

ROWBOAT
AGLIDING PARASCENDING FONT
HBALL QUADBIKING GRAFT BUILDING ROWING SAILING
LLING SHOOTING SINGLE PITCH CLIMBING SKIING SNORKELLING SNOWBO
REETSPORTS SUBAQUA SURFING SWIMMING WATERSKIING WHITEWATER RAFTIN
RFING ZORBING ABSEILING AERIAL RUNWAY ARCHERY BALLOONING BANDS BOULI

1ST HALTON SCOUT GROUP

AGM 23rd Nov 2021



1st Halton Beavers Report 2020 - 2021

After a break during the Autumn term 2020 and over winter, the Beaver Colony restarted our online sessions in March 2021 with a core group of 6 beavers and their fabulous families supporting. We focussed on learning about Our World, finding out about Beaver Scouts around the world, attempted a family online Escape Room (officially we're still locked in the virtual scout hut!) and had an easter biscuit online bake-a-long.

After Easter, and with lots of additional planning and risk assessments, we started back to face to face meetings. The restart led to an influx of new starters and the Colony rapidly grew in size from 6 to 17 over the course of one term.

Our main project during the summer term was the Community Impact badge where Beavers studied the impact of declining number of bees and other pollinators on the world around us and engaged in activities to support the sustainability of bee populations both as individuals and as part of our wider community. The Beavers made their own solitary bee houses, bee drinking fountains and planted a bee friendly plant to take home. They had a visit from Lune Valley Bee Keepers, collected seeds and planted seedlings at the Hermitage Field Community Meadow and entered the BBC Radio 2 Big bee Challenge to design a bee friendly garden for a children's hospital. They have also worked together to build a larger bug house for the scout hut grounds, a project that is ongoing and will be picked up again after the winter.

Sadly for me, but perhaps not for him, William, our Assistant Leader, left us to start University in Nottingham at Easter. He hasn't left scouting however, having taken up a role of District Youth Commissioner in his university district and he still returns to visit when he can. He even helped teach fire lighting skills to the Beavers in July. His departure has left us short of leaders. However, the parents, as always, have stepped in, with some becoming DBS checked, to ensure that we could have sufficient authorised adults to keep running our sessions. For this I am truly grateful.

So far the Autumn Term programme has focussed on introducing the new starters to the Colony's routines and ceremonies and, supporting the older children to achieve their Chief Scout Bronze Award. We have also been celebrating the 35th Birthday of Beaver Scouts, accepting the District Beaver Challenge of 35 different activities related to the number 35 to be completed by the end of the year including such fun as wearing 35 different items of clothing all at the same time, keeping two balloons in the air for 35 seconds and building 35cm towers out of spaghetti and marshmallows!

From 6th September 2021 The Scouts moved to Green in the COVID readiness framework meaning restrictions on numbers, travelling together on trips and restrictions on overnight/residential trips were lifted as a further step towards normality. We have not yet ventured as far as planning any overnight events, but hope to be able to offer this in Spring 2022 along with some visits away from the hut.

Sorrel (Weasel)



Cubs

What an unusual and very challenging year it has been for us all in scouting. Having to find new ways to continue scouting in the section, some successful and some not. Having to do numerous risk assessments for every activity and meeting and not being able to guarantee whether cubs will be on or not until the very last minute because of someone testing positive. Having low numbers of children at weekly meetings due to positive tests we have somehow managed to keep going and are now doing well and nearly back to where we were before lockdown. On a positive note, it has given the leaders time to sit back and reflect on past experiences and how we move forward from this, it's made us think outside the box to get activities planned and then completed. It has made us all think out staying safe and looking after one another, and I'm now pretty good at writing risk assessments for just about any activity.

It was late April when we got the go-ahead to meet back indoors with scouting, and it couldn't have come at a better time. We had struggled on with some activities on-line and by email but nothing beats meeting your friends and playing some games. The first night back was a little strange for everyone but we all went home with smiles on our faces as things were beginning to get back to normal.

From May to July, we managed to fit in some indoor games, a bit of navigation, some air activities, orienteering, an obstacle course, some wide games in the woods, athletics, fire-lighting, a look at nature, a visit from the bee keepers, some outdoor games and a BBQ, all safely risk assessed and covid safe. The number of cubs in attendance varied from week to week and there were many who didn't come back when we re-started.

Since May, our numbers have increased from 9 to 18.

We had a break for the month of August and re-started back in mid-September. Covid risk assessments are a thing of the past but we still have to take precautions for every activity we do as Covid is still with us and will probably be for many years. Cub numbers are pretty steady each week and we are now trying to catch up on 18 months of badgework that has been missed. Since September we have managed some indoor

games, an evening on first aid, we've planted some spring bulbs in pots and outside, we completed team challenges, had a senses night with food tasting, completed the road safety badge, looked at bones and internal organs of the body and made pitta pizzas which went down very well with the cubs.

Since we started back in late April, I have handed out a total of 24 challenge badges, 82 activity badges and 1 Chief Scouts Silver Award to the cubs. We are now back to our normal weekly routine in cubs and it's beginning to feel like we've never been away.

