
Welcome to the current edition of First News, the newsletter of the 1st Wokingham (St Paul's) Scout Group.

Chairman's report by Bill Forfar

Scout Hut – who owns it, and who does the maintenance?

Some of you may not realise that 1st Wokingham Scout Group OWN the Scout buildings and LEASE the land from Wokingham Town Council. This means we pay ground rent to WTC and have to insure and maintain the building from the subscriptions that parents pay each term.

I recently calculated that vandalism to the Scout Hut had cost 1st Wokingham Scout Group nearly £500 over the last 2 years and presented this cost to the Town Council in support of my request for the Council to install lighting in the Car Park. The Council have responded by freezing the ground rent for the next 4 years but no decision has yet been taken to install lighting or a barrier (see the meeting report below).

The one positive and prompt action the Council took was to arrange the eviction of two Traveller Families from our triangle of land last summer. They also installed new posts on the edge of the car park and a lockable folding post for us to access the Scout Stores door for loading equipment for Scout and Cub Camps.

New Windows and rear doors at the Scout Hut

The Hut was built and opened in 1981 so is 25 years old. I'm sure you have seen the rot in some of the window frames and the broken glass caused by various acts of vandalism in the last 2 years. Your committee has been putting aside £500 for the last few years to pay for major maintenance and we have taken the decision to renew all the windows around the Hut and the doors at the back of the Stores.

We obtained several quotes for windows and Berkshire Windows came in best since they included Toughened Glass. We have also found some mesh which stops even airgun pellets from penetrating. This will be used to protect the new windows when they are installed in the next month. The total cost will be £5,000.

The rear doors have been renewed by Keith Winter and Dick Moodie (well done to you both) and have been improved with a push-bar exit to comply with new fire regulations. These new windows and doors should last for another 25years....

Vandalism, and anti-social behaviour in Wokingham Parks

Here is my report from a recent meeting which I attended with Town Councillors, Police and Youth Workers.

Also present were residents from the Leslie Sears Park area (Crail Close, etc).

The object of the meeting was to discuss the problems and formulate ways of solving them.

1. Leslie Sears Park residents wanted an alcohol ban to control underage drinking. The police, Insp Weems especially, and the Town Council were against it. There was much heated discussion especially from the Leslie Sears residents for 45 minutes.
2. I then outlined the different problems at Redlands Park. Car drivers, drinking and some drugs until late into the night with the associated disturbance to residents. We have a much older group than at Leslie Sears. I also mentioned the Scout concerns about vandalism, broken glass and drug residue which can affect the Hut and the boys of 1st Wokingham. Lighting funded by the Town Council in Redlands Farm car park was requested by me again. The Town Council produced a report from a meeting with Southern Electric where costs of poles and cabling were outlined. Columns at £350 and

cablings at £100 PER METRE for 70 metres from the entrance to the furthest column made the cost prohibitive in WTC terms.... The police and the Youth Worker group who were present also made a case for the "moth effect" of lighting. This is where groups congregate under a street light because they can see each other and the social effect is increased by the light. I began to have second thoughts about lighting especially when the alternative below was proposed.

3. An alternative to use an automatic barrier such as is seen at District Council Offices in Shute End and Elms Road was proposed. The barrier would be open during the day for normal use and would close (or roll up in this case) at, say, 10pm and re-open at 7am or whatever time is agreed to be appropriate. A few places would be left at the road end to allow late night dog walkers to park. This will stop the current car park being used at night for spins, etc and will stop more than 2 or 3 cars congregating from 10pm onwards because the spaces will be reduced. I like this option and costs are being investigated by the Town Council for Redlands Car Park.
4. A Town Councillor mentioned an initiative he had seen in Cirencester where there were signs in the parks and open spaces titled "BOBBS". This stood for "Behave Or Be Banned Scheme" and has had some success. The council had worked WITH the local youths (both disaffected and organised youth groups) to draw up a code of behaviour covering litter, rowdiness, alcohol, etc. It seems that the rowdy behaviour of some groups can intimidate other young people as well as older people. Therefore many young people did not use the areas where rowdy groups congregated. The Wokingham Youth Worker group took an action to investigate this further.
5. The same enlightened Councillor (sorry I missed his name) asked why there were no representatives of the youth at the meeting. Were we not in jeopardy of telling them what they should do rather than engaging in reasoned discussion? The assembled group took note of this but no action was taken to contact the groups assembling at Leslie Sears or Redlands Park. I felt this was a missed opportunity, especially by the Youth Worker Group.

Scout Camp

This years scout camp took place between Saturday 29th July and Saturday 5th August at Pull Wyke Camp on the edge of lake Windermere near Ambleside. The small grassy area which forms the camp site itself was in a small dingle surrounded by woodland. A short stroll of about 200 yards took you down to a private beach on the edge of Lake Windermere. The only facilities on the site were running water and four small wooden sheds for chemical toilets. Various activities took place including canoeing, building and "sailing" rafts, a rope course through the trees which consisted of walkways which scouts negotiated using their own initiative, mountain biking on forest trails, a 3 hour boat ride from Ambleside down to Lakeside, climbing and hill walking and finally the end of camp sing along around the camp fire. This was a very wet camp and during the few dry periods the camp site looked like a laundry with wet clothing draped over every available tree branch and guy rope. A lesson learnt is "do not under any circumstances go on a scout camp without waterproof waterproofs".

Cub Camp

Report by Alastair McRea

This was my first Cub Camp. It was great fun and we did a lot of outdoor games such as Blindman's Trail, Danish Longball, cricket and my favourite was Capture the Flag even though the leaders had extra help from Benjy the dog.

