

Group Annual Report 2015

Chris Ball, Group Chair

The 4th St John's is a Scout Group going from strength to strength, and it is all thanks the leaders and young leaders for their dedication and efforts.

We have an excellent and highly dedicated set of leaders and in our opinion we have the best and one of the largest facilities in the whole district - certainly we are the only group to own their own site ... and our goal is to build on these strengths so your children have the best scouting experience possible.

We have had another great year of Scouting –it started with our traditional St George's Day parade through Sevenoaks followed by our Young people joining almost 800 other members of Sevenoaks Scouting in May at the hugely successful, whole District camp, Mag7 on a farm in Weald. This only takes place every 4 years, due to the size and organisation. Take note - plans are underway for the next one - same weekend in 2018.

Our group represented the District twice on parade at the Vine this year - on August 3rd for the WW1 Remembrance parade and again at Remembrance Day. Our Scouts camped in Dorset near Brownsea Island, where the first scout camp took place, and Pirate Group camp followed in September. We held a hugely successful Firework display in November and just last weekend we joined almost 8,000 members of Kent Scouts in a Big Night Out, where we camped here along with Cubs from the 6th and the 9th that night.

Our Young People have taken part many activities - climbing, shooting, kayaking, hiking, to name but a few.

But there's much more to this Group....

Last year we talked about some of our plans, and as you will have seen we have been working hard to make this happen.

First, we have started a new cub pack led by Steve Kelley who has moved up from Beavers, supported by Jo and the existing Cub team plus 3 new Assistant Cub leaders, Laura, Karen and Freddie. It's already full, reflecting the popularity of scouting and our Group.

With the addition of 3 Assistant Beaver leaders, Katrien, Laura and Martha to our existing leaders Shelley, Jo and Amy, we have increased our Beaver colony size. We are also ready to start a new Beaver colony. All we need is one or two more volunteers to help round out the team before we can start. If you are interested, then please speak with Jo at the end of this meeting. Any of the leaders will tell you what a rewarding experience it is, and that you do not need to commit to coming every week. The team is all about sharing responsibilities.

Second we continue to develop the site. New gates on the front steps (funded by the nursery on site), permanent benches in the camp fire area, additional storage creation behind the hall, the disabled access ramp progressing well – all speak to our desire to make scouting accessible for all and safe with it.

www.4thsevenoaks.org.uk
www.facebook.com/4thScouts



The quality of the site is reflected by the fact that we hire out the space to different groups. We have recently received a further boost to our funds is that Sevenoaks St John's Ambulance will be moving to our site on Monday nights at the end of this month - last week after 6 months of work the agreement was signed. This extra income is going to allow us, amongst other things, to purchase a new minibus so our Young People can have even more adventures. We would be especially keen to hear from anyone willing to join a team to help maintain our replacement bus.

Of course, I cannot ignore all of the background activities involved in making sure the Scout Hall and the wider site are maintained and kept in safe manner. This is again thanks to the work of many of you not only at our volunteer days but also doing lots of the little jobs which keep the Group running smoothly.

Thank you to all of you who have helped out over the last year – big or small. We hope you will continue to support us. If you are thinking about helping, then do speak with any of us – we want to keep growing and delivering the joy of Scouting to as many children as possible.

Finally, I want to thank again the Scout leaders – without them none of this would happen.

Group Scout Leader's Report 2015

Paul Davis, Group Scout Leader

Once again I would like to thank all of our section leaders for their efforts in delivering varied and exciting programmes for their sections. Sadly I have not been able to attend as many of these activities as I would have liked due to work commitments, but building Cardboard Canoes that float sounds like great fun!!

I must also mention the Young Leaders and Section Assistants who help the leaders, week in, week out and provide much needed support throughout the meetings. In particular I want to acknowledge the three Young Leaders (Kelly, Riana and Elizabeth) who gained their Young leader belt and all 4 missions of validation in record time before the age of 16 of that training. Also congratulations to Kelly & Riana for being awarded the District Explorer achievement award.

As you have already heard, we are continuing with our plans to improve the site facilities. Already we have received very positive feedback from other groups from all over the county who have made use of the site for camps and other activities. Our reputation is spreading far and wide. Again these improvements would not happen without the hard work put in by the Leaders and parents who give up their time to be bossed around by Carl and Michael!

We will all see the benefits of this work as we attract other users (and more income!) to the site.

I encourage you all to check out our website www.4thsevenoaks.org.uk which is regularly updated by Michael with details and photos of all recent activities by all sections as well as the programme of up and coming events for all sections. This should always be your first port of call for any questions on events.

