



Scouts

Grafton

Annual Report 2024

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District Lead Volunteer's Report

We've achieved a lot as a District in the last year which has been great to see!

I was able to visit a number of AGMs and whilst I knew what amazing things our volunteers were putting on for our young people, it really brought home quite how much we do do but we also need to shout about it more!

It was amazing to welcome a number of members to various District teams, including Team Leaders, Squirrels Support and Group Lead Volunteers.

I was delighted with the response we had to the District Development Day, and it was great to see so many people there shaping the direction we take as a District. I personally feel that we have an ambitious but workable plan that if we execute in the right way, we'll take the District forward hugely. The plan underpins nearly everything that we're doing as a District and therefore my thanks go out to all of the District teams who are working hard in the background to make it happen and I'm confident that we'll continue to see positive outputs.

It has however been a very sad year saying goodbye to 1st Houghton, and the formal closure of both Paulerspury Scout Group and the District Scout Band. Whilst these have been extremely difficult decisions, they were unfortunately the right ones for the District to ensure that we could effectively deploy our resources.

We started off 2024 by welcoming 1st Hardingsome into the District which as original members of Castle Ashby, was great to welcome them "back" into the District.

As always, January brought the annual census and we reported a headline growth figure of +13.21% (+14.03% or 149 young people and +10% or 27 adults), this was thanks to Hardingsome joining us with our like for like growth being -3.15%, losing 21 young people and 21 adults.

We last saw a decrease in 2021, and 2015 before that, and although a decrease is not what we want to see, it was positive to see that even on a like for like basis, our Leadership (so adults working in the sections) grew by 4.35%.

I was delighted when I received an email from Pattishall in March saying that they wanted to open a Squirrel Drey, and they had their first meeting in May. Growth will of course remain a priority for us as a District but in a sustainable way, and by focusing on our existing provision too, not just opening new. We have ambitious plans, including open DREYS, so I look forward to seeing these come to fruition.

January, February and March were busy months for the District Programme Team with the Cub Totempole Competition held in January, the Scout Expedition in February and the Beaver Party in March. I was really pleased to be able to visit all 3 events and could see how much the young people enjoyed themselves, so my thanks go to the team for organising these and to the leaders for bringing their young people.

Transformation is ongoing and who knows when we'll see an end, but the resilience of volunteers has shone once again and I know that when the time comes, we'll make it work in the very best way. I was really pleased to see a number of you at the Trustee Workshops that we ran, and we will of course run similar sessions when more changes start to filter through.

We continue to lead the way with training with our eLearning site for both adult volunteers and young leaders being used all across the country, from Scotland to Dorset. Mandatory Ongoing Learning will continue to be a huge focus for the District and whilst this may mean making some hard decisions on occasion, it is the right thing to do to protect our young people.

As I finish writing this report, I want to say a huge thank you to all of the amazing volunteers within Grafton – you all do a wonderful job and even if you don't work directly with young people, you're still enabling them to learn Skills for Life. I've said since the day I took on the role of District Commissioner that we as a District solely exist to support you and make your lives as easy as possible so I urge you to get involved with District meetings and events as without your input, we can't do our job effectively.

Will Hazell
District Lead Volunteer

District Chair's Report

The continuing changes that are involved with transformation are gradually being implemented and becoming familiar to everyone. Change is never easy as it is unfamiliar, but I am confident that Will and his leadership team will continue to see you all through this time effectively. They have had a difficult year and despite this are working through the problems that arise. For Will and the groups to continue to adjust and adapt to the changes the need is ever greater for Volunteers, and this, as you are aware, implies to all areas of the scout movement. Please do all you can to encourage anyone you know to be involved in scouting. There are new groups emerging and the future looks exciting.

It has been an honour and a great pleasure for me to be a part of Grafton District Scouts in different roles for over 10 years, but now I sadly recognise that a younger person, with more energy, and amongst other things, computer skills(!), is needed to carry Grafton District Trustee Board forward. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as Chair and will miss being involved with all that scouting stands for, but I will especially miss the comradeship. I am certain Will, and his team will fulfil their roles away and above what they entail, and especially Will. He has proved that in the past year by all he had done. I wish Will, his team, the trustees, and local groups and all of you with roles in the District every success and thank you all for all you do for Scouting, and especially what you give to the young people. You are giving those young people skills and enjoyment that will be of benefit to them throughout their lives. Thank you and thank you too for the support you have given to me.

Happy Scouting!!!

