



The Water Rat

The Newsletter of Leander Sea Scouts

October 2013

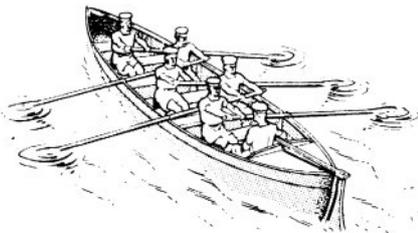
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Great River Race

The Great River, London's River Marathon, is a spectacular traditional pulling boat race up the River Thames, from Docklands to Ham House, that attracts over 300 crews from all over the globe.

It is a unique sight, the river filled with every kind of boat from pilot gigs, whalers and skiffs to Hawaiian outriggers and dragon boats. Every year, Leander enters Scout, Explorer and Adult gig crews and this year the Scout crew won the 'Ted Springer Trophy' for the fastest under-14 junior crew. Using one of our two much-loved clinker built wooden gigs, now over 60 years old, the Scouts successfully won their class. A brilliant result as there was a strong headwind and rough water much of the way, making for a very tough 21 mile race.

The Explorers also came in with a very good time and the Mutineers, a fine crew of Leaders and parents, couldn't quite match their class-winning time from last year, but had to settle for the fastest Home Counties gig back – always next year!



Leander (Kingston) Sea Scout Group

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Boat Deck Business

Quite a bit of work is being done on the Boat Deck as we are getting rid of some of the boating junk that accumulates over the years. With such a large Troop now we need to use virtually all our pulling boats and we need the room to move them around. We are very pleased with the new canoe trolley, designed by Nigel Duffin, which makes handling and storing our open canoes much easier.



All the boat fittings are being transferred to a dedicated section at the back of the deck, eventually some of the heavy racking will be relocated to make handling kayaks easier and our old coypus will be stored on a special covered rack to be erected outside. Many of our boat trolleys are now showing signs of wear and tear; they have given great service over the years but will need to be replaced for next year's boating season.

Something new and different. Russell is building a .177 air gun range in part of the Boat Deck, a great idea, that will enable Cubs and Scouts to learn and practise target shooting.

By next Spring we hope that most of these improvements will be completed, providing much more efficient storage and handling facilities for all our craft.

Coxswain

Russ's Range

Any of you who are members of the Leander Facebook page will know that I have been trying to set up and run air rifle shooting at the headquarters since Simon B and I qualified as Small Bore range marshals. I was given the go-ahead recently, because we had available funds to run the project. I only wish we had been able to do it when I was a Scout at Leander.

As it stands we have the guns, ammunition, targets and target holders. The proposed range now has lights, deflection curtains and a backboard to accommodate four targets. There's still some protective shielding to be put in place and backing for the target boards. I also need a secure cabinet to keep the guns in but, hopefully by the time you read this, these things will be in place. All that then remains is a Risk Assessment and then Parental Permission forms can be sent out for those wishing to take part.

The time and days that we can run shooting will then need to be decided. A time when the HQ is not being used by other people is preferable but not essential. I realise that many people have other activities they take part in during the weekday evenings and at weekends, so we'll have to come to a consensus as to what time and days suit the most people.

As we will only have four targets and can probably only take a maximum of 12-16 per session, a rota will probably be needed. Myself, Simon B, Jim M, Karen and Robin are all qualified to run the activity but we too have lives and families outside of Leander, which will also have a bearing on the times and days of the sessions. Hopefully I will be able to hand out the consent forms soon so we can get the activity under way before Christmas.

Russ



Summer Memory

There was a report of Summer Camp in the July Water Rat, but here is a memory that won't fade! Names have been removed to protect the foolish!

I think my outstanding memory of the Summer Camp was one afternoon when we were on the boating lake. The Scouts would often get out of the boats onto the island and walk across to the other side.

This particular afternoon our session was drawing to a close and one of the Scouts was still on the island. Of course, the others didn't want to pick him up. However, he had a bargaining chip in the form of one of their oars. Whilst he was negotiating his safe passage back to land he jabbed his oar several times into a mound of earth on the island, which, unfortunately for him, turned out to be a bees' nest!

