



# The Water Rat

The Newsletter of Leander Sea Scouts

August 2021

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## From the Chair

I hope you are all enjoying the post-lockdown period, the school holidays and the glorious Summer weather.

A huge thank you to Russell and the team of leaders and helpers who pulled off yet another fantastic Summer Camp. I spent one night and a couple of days with them – our Scouts and Explorers really are an adventurous, considerate and fun group of young people.

I also want to pay tribute to all our leaders: Robin, Russ, Cathy, Alex and Tim, and young leaders James and Eleanor, because keeping activities going throughout this period has really been an outstanding achievement.

We've been busy with HQ too. The 'Operation Clear Up' team did a great job on the backyard and we've now replaced part of the fencing. Thanks to Mike and his team for sorting out the electrical safety certification. Dick is in the process of arranging a new electric shutter to replace the one we have. Thanks to Neil, Alex and Jon, we have added a few more kayaks to our fleet and Robin and Dick have kept our gigs afloat with repairs and maintenance.

The hirers are back using the premises – many thanks to Ruth for organising this. The Executive Committee has been meeting throughout this time, and I'd like

to thank Paul, Penny and Nigel for helping us keep our finances and administration in such good shape.

To say thank you to all parents and supporters who have kept Leander going through this pandemic, we invite you to our Evening River Cruise on Thursday 23rd September (see flyer on p.3; details to follow). We do hope you can make it – it will be a great opportunity to chat with other parents, meet the team and just have a really good time.

Dick Riches is looking for a couple more ladies to get involved in the 'Guild and Mums' rowing sessions. This friendly group rows on Wednesday evenings, and includes some of the Guild (former Leander Scouts) and Mums – so let Dick know ([franches@btinternet.com](mailto:franches@btinternet.com)) if you are interested in trying out gig rowing.

Our Annual General Meeting will be on Monday 20th September, 7.30pm at HQ. This is YOUR opportunity to come along, get involved, or just find out more about what makes Leander tick. We are always looking for more parents to help out and if you are interested in one of our helper/project manager roles we have some really good ones!

*Andrew  
(Chair, Leander Sea Scouts)*

## 70 years ago

In 1951, Leanders had a fortnight's camp at Waldringfield, in Suffolk, an ideal site, with the river almost on the doorstep.

At 7 o'clock on Saturday morning, 28th July, the pantechicon was loaded with two sailing dinghies, a pram dinghy, a couple of bicycles, and twenty Scouts and Scouters, their kit and camping equipment.

Tents were pitched at the top of a grassy slope, at the bottom of which was an icy-cold stream. Leanders, always adaptable, used this cold water to keep their butter and provisions cool. A travelling butcher's shop called at the camp twice a week: rabbits were purchased at 1/6d each and, in spite of the shortage in London, potatoes and eggs were plentiful.

Good sailing was enjoyed. Three Rovers, who sailed round the coast from Kingston, arrived on the Monday night, and during the week the Juniors were taken out sailing in 'Hero'. The longest trip was to Felixstowe to sample the irresistible attraction of Butlin's Fun Fair.

On August 11th, the pantechicon reached HQ by 7.30 pm, after a very enjoyable camp.

*See Water Rat, September 1951, on Leander website for more 'gory' details!*

**Leander (Kingston) Sea Scout Group**

Headquarters: 92 Lower Ham Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 5BB

[www.leanderseascouts.org.uk](http://www.leanderseascouts.org.uk) — Registered Charity Number 290029



## Beavers, campfires and chocolate

Despite some tricky restrictions for 6 and 7 year olds, we were able to meet in person during the Summer term, which was a big relief. We said goodbye to those swimming up from Beavers to Cubs who were ready for their new adventures and we welcomed new members.



We had a well-ventilated hall and used the newly cleared yard increasingly as the term progressed. We decided to try and complete some badge work which we had been unable to do in the previous year.



We learned about the local food bank and how it is able to help people, about the Nations of the UK, Great Britain and Switzerland where there are two world Centres located for Scouts and Guides. This involved some extensive chocolate tasting of course!



We practised our Green Cross Code and donned DayGlo vests to practise outside; we grew some seeds from scratch and learned many silly campfire songs before ending the term with a real campfire. Thank you to the great Young Leaders, adult and parent helpers who make our sessions take place with plenty of fun thrown in.



For the Autumn term we look forward to doing some outside badge work including fire lighting and cooking, leaf rubbing, some skills training and first aid. We also hope to run our Day Camp which was postponed twice over the last year.



We wish you all a fun and active Autumn and thank you for your support

*Yogi, Cathy Johnson,  
Beaver Scout Leader*

## Covid & Scouting

It seems ages ago now that the first signs of Covid-19 infection emerged and would have a devastating effect on our way of life, Scouting included. From March 2020, the first lockdown was implemented; all meetings and activities ceased; group halls and meeting places closed down and we got used to a strange world of keeping away from everybody else. The Scout Association ceased to function, activity centres and camp sites were mothballed and a substantial number of groups closed down permanently. The loss of income from activities and camp fees resulted in many job losses at Headquarters and the forced sale of valuable assets.