Rosemary Shaw
District Chair

Beaver Scout Report

Beaver numbers are continuing to grow throughout the District, we have a total of 18 colonies with three groups running 2 Colonies each, however in some groups numbers have dropped slightly. Local primary schools in some areas are reporting a low intake of young people in reception and year 1, this I believe is having an impact on some of the village groups.

Last year in May we ran a District day trip for 113 Beavers and 30 leaders to Conker's, a discovery and adventure park in the heart of the National Forest Derbyshire. The Beavers and the adults had a great time den building, exploring the woodlands, getting wet feet on the bare foot trail, eating ice creams and tackling all the adventure play areas, rope walks, tree top walks and having a great day out. A lot of very tired Beavers and Leaders at the end of the day.

In March this year we held our annual Beaver Party at Roade Village Hall. Where 80 Beavers and 20 Leaders had fun dancing and playing games with Andy from ABI Entertainment and we had a visit from a very excited Billy Beaver, numerous hot dogs, cakes and a copious amount of squash were consumed by equally excited Beavers.

We're excited about the opportunities to engage young people in our District. While our current attendance numbers may not fully reflect our potential, we're eager to tailor our events to better suit your interests. This is your District, and your input is invaluable. Let us know what activities you'd like to see, and we'll do our best to make them happen. Keep in mind that some events require extensive planning, so your feedback helps us prepare in advance. Hannah and I are committed to delivering truly memorable Scouting experiences for your Beaver scouts in the upcoming year.

Many thanks to all the leaders for all of your time and hard work you have put in for the young people and also to those leaders who have supported us throughout the last year.

Yours in Scouting,

Carol & Hannah Fraser
Programme Team Members (Beavers)

Cub Scout Report

On looking back at my report in 2023 I started by saying 'I cannot believe twelve months have gone by' and I honestly think the last twelve months have gone by faster than ever!

I was very pleased to see a number of groups attend the County Cub Camp on one of the hottest weekends in June 2023. By all accounts, the young people attending had a fantastic weekend.

I was able to attend a number of AGM's during the year, which gave me an opportunity to catch up and meet all the leaders and also to see Cubs taking part in activities.

It is very difficult to arrange a leaders meeting as every night is taken up by Cub meetings, but we eventually managed to get a few leaders together in July, which proved to be a very productive meeting.

We eventually managed to run the Totempole competition at Blisworth Scout Hall, with seven groups attending and it was a fantastic afternoon. We had a visit from Mick Turton who was the leader who started the competition over 40 years ago. The afternoon took a slightly different format to previous events and all those attending enjoyed themselves and it was pleasing to have fantastic feedback from the young people and leaders. Many thanks to all the leaders who helped before and during the afternoon - Roy Cooper, Steve Smith, Debbie Adams, Will Hazell, Carol and Hannah Fraser, plus the leaders who brought their Cubs.

We are holding a hike in June at Castle Ashby by kind permission of Lord Northampton, which will have taken place as you read this report, so I'm hoping it will have gone well and been enjoyed.

I am very proud of all the leaders and helpers for running such wonderful programmes, with so many young people achieving so many awards and badges. You all do an amazing job - so well done and thank you !

Anne Oram
Programme Team Member (Cubs)

Spotley Wood Campsite Report

This year the site has continued to run smoothly, and I would like to start my report by thanking Ken Underwood for all the work he carried out as the previous Warden and for his invaluable support to me taking over as the new warden in November 2023. Thanks also go to Mike Ladd, Jon Owen and Bob Gibson for their help and support. Much appreciated 😊

Bob's help with the booking system has also been gratefully received and we hope bookings continue to improve this coming year. Since April, we have taken 7 bookings, although one of these did have to leave early due to terrible weather and ground conditions. We have another prospective 14 bookings in the diary up to the end of October.

The site is in a much better state both financially and facility wise than it was back in 2005 when Ken first took up post as Spotley Warden and it is great that he will continue to be part of the team for this coming year too.

Drainage work has now been completed and we are hoping that the site will benefit from this in the future. In January, we re-laid the existing pathways and in February, Compton estates, after completing a tree survey, felled relevant trees. This was done prior to nesting season to ensure no damage to any nests that might be built in them.

Fire extinguishers were checked in January 2024, and at the time of writing, we are in the process of arranging PAT testing and required gas safety checks.

Weekly checks and general maintenance are carried out by team members, and we have noted that some of the brick work could do with being re-pointed in the not-too-distant future so we will look into this in the coming year.

Hopefully, groups will continue to make use of Spotley Campsite and all it has to offer. It is an important asset to our District, and we hope more groups can be encouraged to come for a visit in the future.

Martin Hammond
Warden



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