



The Water Rat

Newsletter of Leander Sea Scouts

May 2004

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Skipper's Scrawl

Firstly, well done to those who attended St George's Day parade this year. For the second year running we managed to win the turnout and marching trophy on the day, although it was a pity a few more Cubs were not on parade.

With the Summer boating season now on us, both the Troop and Explorers are on the river again and practising hard for the Regatta which is on the 4th July. Debbie Pratt has again agreed to take on the catering on the towpath and will be pleased to hear from any volunteers to help on the day.

During the Winter months we lost our mooring buoys out by the island and thanks to Peter Thompson from Garsons Farm and diving companion Richard Foster, after about an hour's swimming about under the surface, they were able to locate the sinker weights. Apparently it all had to be done by feel, as visibility on the bottom of the river was zero. However, with new chains attached we now have two mooring buoys again.

The Guild have completed the re-vernishing of the wooden gig 'Active' which is now back in service and the parent Mutineers have almost com-

pleted the refit and on the second fibreglass gig. The four new Coypu dinghies have all been delivered and are already in use by the Troop, so we again have our full fleet at our disposal.

I was pleased to be able to get down to both Beaver and Cub meetings to invest the new members into the Group and both sections are now at full strength. However, I must emphasise the need for more Leaders for the Cubs. As you know, Steve will be standing down this July and so far we have only had two volunteers to help with the section, neither of whom can make every week. We need two more volunteers as otherwise there will be insufficient Leaders to run the section in September. Please let me know if you are prepared to help.

Keith



Divers Peter Thompson, from Garsons Farm, and Richard Foster ready to recover moorings

Mutineers' Mumblings

At last, the refurbishment of 'Hero' is nearly complete. It has taken quite a few Thursday nights to do, but the gig is now looking very smart. This will allow some serious pulling to be done and we can check the various establishments along the river that we sometimes stop at for a small glass of lemonade!

Coxswain

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Beavers learn about Canada

The Beavers enjoyed a very interesting meeting with Sam Whitfield and Aidan Hazard, from the Explorers, who taught them some knots. We have never seen them so quiet.



We also had a Canadian themed evening to commemorate Victoria Day. Our guest Canadian (Bob Wheller) started by showing the children the Canadian flag – did you know that the two red stripes represent

the two oceans? He told some grisly bear stories – if you think you might meet one, you should carry a whistle and blow it from time to time to give them time to escape: they really don't want to attack you! The Beavers also heard about the mountains, and the Northern Lights, the cowboys and the Eskimos in Canada. Bob is a fan of the 'Toronto Maple Leaf' Hockey Team, and we learned about playing ice hockey on frozen ponds. No frozen river in May, but we did end the evening by playing hockey and eating pancakes with maple syrup. Delicious! Many thanks to Bob for an exciting evening.

Mandy



Appointment of DC for new District

Our current Scout District of Kingston and Malden is to merge with Surbiton District in the early part of October 2004.

County Commissioner Roger Hurion has announced the appointment of Bob Bushell, currently ACC

Activities, as the DC Designate. Bob will be working closely with current DCs Pat Askey, Surbiton, and Mike Wellman, Kingston and Malden, along with their respective chairmen, in putting a team together to ensure a smooth transition takes place.

Explorers

Many thanks, and well done to all of the Explorers that ran and took part in this year's Easter Camp at Chalfont Heights. With six Leaders, six Explorers and six Scouts, I can honestly say this is the first camp I have been on when I did not get stressed out. Also a big thank you to Keith for towing the trailer to and from site for us. Congratulations to all members of Leander that attended this year's St George's Day parade, where we retained the Marching Trophy for a second time.

As for this Summer term, we have been joined by three members from the Troop and two new members from 2nd Norbiton. Having a very large adjustment to make from transferring from land Scouts to Sea Scouts for their first term they have done very well. Currently we have also been playing host to Apollo ESU and, with the help of Sealion ESU, showing them some basic nautical skills and giving them a taster of what it is like to pull and canoe.