Finally, at the end of last year, we received news that Stan Rushbrook, a previous Cub leader at the 4th for over 20 years, sadly passed away. I was contacted by his widow who asked if she could bury his ashes at the one place that meant so much to him during his life in Scouting – here at Mill Lane.

This just shows how much our Group is regarded both in the past, present and hopefully in the future. With your help, we can continue to build on this.

Beaver Colony Report 2015

Shelley Williams, Beaver Colony leader

This has been a very busy year for our colony. We had a visit from the Creepy Crawly Man as a Christmas extra.

In January I took over as leader from Emma Searle. Steve Kelley has moved up to be Akela of the new cub pack, although he is continuing to support Beavers when he can. This is appreciated as Steve's knowledge is vast!! I have been very lucky in having several new adults joining to help - Laura (Woody), Martha (Dove), Katrien (Bald Eagle), Amy (Robin) and Jo (who hasn't been named yet). I am very grateful for their help. Our numbers are increasing to take 30. This is due to having the extra support.

We took seven Beavers to the district sleepover in March. They were all very well behaved and had great fun.

The Beavers have had a variety of activities over the last few months. Last week we went to Shoreham by train which was great fun. We have been to Knole Park for a hike. The turnout for St Georges Day was brilliant.

A lot of badges have been awarded as well. With Beavers we tend to award the badges as soon as we can after the children completing the badge.

We had 16 Beavers come to the Big Night Out last weekend. I was very proud of all of them. Their behaviour was great.

Last October we had several Beavers collect their Chief Scout Bronze award from the Mayor at the Town Council offices. We had some more collect theirs in March.

Wilderness Cub Pack Report 2015

Richard Everest, Cub Pack Leader

This year has been very eventful with a second cub pack being opened at Easter, and the re-naming of the Wednesday pack to the Wilderness pack, and the Friday pack to Greatness to reflect the 2 large estates on which our main catchment area sits. Indeed our site sits on part of the gardens of Greatness House, and the area we call "The dip" was formerly the fishpond serving the estate, and our Air Rifle Range was once the Ice House.

We currently have 29 invested Cubs, and have awarded 4 Silver Awards (which is the highest level badge a cub can achieve) and another 399 badges have also been gained. This has included the Pioneering badge, which covers some of the more traditional scouting skills of knots and lashings. We also held a very successful hobbies and collectors evening, which accounted for 82 of the badges awarded over the last year! The cubs have also worked towards and achieved their Fire, Home and Personal Safety badges, and spent an evening doing some first aid. This term we have completed the local knowledge badge, which culminated in an evening walking round Sevenoaks

town centre trying to find specific buildings from just a photograph. Some of the cubs have also completed their photography badge, they spent the first evening in their sixes directing and then photographing the rest of the pack in various activities which they felt most reflected what they have done whilst in cubs, and the second evening was spent putting together a display, using the photographs they took. We have held 2 international evenings, the first looking at scouting around the world and on the second evening the cubs had great fun trying to identify various cheeses from around the world. The cubs have also worked on their creative, global and fitness challenge badges (which go toward their Silver Award).

However in September we will be moving onto a new challenge badge system, so there may be the need to remove and then so on some more badges

(sorry!) which the cubs are already working towards.

History of Greatness House

"In 1760, Peter Nouaille, a French Huguenot formerly based at Spitalfields, set up a business in silk production at Sevenoaks. The silk mill was located to the north of the Site at the junction of Greatness Lane with Mill Lane. The factory, which was converted from a flour mill, employed just over 100 people including French refugees. Nouaille built Greatness House nearby in 1763. Later, After Peter's death, the silk works went into decline and the mill and house were sold. Greatness House went on to be used as a boys school known as Lonsbury College. It was finally destroyed by a film company after the First World War, who blew the house up to make a film about the war."

Taken from <http://www.kenthistoryforum.co.uk/index.php?topic=17743.0>

In February we entered 3 teams into the District Cub Challenge with one team coming a very creditable 2nd. 5 cubs also attended the district run pioneering day and we would like to thank all the young people who attended the Remembrance Service in November and the St. Georges Day Parade in April.

Last weekend the pack took part in the Big Night Out (which was organised by Kent Scouts with the aim to get as many young people to spend the night in a tent across Kent) and so 16 cubs spent Saturday night under canvas, after having spent the day doing various activities and learning about WaterAid.

The leaders would like to take this opportunity to thank our 3 fantastic young leaders, Kelly, Lizzie and Riana, (who volunteered amongst other things to organise and run our annual Halloween Party in November, but we're not sure they will ever do it again!) for their commitment and enthusiasm over the last year.