Despite this grim picture, Leander's talented and resourceful leadership team, fully supported by our dedicated Executive, worked incredibly hard to bring Scouting back when appropriate. The restrictions imposed were extremely demanding, requiring minimum social contact and intensive health and safety arrangements with many long hours spent devising Covid-19 risk assessments for every single Beaver, Cub, Scout and Explorer activity. Coupled with a complex approval process, these took many months to complete.

Most fortunately, the Group was classified as an essential youth activity and received Government financial assistance, which enabled us to plan and continue with our activities programme for all our sections. Although we couldn't meet in our HQ, we were one of the first groups to restart water activities, with Cub, Scout and Explorer kayaking and canoeing sessions every other weekend and the Beavers bravely meeting outside. We have survived the last lockdown, had a very successful Summer Camp and, now that most restrictions have been lifted, we look forward to our young people once again enjoying the full range of sea scouting activities that Leander provides.

*Robin, GSL*

# Pack! Pack! Pack!

As we sat down to plan our Autumn programme a year ago we hoped the worst of the pandemic was behind us and tentatively started organising face-to-face activities. But after some kayaking sessions, a night hike and a bike ride around Richmond Park we were back into lockdown and facing a return to online meetings.

By the time we were planning our Spring programme there seemed little hope of face-to-face meetings before Easter. So instead we got creative. While real travel was seeming like a distant memory we decided to explore the world from the comfort of our own living rooms.

From our first meeting after Christmas to the last Saturday of term was exactly 80 days, so we challenged the Cubs to a real-time virtual 80 days around the world. We avoided air travel for environmental reasons and found out about the sights, languages, customs, food and



people as we travelled. Some of our best moments came from the Cubs themselves giving presentations about countries they had been to, had a connection with, or were interested in. We may have been stuck at home physically but at least we got to see the world and have some fun along the way.

After Easter, our programme started to get closer to normality, albeit just outdoors and with more risk assessments and social distancing than usual.

Seeing the Cubs running around together, flying kites, playing games and even having a water fight after a year of lockdowns was wonderful. We made the most of our new freedoms by running some Saturday kayaking sessions in addition to our Wednesday evening meetings. It was great to see the progress they made over the Summer term.

So, as we look forward to the year ahead, we cautiously hope for a more normal year and programme. We're also planning to run some weekend camps since it's now two years since we last went camping as a Pack. Whatever the year ahead holds, we'll do our best to be prepared for it.

*Tim, Chris, Peter, Lorna,  
Ben & Richard.*



Leander (Kingston) Sea Scouts  
Family Social Event

Join us for an  
**Evening River Cruise**  
**Thursday 23 Sept 2021 8-11pm**

**HOLD THE DATE!**

Depart from & return to Turks Pier, Kingston  
Cash Bar

For Leander parents/carers, leaders, helpers, instructors, Trustees and  
Guild members

Online ticket sales to be announced in due course

# Scouts and Explorers have a successful camp

As you may know, normal Scout meetings haven't been able to take place since March 2020 for the obvious reason. I'll try my best to avoid using the 'C-word' in this report, as I'm sure – like me – you've had more than enough of it interfering with every aspect of your lives!

All Scout activities were off, then outdoor activities were on, then off, then on again. Finally, we were able to run a relatively normal outdoor Scout programme for the Summer term 2021, albeit with an accompanying weight of paperwork and Risk Assessments having to be completed.



Regular kayaking sessions have been run on Saturdays when the weather has permitted since the Summer of 2020. I think this has helped with everyone's general wellbeing, including the leaders. It was the only way we could think of to give a regular activity programme, as we weren't permitted large groups indoors. Overall, I think it has been very successful in keeping the Scouts together and giving them something constructive to do outside of their schoolwork, during a very difficult time.



As restrictions slowly lifted the chance of Summer Camp became more of a possibility, so I continued to plan for it as far as I could. Thankfully, the restrictions

lifted enough at the beginning of July to allow the camp to go ahead, with yet again more accompanying paperwork, but the systems we had to put in place had only a minimal effect on the feeling of the camp.



Summer Camp this year was at Paccar Scout Activity centre in Hertfordshire, which is equipped to provide a full activity programme. On the camp the Scouts and Explorers took part in Gladiator challenge, quick drop, go-karts, archery, air rifle shooting, tomahawk throwing, all aboard, high ropes, fire lighting, wood cutting, backwoods cooking and zip wire.



Chris did another of his classic, six whole chickens on a spit and backwoods cooked baked potatoes for dinner one day, which as usual was hugely enjoyed by all.

My usual night hike was a bit of a gamble as I was unable to walk it prior to the camp and construction work for HS2 had cut off all public paths one mile to the north and east of us. Despite all this, the hike was a great success, apart from the path that no-one had seemingly

been down for a long time. When we got halfway down, we found out why. A septic tank had burst in someone's garden and flooded the path! It was a bit whiffy!



Neil, Alex and Andrew ran the kayaking trips for the Scouts and Explorers on a very picturesque stretch of the Thames near Marlow the day after the hike. This was unfortunate timing, as the Scouts were worn out by the hike and, as Andrew commented after noticing they lacked their usual vim and vigour during kayaking, "You've broken the Scouts"!

All in all it was a very successful camp. Despite the inclement weather and unusual conditions, everyone had a great time and it was just what we all needed to get us back on track.

*Russ*