We learned about native Africans and how they made fences round their huts. We then had to build them around our tents with branches and rope

We were able to do our Athletics Badge and Camping badges. We did lots of different activities but the most unusual activity was pole dancing.

IT WAS ABSOLUTELY BRILLIANT

Report by Dominic Holt

On Saturday 26th August St. Paul's 1st Wokingham Cubs set off for their annual summer camp. The camp was to last four days and three nights and was held at Ellis Farm, within the Coombes.

Altogether there were twelve of us, including of course Akela, Baloo, Pat and Kirsty. It was Kirsty's first time as a camp leader and I thought she did great. I believe that everybody enjoyed her leadership.

we started the first day by erecting the tents and unpacking all our gear, including equipment we would need during camp. After the gear was unpacked, we were all called together by Kirsty on her whistle and then the Union Flag was flown. Later we were split into two groups and Akela told us who the sixers and seconds would be.

Each morning, before breakfast, we had to tidy the tent and stow gear properly and neatly. No equipment, bedding or clothing had to touch the side of the tent and the leaders carried out a kit inspection on a couple of days. Then after that we had morning exercises followed by breakfast.

Each day, before lunch, we all joined in games with the leaders and only on one day we were required to help in preparing our own lunch. Following lunch, we were kept busy every afternoon with various activities, some on-site and some off-site. We all had great fun! After dinner, we had further games or activities, for instance, "blind trail". At the end of each day we lit a camp fire together and joined in the singing and fun activities around the fire. Later, we went to bed wondering what tomorrow would bring.

But all too soon it was Tuesday 23rd August and time to break camp and return home to our families. We all had the time of our lives and may I say, on behalf of all the cubs that went, a big thank you to the leaders for giving up so much of their own time and for giving us such an enjoyable annual camp.

Parent/Guardian Day 23rd September

Report by Geoff Hawkins

The event was organised to give Parents and Guardians an insight and share scouting activities and to commemorate Berkshire County Cubs 90th Birthday.

Starting gently with a 'kick about' outside the hut we were called in for reception tea or coffee to be given the day's itinerary. A full programme was planned for three teams of 8 to 10 members, including an 'opportunity' to cook your own lunch on a self-built camp fire.

First though we were to build a Sedan Chair to carry a cub volunteer around an obstacle course. Points were awarded for construction, presentation and time negotiating the course. The cubs experience in tying clove hitch bindings was soon put to great use and the three finished chairs ranged from the 'ecological', made only from natural growing materials to ornate fabric draped compartments fit for Royalty.

Next up - a refreshment break and briefing. Akela and Baloo prepared us for the challenge of open camp fire building, food preparation and use of limited resources and equipment. Everyone was involved, collecting our own kindling and firewood from dead trees and shrubs around the scout hut. Quite soon the fires were lit and the leaders assisted in containing the fires and preparing them for cooking. Cubs enjoyed chopping onions, slicing mushrooms, carrots and peppers while parents managed the fire and worked out how to present an edible Spaghetti Bolognese. Each team produced an excellent meal, enjoyed by all and finished off by a baked banana surprise. Now the washing up with a ration of water, heated on the fire and on to the next challenge

While the fires were being built the leaders were busy building and erecting a rope bridge for us all to enjoy. Cubs first, the pack took it in turns to cross the bridge with great enthusiasm and encouraged the parents to have a go. The cub audience sat back to cheer the parents on and were delighted when some parents managing 360 degree turns and backward crossings.

Now off to the field for a game of Danish Longball, a new game to most parents, played with a rugby ball, cricket bat and physically demanding. The parents were highly competitive and 'bashed' and ran their way

to a win before returning to the Scout hut for another welcome refreshment break.

So now another skill challenge with the teams involved in a tent pitching and dismantling race. The cubs helped communicate the leaders tips and tricks to an effortless pitching. It was a close run race finishing when the tent was packed away and returned to the storeroom.

Guess what - another welcome tea break! But... short lived as we moved on to a game of Continuous Cricket where once again the parents managed a victory. Feeling the pace of the day the parents were happy to let the cubs play football and rugby by the Scout Hut while seeking refreshment from the attentive canteen team.

Finally, we gathered around to close the day off and look forward to the evening camp fire and entertainment. (ED: At this point the days participants were joined by boys, parents/guardians of the Scouts and Beavers as well as members of the Group Exec.) The winning team received a Mars bar each to warm applause. Akela then thanked all the leaders, helpers and participants for making the day what it was - a great success.

I would like to say thank you to Akela and her entire team, on behalf of the parents/guardians. They gave us first hand experience of the fun and challenges of modern day scouting that our children enjoy so much.

Current Events

For full details about these events then please visit or look on the notice board in the entrance hall to the HQ.

1st Nov 2006	Social	Fireworks Evening (HQ)
3rd Feb 2007	Fundraising	Quiz Night (HQ)
22nd Apr 2007	Boys	St. George's Day Parade (Ascot Race Course)
7th May 2007	Fundraising	May Fayre (Wokingham Town Centre)
25th - 28th May 2007	Boys	District Centennial Camp (Binfield)
6th Jul 2007	Social	BBQ and AGM (HQ)
28th Jul - 5th Aug 2007	Boys	Scout Camp (Hay-on-Wye, Wales)
25th to 28th Aug 2007	Boys	Cub Camp (Ellis Hill Farm)

Online at: <http://www.firstwokingham.org.uk>