I could camp)

02:30pm. Pitched tent etc. and went for a walk. Met a tame crow which liked to sit on my shoulder and peck my ear while I fed it on ants. After tea I took the owner and family up to Halsham and back in their punt. After supper a water rat ran by about 12 inches from my foot and jumped into the water, closely followed by another one.

10:15pm. Turned in. A lot of noise from the weir.

08:00am. Got up and washed in the river but did not swim owing to the very strong weir stream.

11:45am. Finished packing up, thanked the owner and set off down stream .

01:15pm. Shepperton Lock. Got talking to the crew of a tug towing a barge, with the resulting offer of a tow to Kingston.

As I had rowed the required distance I accepted. Unfortunately the tug was going too fast for comfort and my watch was jerked under the floorboards so I did not know the time. At Sunbury Lock I gave the bargee a sausage by way of payment! The tug dropped me off at Kingston Bridge so I had to row the rest of the way home, where I arrived at 03:15pm after about 30 miles.

Boat – my 9ft. dinghy. A bit small for me and all the gear. Hardly leaked at all. (It originally cost £3 which I borrowed from my father. Over a few years I repaid 30 shillings and he then cancelled the debt, so I sold it for £10).

Latrines – Outside lavatories at both sites.

Cooking – No fires allowed so used a small petrol primus, used two pennyworth of fuel.

Conclusions – It was a pleasant trip which I remember well although it was 65 years ago.

Paul Clements

## Explorers, Leaders and Subs at the AGM

*This brief report of the Leander AGM on 16th May was written by Dick Garnish, Group Secretary, for the Guild Newsletter.*

The AGM for the year ending 5th April 2002 was dominated by three main topics, which are likely to be of concern to the Group for some months to come.

The meeting heard that Scouting in the UK is entering an exciting period with the introduction of a new programme for the Explorer and Network sections. Under this, the responsibility and management of the Explorer section will be with the District even if it has direct links to individual scout groups, in our case, Leander. It was pointed out that, to date, no decisions have been made regarding the working of this management structure. Nevertheless the Group's position on this matter is that the management of its **Sea Scout Explorer Section** is not something that Leander would wish to relinquish to District control. Leander needs the input and expertise of the older members of the current Scout section (the soon-to-be Explorer section) during Troop meetings as well as outside activities such as the Great River Race where they can start to take command and put their seamanship skills into practice. Other areas which will require clarification in due course are subscriptions, safety regulations, use of boats and charge certificates.

With the launch of the new Explorer section later this year, it is considered vital that the Group attracts more leaders for this age group and the older Network section. Again on the leader side, the Group is also looking for at least two new leaders for the Beaver Colony as the current leaders will be standing down shortly.

Lastly, the Group's finances have been of some concern to the Executive Committee for a number of months now, with expenditure exceeding income; a position which could become

worse as one of the wooden gigs now requires three new planks on each side of the keel. To overcome this, the meeting approved raising subscription levels (the first time for a number of years) for the all sections of the Group. The meeting also approved the introduction of quarterly subscription payments by standing order, a system which, it is hoped, will enable payments to be received on time and without the administrative difficulties which the Group is currently experiencing.

*Dick Garnish*

### What me?

A year ago I was asked to join the Executive Committee ...  
*the WHAT? ...  
ME??*

And then I thought about it and what it would mean. It sounded very important, a lot of work, etc. Then, thinking further, it occurred to me that James has been a Beaver, Cub and Scout and my grandson is on the list to be a Beaver – Leader has given my family a lot: could I give them something back?

Being on the Executive Committee gives me the chance to offer the 'Parent's Voice' to the body that really runs and maintains the Scout Group. Committees can be a bit dry, but at this time of great change, with the advent of the Explorer section, it is very interesting and stimulating.

The Committee meets about five times a year and is keen to have new parent members and to hear new voices and opinions, especially from the Beaver and Cub sections. So, come on, why don't you join me and the Executive Committee and play a part, however small – the leaders need our feedback and opinions.

*Chris Ford*

## Mountain Weekend

At the beginning of April, two minibus loads of Explorer scouts and assorted leaders, including Coxswain, drove the long journey down to the Surrey Scout Mountaineering base in Bethesda, for a weekend of mountain walking and climbing. Organised by David Batten, from 2nd Norbiton, a very experienced mountaineer, a superb weekend was enjoyed by everyone. On the Saturday, divided into three parties, we were soon over 3000 feet up on the tops, looking over the whole of Snowdonia and North Wales. The weather was fantastic, we could see for many miles. The rock was dry. It was a glorious day out. Come Sunday, traditional Welsh precipitation didn't stop everyone from climbing and abseiling on some quite wet rock. Another weekend is planned for the Autumn, so for those Leander mountaineers who had other engagements, but were very keen to come, there will be another chance. Don't miss it!

*Coxswain*

## Working Parties

Parents' working parties on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month are for regular cleaning and maintenance of the HQ, allowing our Leaders to get on with planning and running programmes.

All Leander families (except leaders) are divided into groups of four or five and one parent from each family is asked to come along from 10:00 to 12:00, arranging swaps if necessary. There are two Sundays left on the current list – a new rota will start in September.

Please would the *\*first named* on the list arrange to collect a key from Mike Freeman (020 8549 8634).

June 23 – \*Pratt, Steele, Thomas,  
Walters, Whitfield,

July 14 – \*Wingrove, Woods,  
Yagnick, Young