Once Christmas is out of the way, sleepovers and camping are next on the list of activities to arrange and book, but that won't be until early 2022. With all the district and county camping events having been cancelled due to covid, 2022 could be a busy year for weekends away for the cubs as events are caught up on.

I'd like to say a big thank you to Lucy, our young leader with the cubs, her help each week is greatly appreciated. I'd also like to thank Ben Pritchard who has joined us to become an assistant cub leader. Thanks too go to Robert Prescott, who is also an assistant cub leader with the group and during lockdown, Robert has spent numerous hours down at the hut painting, clearing gutters, moving shelving, tidying, repairing, arranging for B4RN to be installed, ordering new doors for the building, the list of jobs he has done goes on and on. A lot of what he's done has gone unseen but it will benefit the whole group greatly for years to come.

Here's to another great scouting year.

Anne Prescott (Akela) – 17/11/2021

Scouts

Yet another difficult year with COVID restrictions in place, although at the moment things aren't too bad, but there may yet be further restrictions ahead (I'm hoping not though).

Since we started back just after Easter we have had a gradual reduction in the level of restrictions, to the point that now we only have to be watchful of maintaining cleanliness whilst still maintaining social distancing as much as we can.

The last camp that the scouts managed before the lockdown started was in February 2020 (a winter camp), it was then 18 months before we were finally able to go camping again for the Expedition challenge. We kept things local for this camp and decided to take in the beauty of the Morecambe bay coastline from Hest bank to Arnside, with detours up Warton Crag and Arnside Knott, stopping off at Silverhelme campsite overnight. It was a bit wet, but better than the weather of the original date we had it planned for.

We've been trying to do as much outdoors as possible while the COVID restrictions were in place and the children have done the orienteering routes at both Halton and

Williamson park, a photo scavenger hunt around the village, and many outdoor games in the woods and fields.

We are hoping to do a winter camp at the scout hut weather permitting, so that the children can get the opportunity to do some outdoor challenge badgework. We are also hoping to get out and do a hike around Farleton Knott in the dark, since this year's district Knight activity was cancelled because of insufficient teams entering.

I'd like to thank our two young leaders, Georgia and Sam, and my Section assistant James Denley for all their help over the last few months. Sadly, one of my Sectional assistants, James Melia (it was very confusing having two James's helping), has finished with the group as he has moved further south in the County.

I think we are all looking forward to the Christmas holidays, but as yet as a Section we haven't made any Christmas party plans.

We are also very much looking forward to the completion of the shooting range so that we can start the Master at Arms badge.

GSL Report

We have had another challenging year due to COVID, however, I think we are now turning a corner, and we haven't come out of it too badly faring better than many other groups / businesses / organisations.

Sections

During COVID there was a significant fall off in numbers as was expected, this was a nationwide phenomenon, however both Beavers and Cubs have seen exceptional growth since we have started back, and both sections are now in the high teens for numbers. The scout section has however not faired so well, our growth generally comes from cubs moving up, however, a lot of Cubs didn't progress to scouts during lockdown and have since moved on to other things, we also lost a lot of our scouts because of age. We currently only have three boys in the group, without the prospect of anyone moving up until probably around Easter next year.

Money

We have been extremely lucky this year to have had our own venue for scouting. This has allowed us to access COVID grants from the government for the hospitality and leisure sector (of which apparently we are a part of). This has allowed us to remain afloat, since without these grants the group would most likely have had to close.

We also received a grant from the CO-OP towards an air rifle shooting range. We are well on the way to getting this done, and are currently just waiting for new higher security doors to be fitted to the garage and the scout hut before we can complete the works. We are hoping to have this finished by Christmas. Robert and I have recently completed a two day training course to allow us to teach the children.

We have also been hiring out the hall (and parking area) to various groups and businesses, that has helped us financially. The hut was turned into a home for Valley church for 6 months, from December to June this year, while The Centre in Halton was shut. Also, as you have no doubt seen, BEE Adventures are using the car park for storing their minibuses.

Volunteering

As ever we are in constant need of extra volunteers. We welcomed a new assistant leader into cubs earlier in the year, but we could always do with additional helpers / leaders. Youth membership has not been the only area that has seen significant drop off during COVID, adult membership has also been significantly affected. There are now many areas in scouting that are now suffering from a lack of adult volunteers (more than we normally do).

For us at the moment our biggest need is with the Beaver group, where Sorrel is only just getting by, but this is not sustainable in the long term. All the sections would however benefit from more helpers / leaders, as this reduces the workload for the existing leaders.

If you would like to help out, even if it's just on an occasional basis, just speak to one of the leaders (or me), and we can let you know in what way you could get involved. Some roles require very little training, others require a bigger commitment, but it could be a great addition for your CV, especially as all the training costs are covered by the group. You can even get training for adventurous activities such as Archery, shooting, climbing, hill walking etc etc covered (as long as you are available to help!).

John Elliott (GSL and Scout Leader)