

Third Alton Scouts Troop Report 2019-2020

Introduction

This year has been very different indeed with national and international lock-down responses to the all-pervading Covid-19 pandemic, but I hardly need tell you that, although I probably will. One day when I was a smallish Scout my Skip announced that because of foot-and-mouth disease he had not been able to get out into the country to look for a camp site so we would have to go back to the same farm as the previous year. Something similar happened in 2001 and to a lesser extent a few years later but it wasn't anything like this. Let me get on with what the Scouts got up to rather than tell you why we might not have done things.

Austria

Last summer's long-anticipated camp in Austria was part of a much larger enterprise involving just over fifty Scouts, Explorers and leaders from other groups in Rotherfield Scout District. Everyone involved had spent a good eighteen months' fund-raising and team-building. It got off to a hectic start after our airline cancelled our out-bound flights a matter of hours before our scheduled departure because of bad weather over southern Europe. With much dedicated work by many people we got to our camp-site only a day



behind schedule and were able to pick up the threads. The camp-site was at Pfadfinderdorf (Scout village) Zellhof near Salzburg and we were on a multi-national site with many different nationalities of Scouts including Austrian, German, Irish and French groups. During the day each group had its own activities but in the evenings there were many cultural exchanges: games, singing, national food tasting – a good job 3rd Alton know how to cook! Our own activities included: white-water rafting, canyoning, cycling, rodelbahn (summer tobogganing), high-ropes, sight-seeing in Salzburg, sailing and wind-surfing. The camp-site was beautifully situated between three large lakes making it ideal for these latter activities.

Cranbury Park

Back home we got virtually the whole Troop out for camp in September at the Chandler's Ford Scout District's camp site at Cranbury Park. We have never camped there before and found it a very good site. There were plenty of new places to explore and the Scouts excelled themselves in their patrol meals. We had good support from our parents too with both Jamie Kilner-Smith and Mike Severs coming along to help keep everything on a straight keel – and join in the fun of course!



Autumn Term

In the autumn term there was a considerable amount of badge-work including the World Challenge and Environmental Conservation badges. This saw a good number of Scouts team up with the Alton Society to take part in one of their community litter picks. Unfortunately because of my work commitments we could not manage a mountain weekend at half-term but the troop helped run



a barbecue fund-raiser for the group at Chawton fireworks. We did however achieve Nights Away credits with a night hike/sleep-over and a stay in London on the Lord Amory Scout training ship. For the latter we had a special early opening



of the Old Operating Theatre and apothecaries' garret at St Thomas's Hospital – most interesting and certainly not for the squeamish – and visits to the London Transport Museum and RAF Museum (where incidentally I found a photo of my own uncle taken during his service in WWII). Here the Scouts were able to work towards their Air Researcher badges and we had great difficulty prying them out when the time came to depart. The term finished with a trip to the escape room in Basingstoke. I think everyone managed to get out and that no-one was permanently locked in.



Spring Term



The term started off well enough in the New Year, albeit with most activities based indoors and based on continuing badge-work. One time we did get out was for a work party on the embankment where Scouts, parents and leaders worked on the ongoing maintenance. The winter is a good time for us to sort out the undergrowth and do tidying up in general.

A patrol entered the County Fair Trade cooking competition aiming to repeat their first place of last year but were pipped at the post and didn't quite carry it off this time. Nevertheless they made a good effort, prepared a very good meal and acquitted themselves very well.

The term continued through half term including a food miles pizza evening. Each patrol had to make a pizza trading off the food miles of the ingredients (sourced from twelve countries in five continents) against culinary attraction. There are some interesting and difficult choices to make.

Our last major event was the Monopoly Run. This was held in London at the beginning of March and across the Scouts and Explorers we entered a record (for us) six teams. All the teams played good games and ended the day with positive funds. In total some 700 teams each with up to seven members from all parts of the country took part and many went into Monopoly overdraft. Some Scouts went just for the day and others stayed overnight on the Lord Amory before and after the event.

After the Monopoly Run we had but one more meeting together, a wide game at Kingsley, before we were instructed not to meet up face-to-face because of the Covid-19 epidemic.

Scouting in Lock-down

Since the middle of March (I am writing this in early June) all our Scouting has been conducted in a new way by holding on-line meetings and encouraging Scouts to complete a number of personal challenges, badges and activities which are provided as downloadable resources. We have kept on-line meetings running regularly on Thursday evenings and these have included quizzes, ideas for projects to do at home such as indoor micro-pioneering, indoor camping, a special Jamboree-on-the-Internet. Several Scouts have worked towards badges such as the Great Indoors Challenge (itself building on other existing badges) by doing art and craft at home, camping in all sorts of places, cooking for their families, etc. I do not want the friendship and spirit of Scouting to dissipate just because we cannot get together in person.

Unfortunately some events have been cancelled, we were scheduled to go cycling in France and all ideas of camping have been shelved until a) it is permitted and b) the special nature of traditional Scout camping has been addressed and we can do it safely. We had a working day and sea trip on the historic steam ship SS Shieldhall planned for May and this too has been postponed indefinitely. If all that sounds rather gloomy then the positive aspects are that our Scouts are all healthy and resilient.

Thank You

Let me finish with a word or two of thanks to our leaders: Frances, Nicki, Gordon and Paul and Young Leader Jack who now plans to go to university. I must also say thanks to all the other leaders in the group, especially Terry who has just completed twenty-five years as our Group Scout Leader and Matt, one of our own, a member of Third Alton boy and man, who will take over from him and all the Mums and Dads for their support in all sorts of ways.

Finally let me say thank you too to all the key workers, I know that in our Scouting community we have several families with members who hold various key roles and their work is very much appreciated.

Adam Brook,

Scout Leader, 3rd Alton Scouts

