

Third Alton Scouts Troop Report 2020-21

Introduction

It's time for me to reflect on another Scouting year, and what a year. This time last year we had spent two or three months in lock-down because of the various restrictions imposed to try and limit the spread and effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. However before then we were running our normal range of Scouting activities. In a typical year our troop members can achieve up to twenty nights away in various ways (including overseas trips), sometimes even more, and unfortunately this year has seen none of this activity. For the first time in forty years our troop has missed summer camp two years running; we prepared to go away at spring half term and everything was ready: deposits paid, ferries, campsite and activities booked, etc but, sadly, to no avail. If we had not prepared and restrictions had eased enough then there would not have been time to organise the camp, we had to be ready to go. I very much expect that the situation improves for next year.



Keeping Going in Lock-down

Third Alton kept Scouting going through the long months of lock-down and for everyone this proved to be so challenging, but what are Scouts if not resourceful and ready to rise to a challenge?



In our case we ran on-line Zoom meetings and encouraged Scouts to do various badges at home such as the Great Indoors Badge. We also arranged a number of external presentations on topics, Alison Steele from NatureTrek in Chawton and Joe Doherty from the Hampshire Scout Expeditions to the South Pole both gave very stimulating talks – you can tell, the questions kept rolling in. Scouts were encouraged to join in on-line meetings such as the international Jamboree-on-the-Air/Internet and a number of county-run ones such as the Big Campfire. JOTA/JOTI was run twice this year (normally it is an annual



event). Some on-line games were very popular, particularly ones which could be customised with local information.

Some of the downsides of on-line Scouting related to the amount of screen time Scouts were having. Sometimes a Scout would be on-line doing school work from 08:30 for several hours and the extra time needed to take part in one of our meetings was just too much for some. We generally planned shorter on-line meetings but sometimes there was so much enthusiasm that we were still going a long time after we planned – at least no Scout had to travel home late.



One great benefit was that all our adult leaders have jobs which enable on-line home working so there was no rush to escape the office and commute home. In this way we welcomed Mike Severs into the leadership. Mike has a strong Scouting background but had only been able to help out on weekends away, so it has been really helpful to have him join us. On a personal note, I painted a new sign for the Den as a lock-down project, which I hope, while perhaps not quite to Michelangelo standards, has helped raise the tone.

Returning to Face-to-Face Scouting

Face-to-face Scouting, i.e. the sort of Scouting which has been run world-wide since 1907, returned briefly in the autumn term until half term and then again after Easter this year. Following government rules and guidelines The Scout Association has been moving cautiously so at the time of writing all camping and residential except for very small back-packing groups have not yet been permitted. However, limited face-to-face meetings have taken place and have proved extremely popular. Last autumn's meetings took advantage of newly installed outdoor lighting to allow half the troop to meet inside and half outside, this was a requirement for keeping our groups small and separated.



We have had quite a variety of meetings, these often involving cooking and food, shelter building in our woodland area and pioneering in the John Thurman tradition.

Resuming face-to-face Scouting after Easter meant that we needed to establish new patrols with new patrol leaders and assistants or seconds. All but two (both with sports training clashes on troop night) of the Scouts who were on the books a year ago are still in the troop or have moved on to Explorers. For the first time in many years we have also been able to accept a significant number of new Scouts as direct entrants into the troop, this has raised our numbers and is making our young patrol leaders really work hard to build up their patrols. Some of our new Scouts live quite a distance away from the town and I think this reflects well on us. When we can get camping again and join activities in larger groups we will be in a really good position, let's hope the next year brings this normality back.



Thank You



Let me finish with a big word of thanks to our leaders: Mike, Gordon and Paul and Young Leader Toby. Without all their support we would not have been able to hold weekly face-to-face meetings last autumn and the quality of our Scouting would have been considerably lower. I would also like to say thank you to Nicki who has been a leader with us and committed to making a thirty mile round trip on Thursday evenings while one of

her children was in the troop. I must also say thanks to all the other leaders in the group 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