We have also been trying to train for this year's Regatta on 3rd July, but it has been proving rather hard as most of the seniors are currently out on study leave, revising for their GCSEs.

Hopefully we will be able to attend the first ever Sport Show being held at Earls Court 24-27 June 2004. This will give all members of the Unit a chance to try out a real-life assault course being laid on by the British Army and to try any other sports that take their fancy.

Finally, this year's Summer Camp will be with the Troop in Essex, so if you are interested in coming along and trying a bit of horsing around, please ask for a Summer Camp letter from Coxswain or myself.

Once again GOOD LUCK to all of the Explorers that are sitting their Exams.

Kaz.

Four new Cubs invested



Sunday Morning Working Parties

Parents – don't forget – we rely on you to keep the HQ 'ship-shape'!

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. A new rota starts at the end of February.

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

June 13 – *McDonagh,

McGuinness, Pearn, Peto, Pope

June 27 – *Pratelli, Pratt, Pratt,
Sankey, Sibley

July 11 – *Smith, Steele, Troullides,
Waller, Walters

September – *Webb, Wheller,
Whitfield, Wingrove, Woods

First Troop meeting

In the Leander Guild April newsletter, their Vice Chairman Dai Evans recalls his first evening at Leander.

One dark, winter Tuesday night in 1948 saw me cycle with Chas and Des Huckson from Ewell to the Clubhouse, where at 7.30pm we met 'Wog' and 'Cyril' casually leaning against the green sliding doors, awaiting their opening. I was 12, a slightly built and rather nervous boy, eyeing up these tough-looking blokes who advised me to "Go, home, as it's pretty rough in there."

I had heard (what later turned out to be watered-down) descriptions of the games that were played: 'Bung the Barrel' and 'British Bulldog', and my feeling of insecurity was growing, so the thought of returning homewards was definitely on my mind. I then remembered that, without an escort (we usually shared one front light and one back light between three or four), I would be running the gauntlet from a number of bike-riding 'coppers' keen to pounce and 'nick' you. The lesser of the two evils at that moment appeared to be Leander, so I decided to stay!

AGM

The Leander AGM took place at HQ on Monday 24th May. The GSL presented a written report of the year, and this is available on the website for those who were unable to attend.

The independently examined accounts were presented by the Treasurer. The annual turnover is more than £20,000 and this year we have invested in maintaining and updating our fleet of boats. £5000 was paid towards the four new Coypu dinghies and a loan toward the repair a wooden gig was cleared with a payment of £1500. Although we had a balance of £7700 in April 2004, the remaining £3800 for the new boats and marine insurance of £1200 has already been paid. We received grants from the Royal Navy and the Royal Borough and an Inland Revenue rebate of £3000 for Gift Aid on subscriptions and donations.

Keith Maund, GSL, appointed the Officers of the Group Executive Committee: Nigel Duffin (Chair), George Goodall (Treasurer), Les Lidington (Secretary). He then made his nominations to the Committee: Jeff Barley, Peter Burton, John Clark. Additional members Chris Ford, Paula Hazard and Ros Kimber were elected after nomination from the meeting.

We do need on the Executive Committee a couple of parents of current Beavers and Cubs, to ensure that their interests are represented. There are only five meetings a year and, if you would like to take advantage of this opportunity, we would be delighted to co-opt you. Please speak to one of the Section Leaders or to Keith.

Mike Wellman, District Commissioner, who had attended the meeting, wished the Group success in the coming years and stressed the importance of trying to take more members, and so offer more people the advantages of Scouting, by arranging to have meetings on a rota or by recruiting more leaders.

Nigel Duffin

'Leander' back board

What is the origin of the board that hangs at the end of the Main Deck? Groups of people have been observed staring at it in puzzlement.

