



“THE COOT”

HAPPY CHRISTMAS



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LETTER FROM THE GROUP SCOUT MASTER (GSM)



As I attended the Scout summer camp in France and as I also compile this newsletter, this edition is a special to record that event. However, before that content, I need to address an issue on the front page, as the back page has proven ineffective. I do have to spell this out, as I will not accept any criticism that I and the other leaders have not adequately advised in a timely manner. If someone comes to me and says, “if only you had asked”, I will probably punch their lights out! Not politically correct, but trust me, heart felt.

Our Scout Group will soon be in a position to build a new Scout Hut on a larger area of land at our Carrington Lane site. We have a virtually new minibus and a large coach, both of which will serve us well for many years. We have had, up until now, a structure of administration and funding that has allowed us to achieve whatever camps, expeditions and activities we have felt appropriate for our sections at a very low cost for those youngsters who have wanted to go. We have camping equipment that is adequate in quantity and being worn out through use, which is good. It is being replaced when thrifty opportunities are found. We are looking at the potential for securing a good future for the Group, for as long as parents want it to exist and are willing to support it.

Now, there is the point of my letter. “For as long as parents want it to exist and are willing to support it”.

Our group has been running for 15 years now and was started from absolutely nothing by the parents at that time who wanted Traditional Scouting for their children. Some of those parents are still represented in the leaders currently with the Group and our Treasurer. The leaders, who run our Group, just like the officers of our traditional association, The Baden-Powell Scouts Association, are all volunteers; parents just like you, no more, no less. Not one is paid, subsidised or expensed in any way. We all have jobs that we cannot afford to lose, families, other interests, hobbies and other commitments, no less than you. Time taken to prepare and run weekly meeting and camps is our time, donated.

Over the past 15 years parents have energetically participated in fund raising, soliciting grants, repairing and maintaining the Scout Hut, and keeping our vehicles on the road in a safe condition for their children. Great things have been achieved. All costs of running those vehicles have been found from fund raising with no charge ever added to the cost of any trip for any youngster. That has, until this year, included ferry costs. This year was the first time we broke £100.00 Pounds as a charge for a 10 day camp. This year, for the first time the £2,018.00 ferry cost had to be included in the camp fee! We are now at a stage when we no longer have any vestige of that infrastructure of support. In the past we have had periods when the leaders have been the backbone of that effort but it has fluctuated and worked; up until now.

It is ironic that at a time when we have the best potential to secure a future for our Group that will be easier to maintain, we are at the end of the ability of those willing to continue. The leaders are on their own having provided their services for many years, not just a two-year period, some of us for more than the 15 years of our Group, for me it is 25 years. We did try to close the Group once and were convinced by parents to continue and we did get great support for a time. Michele and I will be retiring from the Group in 2011, as will several other long standing personnel. We will still be around to help on occasions, but we will no longer be there to make things happen. Acceptable replacements for us need to be identified and the Group support structure needs to improve if it is to continue.

Richard











BLACKWATER VALLEY BADEN POWELL SCOUTS CAMP LE GRAND CHALAIS JULY 2009 REPORT FROM THE FRENCH END!

This is intended for all Scouts, Adult Helpers and Leaders, and all families of those who took part in the Camp at our farm, le Grand Chalais at Pressignac in France during July 2009.

The camp took place in a large, enclosed field close to our farmhouse in the tiny hamlet of le Grand Chalais. Scouts only left the field to collect fresh water or to empty latrines, both at our house, a distance of 200 metres. Or when they went to the beach, on hike or to the canoeing expedition on the R Vienne. They carried out all sorts of traditional scouting activities including flag break and flag down ceremonies daily, camp cooking, area inspections and a Scouts' Own Service on the Sunday. Six Scouts successfully completed a 24 mile hike with full kit in temperatures which reached 30°C+ during the day. They wisely set off on the second day at 6 am to complete the return leg. All Scouts took part in a 6 km canoe trip down river, in twin "sit-on" canoes (and only some of the adults fell in.) There was a mock campfire with songs, poems and sketches but without an actual fire due to local restrictions.