Greatness Cub Pack Report 2015

Steve Kelley, Cub Pack Leader

The Greatness Cub pack has only been in existence for two months, so this report is for that period.

We have been busy getting to know each other from young people to a new leadership team. We have all been quickly adapting and learning new skills and having fun on the way.

The Greatness Pack has worked hard and the 23 Young People have earned 67 badges between them.

Those badges reflect skills learnt like how to stalk, track and hunt down the fish counter at Tesco's, through to compass making and fire lighting.

These young people have been enthusiastic hard working and dedicated and parents you should be proud of them.

The reason for opening up a second Cub pack was to address an issue that most Scout Groups have, a chronic waiting list. Take as an example the majority of young people in this new Cub Pack, who had been waiting for a place with the Beaver section. The reason this new cub pack opened is due to the adult volunteers that have stepped forward to help in the Beaver section, which has allowed me to swim up from Beavers and take on the Akela role. This Cub section has opened due to the hard work of our AGSL who has been twisting arms and persuading all that she could to form this new pack.

So I'd like to finish this report with a thank you to Jo Brookbank for her tenacity and perseverance fighting the good fight to form this new cub pack and to take on an Assistant Cub Leader role. I'd like to also thank Laura Ayres and Karen Moore for stepping forward and becoming Assistant Cub Leaders to help run this pack.

Additionally I should also thank my daughters Clara and Natasha who "volunteered" me in the first place all those years ago, who have now reaped that reward by being "volunteered" as young leaders....

Lastly I have to thank the Brothers Willson who are true Scouts who work tirelessly to support Scouting not just at the 4th but also around this District.

History of Wildernesse House

Before the 1400s, the land on which Dorton House now sits was known as Manor of Stidulfe, where according to historian Edward Hasted, there was a large mansion called Stidulfe's.

In the 1560s it was bought by the family of Theobald of Stonepitt who renamed it Stidulfe's Place. The home remained within the family, many of whom are buried in Seal Church, for a hundred years. It was in 1669 that it was sold to Sir Charles Bickerstaffe who obtained a licence to enclose the Park, which consisted of about 364 acres lying within Seal Parish. Here he rebuilt a mansion house on the site and named it the Wildernesse.

Bickerstaffe lived far beyond his means and by 1697 was seriously in debt. He obtained permission by Act of Parliament to sell his estates by lottery, but his plan was abortive. There were various court cases against Bickerstaffe, including one by lawyer Serjeant Pratt who eventually became the Lord Chief Justice and the next owner of Wildernesse.

In the mid-18th century, the southern end of the present house was built and fifty years later, the house was enlarged.

In 1884, the house was bought by Charles Henry Mills of Hillingdon who later became Baron Hillingdon. The house was enlarged again and an immense amount of work was carried out. Baron Hillingdon built his own gasworks as well as a laundry and an orphanage from where he employed many of his staff. He was a great philanthropist and eventually gave the allotments, recreation ground and village hall to Seal. In 1890, he founded a Golf Club, Wildernesse, which formed the beginnings of the present Wildernesse and Knole Golf Clubs.

During the First World War, the garages were turned into two wards to take 24 wounded, and there was a supplementary ward for nine beds in the house. Following the war, it was decided that the property should be sold. In 1923, Wildernesse was sold to a syndicate, becoming a Country Club and Golf Course which had, as an early brochure states, "probably the most palatial nineteenth hole in England". After use as a sector hospital during the Second World War, Wildernesse continued as a Country Club until 1954 when it was sold to RLSB and became known as Dorton House.

Scout Troop Report 2015

Sheila Burgin, Scout Leader

We currently have around 20 scouts arranged in 4 patrols. We have had little change throughout the last year.

There are many opportunities for Scouts at district, county and national level to develop their interests and make new friends.

Last summer 8 scouts participated in our summer camp in Dorset, trying new activities and visiting Brownsea Island, the birthplace of scouting this completed some challenge badges and awards.

The autumn term included group camp at our HQ where Scouts share with Beavers and Cubs, and a Christmas camp held at Wilberforce campsite in Southeast London, while the summer term has included many activities away from the hut being outdoors as much as possible. Most recently, those who attended the Big Night Out shared many activities as well as camping and cooking for themselves.

Throughout the year we have worked towards the creative and global challenges as well as the traditional scouting skills. We have been climbing at the Kent county climbing wall and some scouts took that further by attending the county badge training day. There was a district master at arms day where scouts did archery and rifle shooting also a Patrol leaders training day to benefit scouts aspiring to such a position.