It's the back board from the stern of a boat. Former GSL Eric Ebbage wrote in 1984, on the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Group:

In November 1912, the Troop commenced its Sea Scouting activities with its first boat – an ex Navy 32ft 12-oared cutter. This was presented to the Troop [and named 'Leander'] by the great-grandson of Captain Francis Grove, RN, on the Centenary of his great-grandfather joining the Navy, who had commanded HMS Leander in the early years of the last [19th] century. When, some years later, the Boy Scouts Association introduced the Group Organisation, the title Leander (Kingston) Sea Scout Group was adopted.

The main brass plate describes this presentation and how Captain Grove was wounded off Algiers in 1816.

This particular boat was the second HMS Leander, a ship of 1600 tons and 60 guns, built on the Thames of pitch pine and launched on 10th November 1813. Her main claim to fame was the chase and capture of the USS Rattlesnake, on 22nd June 1814, off the east coast of the United States. In 1816 Leander took part in the bombardment of Algiers, to force the Dey to release Christian slaves. Her casualties under the coastal bombardment were heavy and a quarter of the ship's company of 500 were killed or wounded. (The Dey was the governor, nominally the viceroy of the Sultan, but, in practice, the absolute ruler of Algiers.)

This information is from:

<http://www.hmsleander.co.uk/>

see also:

*<http://www.cronab.demon.co.uk/L.HTM>
(search for 'Leander, 58')*

Nigel Duffin

Coxswain's Corner

What a change there is to Troop meetings when the nights are longer – everyone very keen to get the boats out and on to the water. This year though there is a difference – four new Coypus to use. It was only in February that the leaders went to Royal's boat yard in Wroxham, Norfolk, to have a look at the all fibreglass Coypu that is now made.

They are pretty substantial, with extra buoyancy tanks, one piece bottom boards and – apart from the stretchers, rudder and tiller – no woodwork. With new 8ft oars just arrived, they will provide many hours of boating. A new mast and sails were ordered for one boat, and last Saturday we took number 4 boat sailing – very nice too.

There are no District events planned after Easter, apart from the the Joint District five-a-side football competition and the camping competition in June, which enables everyone to concentrate on their water activities and improving their skills. We have a good number of canoeists, ably instructed by Chris Hampton and Jon Bridger, well on their way to BCU 1-star, to be followed by the BCU 2-star group. Hopefully we will have more canoeists gaining their staged awards this year than in the recent past.

Dave King is busy bringing on as many stern scullers as possible; our intention is that everyone in the Troop should learn to scull – it's not that difficult. Once again Karen is keeping a keen eye on crews and individuals for the National Regatta in July – it would be nice if we could win again.

The Leadership team has a lot do running a Troop whose age profile is now much younger – many thanks to Ian, Dave and Liz for all their support and involvement.

Coxswain

Scout Meetings on Saturdays

Leander has always had a tradition of meeting on Tuesdays and Saturday afternoons, but in the last few years, with increased school sport and activity requirements, family needs and a generally busier lifestyle, attendance on Saturday has dropped away.

We have decided to change the meeting times to selected Saturday mornings, from 10.30am until 1.00pm, which nicely coincides with District Canoe Club meetings as well. (All those taking their BCU stages will need to attend at least one Saturday, preferably two).

Sailing is also available on Saturdays – Coypu, Gig, Topper and Laser. All that any Scout has to do is let us know they want come along and we'll make sure the boats are available.

Leander has superb facilities, they are there for every Scout to use – so put away the Playstations, log off the internet and get out on the water – it really is worth it.

Coxswain

Dates for your Diary

June 13 – HQ working party:

*McDonagh, McGuinness,
Pearn, Peto, Pope

June 21 – Executive meeting, 8pm

June 27 – HQ working party:

*Pratelli, Pratt, Pratt, Sankey,
Sibley

July 3/4 – National Sea Scout &
Sea Ranger Regatta

July 11 – HQ working party: *Smith,
Steele, Troullides, Waller,
Walters

July 25 - August 1 – Troop Summer
Camp

The Water Rat is sponsored by
Pick of the Bunch,
140-142 Richmond Road, Kingston
020 8549 5000,
also
Upper Ham Road, Ham Common.
www.pick-of-the-bunch.com