

1st Stotfold Ridgway Scout Troop

The Scouts have had a very successful year and taken part in lots of activities and events.

Five Scouts achieved their Chief Scout Gold Award. James Evans, Adam Fox, Ashley Kirby and Darren Way received theirs from Roy Snell, ADC Scouts, at the Christmas Party and Ben Cave is receiving his at this years AGM.

To celebrate this achievement we departed from the traditional windswept parts of the Peak District and instead travelled to Baden-Powell House in London. With this excellent accommodation as a base we visited the Natural History and Science Museums. Leicester Square and boated up the Thames to Greenwich.

The Scout programme of activities centres around the eight challenges and this year we have tackled six of them.

The Outdoor Challenge is mandatory for the Chief Scout Gold Award and requires the Scouts to spend a weekend away doing "proper camping". We went to Phasels Wood in September last year and had a very successful camp with about 20 Scouts. They put up their tents, cooked on different camping stoves, made camping gadgets, took part in pot holing and crate building, performing at a camp fire and many other activities. This was a very enjoyable weekend and I was "proud of them".

Three of the older Scouts attempted the Outdoor Plus Challenge this year which is a first for Stotfold.

The Community Challenge requires the Scouts to research a local community project and to carry out about six hours of community service. Our local project was Stotfold Mill, and we had two excellent visits to the renovated mill and saw, among many things, the superb work of our very own Assistant Group Scout Leader! Community service was carried out at the Mill weekend where we set up a games tent for the whole weekend and at Roecroft School, where we made two flower beds and laid shingle around various borders to prevent weed growth.

The Creative Challenge has six sections and the Scouts are required take part and complete three of them. We tackled t-shirt making and clay modelling in the crafts section, a quiz night and treasure hunt in the problem solving section and a drama night in the performing section. What creative Scouts we have!

The Global Challenge requires the Scouts to take part in an international event and to consider two global issues. We asked Anish if he would plan one of our meetings and he and his Dad did a great evening of food tasting. We learned how to cook a poppadoms and paratas properly in an open flame and experienced some really hot curry sauce. We have just completed two free trade evenings where we looked at the issues of trading with the third world and how Free Trade gives people an opportunity to make a reasonable living from their hard work. We also got to try out some of the Free Trade produce like biscuits and sweets!

This year we have attempted the Adventure Challenge for the first time. Here the Scouts have to participate in three “adventures”. Our first adventure was to circumnavigate the 13 miles of the Letchworth Greenway on Bicycles. The second adventure was a Night Hike of about seven miles which ended up at the County Camp site in Bromham. Our third adventure will be a hike from the Scouts Hut, with full pack.

We must obviously look at the Fitness Challenge soon so that we do not all become over-weight and sluggish!

We have camped for 16 nights since the last AGM. We attended BigJam06 at Boyd Field in June and Summer camp at Charnwood, Leicestershire in August. Our Outdoor Challenge in September was followed by the Scout Hut Activity Camp in November. Unfortunately we could not go to Winter Camp this year, but visited Baden-Powell House, the Lesley Sell Activity Centre in Bromham and the 100BC Camp at Phasels Wood.

We once again carried out bag packing, along with the Explorers, at the Co-op over in the run up to Christmas. This is an opportunity for the Scouts and Explorers to raise some money for the troop and for their own Scouting activities as we split the money donated in the collecting boxes between the Scout Troop and Explorer Unit and among the participants for Scouting activities.

1st Stotfold Ridgway Scouts entered the Challenge 100 activities at the start of the year as part of the centenary celebrations. This was 100 minutes of activities to find the top 100 patrols in the country. Unfortunately, we did not score enough points to qualify, but over 3,000 patrols entered and our highest patrol, Hawkes, only just failed to qualify.

We have also taken part in air rifle shooting, archery, Quasar, Ten Pin Bowling, a visit to Topsy Turvy World, ice skating at Planet Ice in Milton Keynes, dry slope skiing at Bassingbourne Barracks, Rocknasium in Bedford and Karting in Letchworth.

Our Scout troop lost its inspirational Scout Leader in August when the “elderly” Charles Kilby retired at the tender age of 25 years! Charles had lead the troop for five years and enthused us all in what was actually possible in Scouting if you just believe.

I took over at Easter as Scout Leader and tried to put in place a system which would allow us to continue to deliver an interesting and varied programme for the Scouts, but within the physical limitations of “normal human beings”. After all Charles’ commitment and energy was superhuman and none of us left had these powers.

However, I am delighted to say that we have managed to find a whole host of committed and dedicated adults who are now delivering our full and varied programme.

I am Scout Leader for the troop, which meets on two evenings (Monday and Tuesday). Brian Way ASL and myself run the Monday group and Peter Evans ASL and Graham Watson ASL run the Tuesday group. This situation may change when people completed their Leaders training.

We are blessed with 10 helpers. Steve Jackman, Jane Samms and Shaun Simmonds are helpers with the Monday group and Anton Allen, Stuart Purdie, Rob Thornley, Amanda Comley, Avi Trivedi and Anne Webster are helpers with the Tuesday group. Most have completed their helpers

training. I am delighted to say that I invested my "biggest" Scout ever a few weeks ago when Anton moved into uniform. Perhaps another ASL?

I wish to extend my unending thanks to all these people for the help, encouragement and support they have given me during the year. Also a special thanks to Lynn Way who keeps the Scouts books, deals with all the money and the never ending lists of who is attending what.

And so to the future ... The Scout Troop is in a strong position at the present time, with 40 Scouts, 5 uniformed leaders and nine helpers. We are financially strong and have an interesting and active programme. There are up to ten people on the waiting list for Scouts and some have been there for a while. This is a concern and a problem we have not been able to address as I always give Cubs moving to Scouts priority over those on the waiting list. It may be possible to accommodate some of those on the waiting list after Christmas when several of the Tuesday Scouts will leave.

1st Stotfold Ridgway Scout troop is now open to both boys and girls from January 2007, although we do not have any girls in the troop at present. There are girls on the waiting list and in Cubs. I see the advent of girls as an opportunity which will enhance our troop, but it will provide us with different challenges and I am particularly keen to have female leaders at all meetings when we finally accept girls.

So I end with another opportunity for anyone reading this report. If you have 1½ hours a week spare, a realisation that you need to do something different and are female (I will still take any males also), then come along and help me with the Scouts. After all last year I drove a kart in Letchworth, crawled through a pot hole at Phasel Wood, stayed up until 3 in the morning on the Night Hike, found out that I could actually ice skate, scored a "turkey" at bowling, and realised that in my mid fifties I am still a child at heart.

Nick Peace

Scout Leader

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