In addition, as part of a busy programme, the scouts carried out a number of projects on our land, all of which involved handling axes, felling saws and various gardening and "lumber" tools. They cleared an overgrown and blocked ditch of weeds, brambles and long grass, cleared away areas of timber and repaired a wooden bridge in the field. Under very careful supervision, they felled two trees and reduced the trees to manageable sized logs and sticks.

Leaders carried out testing in badge work including Public Speaking, Art, Use of hand axe and saws, Athletics and others. Badges were awarded to the successful scouts by the Mayor of the Commune. He visited the campsite on the last night, with his wife and a neighbour who had helped prepare the field. All the visitors were very impressed by what they saw; the tool-use sites, the patrol areas with tents, cooking areas and dining shelters and were heard to mutter (in French!) that they wished there was a local Scout Group for their grandchildren.

You will no doubt hear all sorts of "war stories" from the scouts. They worked hard and played hard. They were a delight to know and a credit to their leaders, their parents and families, to the Scout Movement and, dare we suggest, to the Nation. They were all well motivated and seemed to take a pleasure in everything they did, even latrine emptying! They were well led by a group of outstanding adult leaders and helpers and I have no hesitation in passing on that piece of information to parents and families at home.

Thanks must go to the members of the Group who did not attend – Treasurer, Secretary, fund raisers etc without whom the camp would not have taken place. And for the Scouts and those who did not take part, for whatever reason - your turn will come, perhaps in a couple of years.

Our only comment on what was otherwise an exceptionally well run and successful camp is concerning funds. We know that money is tight – it is for us in France too, with the falling Pound/Euro rate – but fund raising for such an undertaking is essential. The Scouts could have taken advantage of other water borne activities in the area but funds just didn't run to it, even with the special deals organised by your writer ("head of extortion" and a Scot!). We are not sure if the leaders who were here would have wanted to do more but the opportunity was there. Lack of funds prevented the activities taking place.

All-in-all, a great camp, blessed with glorious sunshine, not only from above but in their faces. Lots achieved, in the highest traditions of the B-P Scout Movement. A good result.

Yours aye,

Craig & Mary McColville

SAM CODY BEAVER'S HISTORY NIGHT



The Medieval Society members really enjoyed doing the night for the Beavers and felt very welcomed by them.



A suggestion for a return in the future is for the Tudor period with the Beavers being given bows and arrows!! + a bigger bang!



“THE COOT”

UNIFORM

Association unique items are held in stock but not in great numbers as it is sold as close to cost as possible and we do not have the funds available. Please do therefore remember to include payment with uniform orders.

AROUND & ABOUT THE HUT

Our hut roof is again leaking badly along the back wall inside the hut (left hand long wall as you go in). Also, new lights are ready to install. If any parents are willing to make further repairs please do let Richard know.

SITUATIONS VACANT



The families and friends of those in the Group run our Group. Like our Association, all are volunteers. If you can help and participate in running the Group to keep our flag flying in any way please step forward.

- Fund Raising

NO FUND RAISING COMMITTEE AT THIS TIME

*If you are in any doubt about whether or not your assistance and participation is needed and will make a difference, **please know that it will.***

- Grants committee

NO GRANTS COMMITTEE AT THIS TIME

- Hut Maintenance & gardening

NO HUT MAINTENANCE TEAM AT THIS TIME

- Transport

BEING RUN BY THE GSM & AHMEEK

*NOTE: ALL costs of running our two vehicles are born by fund raising. No element of cost is included in the amount charged for any activity, trip, visit, camp or expedition. Insurance, tax, MOT, maintenance, repairs **and fuel** are all paid for out of fund raising (How else can you go to France for a 10 day camp at 180.00 pounds per Scout?). However, no fund raising committee = no money = no transport.*

- The COOT

BEING PRODUCED BY THE GSM

USEFUL NUMBERS

GSM – Richard Llewellyn 01276 63940

Chairman – VACANT

Treasurer – John Lewis 01252 650066

Membership – Margaret Young 01252 835014

Q'master – Mark Howarth 01252 682197

Uniform – Michele Llewellyn 01276 63940