I told him to throw the oar and dive in. Luckily he only received a couple of stings but in retrospect I couldn't help

laughing at the scene that had unfurled in front of me, despite realising the seriousness of what could have been. I'm sure neither he nor I will forget the event any time soon, which I think could be said of the Camp in general.

A good time was had by all.

Russ

Work at the HQ

Over the half term week, new vinyl flooring was laid in the Lodge/Six/Patrol dens off the Main Deck and also in the office, girls' changing and new store – a total of nine rooms. These will now be much easier to keep clean and tidy – *please note, girls and boys!*

The accessible toilet is being refurbished and fitted with a basin and hot & cold water; the door has been rehung to make it more suitable for wheelchair users. This work should be completed very soon.

Bruno Memorial Bench unveiled



At lunchtime on Saturday 26th October a number of good friends and supporters of Leander took part in a brief ceremony of official 'unveiling' and first 'sitting' at the Headquar-

ters. It was a pleasure to welcome, amongst others, Trevor Thorpe, former Chair of the Executive, and Dominic, brother of Mark Partidge, who made and carved the bench so beautifully.

Stefan Davies

Stefan Davies was a Scout in Leander in the 1960s and 1970s. His parents were active supporters of the Group. He recently died of a brain tumour and his friend Anthony (Ant) Merriman recalled their time in Leander at Stefan's funeral.

I was first introduced to Stefan when I joined Leander, age 13, 48 years ago. Stef quickly made me feel part of the Group. We had a lot in common. Neither of us was very keen on school, but Stef had the advantage of having many practical skills.

We got up to all sorts of mischief together as Scouts and Venture Scouts. We attended several camps together. The campsites often had no facilities and we dug latrines and cooked on open fires. My recollection of Stef's practical application was the 'interesting' methods he employed to get a cooking fire going. I am not sure his father, who was in the fire service, would have approved!

During that stage of our lives, the Queen's Scout Award & Duke of Edinburgh Gold award became a very important part of what we were trying to achieve.

One Summer, Stefan and I took a group of Venture Scouts up to the Isle of Arran. Our planning was such in those days that we

filled the mini bus with what we thought we needed and went!

We were driving an old Commer minibus, belonging to Leander. Stefan roped me in to help him change the differential about 10 days before the trip. The differential originally came from an old Humber Hawk and, although it was the same size, the ratio of the gearing was not the same and the speedometer was linked to the differential. The reading on the speedometer was always wrong, and I remember sitting in the passenger seat and being asked by Stef to look at the speedometer of a vehicle we were passing to see what speed we were doing!

In our travels on Arran, another motorist had got into trouble by putting the rear wheel of their vehicle in a ditch. There were eight large lads in the minibus, who Stef had get out and lift the vehicle out of the ditch, so it could be driven again.

Stefan eventually became an ambulance driver and then a paramedic. As a paramedic you would have felt very safe in his hands: he had tremendous patience and ability to put people at the ease. He was an amazing caring man and saved many lives.

Leander helped us develop life skills which we carried with us for the rest of our lives.

Jamboree 2015

The Greater London South West Scout County selection weekend for the County Jamboree unit was held at Polyapes over the weekend of 12th/13th October.

54 Scouts and Explorers are going from Greater London South West and I am very pleased to inform you that Victoria Breach is one of the young people selected to represent the County and Royal Kingston District at the Jamboree.

This is excellent news for the Group, I am sure Victoria will be a great ambassador at what will be the event of a lifetime.

Coxswain



I applied to be part of the 2015 Jamboree in Japan, because I thought it would be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience different countries and cultures. The selection weekend was at Polyapes and I think they were looking for confidence and the ability to work in or organise a team.

We played games and had small-group tasks, such as fitting one person in the group through an A4 piece of paper. In pairs, we made video diaries, as this is something we will be doing while at the Jamboree to keep in touch with our families and friends at home. Perhaps the most memorable experience of the weekend was having to get up at 6.30 in the morning to sing and do the dance routine to 'YMCA'! Very useful in Japan, I'm sure!!

Victoria