

# ***SITTINGBOURNE AND MILTON DISTRICT NEWS***

March 09

Dear All

Well what a terrific month for the district! I have just returned home from the district Easter egg hunt. We made a fabulous £187. This is excellent news for the district and please pass on to all those parents who bought their children along to support this event how grateful the district is. Of course these events don't happen without someone organizing them and getting everything together. This event was organized by Kathryn Shires with help from Dawn Austin. A big thank you to both of you for doing such a grand job. However a big thank you to all the other leaders who came along and helped on the day. I would like to give a particular mention to Chris Till and Julie Martin who stepped in and done a grand job on the teas and coffees. Please do make sure your parents know how much the support was appreciated.

Last weekend I spent the weekend camping with 38 Scouts on the district Lightweight hike and bike, bike ride camp. I must say I was really impressed with the effort put in by all the scouts and I hope the indication that we have gone from 25 Scouts on the last camp to 38 on this one is a sign that we are providing the right sort of activities. I know the Scouts I spoke to all seem to have enjoyed the weekend. Although I did hear a few groans on the Sunday morning whilst we were doing some exercises. I am afraid I did forget to go through the winners, mainly because I was explaining about the dangers of putting non opened tins on gas stoves! (more on this below). However the winners this time were Jack Frampton and Travis Adams from Murston and Babchild with joint place on 42 points, closely followed by Daniel and David from 4th with 40 points in second place and Louis from 5<sup>th</sup> in Third with 39 points. There was actually very little between the bottom score and the top, and I think I will have to make the marking more challenging for the next event. There were also two people who deserve a special mention Sam from 9<sup>th</sup> who did the bike ride who not only set a shining example of true Scout spirit on the bike ride but also still turned up when his mates had decided not to come on the camp. Well done SAM. Secondly a special mention to Volletti, who managed to do the hike with a pack heavy enough that many adults would have struggled to carry. There are a few lessons to learn from this camp and I hope that the young people now go back to their groups and with help from their leaders work out how they could improve their camping. Particular attention could be paid to cleanliness, the amount of kit required (it is meant to be lightweight!) and trying to get in bigger teams to enable

them to spread the load. Again a big thank you to all those leaders who came and helped on this event and well done to Kevin Grimshaw as this was the first event that Kevin had organized as ADC Scouts. Please remember any leader is welcome along on any of the district events, we are always more than happy to have anyone come along so please don't be afraid to ask.

We also had the opportunity this month to go and see the Riding Lights theatre company. I know the explorers spent an evening with them and some Scouts and guides went together to have a go at this event. I went with the explorers and found it to be well worth while. It was very thought provoking and it was interesting to see how our young people related to this performance.

The service crew day that was held this month was a great success with a great deal of work being carried out and a fine meal in the evening being cooked by Nick Tiano. It was really nice to see some new faces coming along to crew day and even more pleasing to see some of our young people coming along to help. Two Scouts were there doing some work towards their Chief Scouts gold award and have said to me they would like to continue to come and help. I would like to encourage more of this participation. It has a number of benefits. Often on Crew day there is a great opportunity to network with other leaders and a chance to get to know some of the fellowship and district team and encourages the feeling that the District is actually part of Scouting and is not remote from the Groups. On this last Crew day I was really please to see people being introduced to each other and leaders making arrangements for those with useful skills to help with camps and their programmes and in turn some new leaders turning up and using their skills on the camp site. We also took the opportunity to do have a good tidy up and throw away a lot of old junk! We have now created a full inventory of every thing we have stored at the site. So if you want to borrow anything you must go through the campsite warden or one of the duty camp site wardens. It is also important you don't store any thing on site without it being marked with your name and letting the district know that it is there. This is so if we do have another break in we have a good chance of know what we lost.

I know I have already written to you all in an email about our Census return results. I could not wait until I had time to do this news letter. This was great news and makes me proud to your DC when we have this sort of growth. Thank you also all for paying your capitation promptly.

We have also now had the insurance money for the break in last October and the equipment that was stolen has now been replaced or repaired.

Now even more good news! I did say at the start it was a good month. WE HAVE A WEB SITE. Yes we finally have a new web site up and running. A really big thank you to Kevin Grimshaw for getting this sorted. The site is at: [www.sittingbournescouts.org.uk](http://www.sittingbournescouts.org.uk) it is still being built and we will continue to develop this over the year with a photo gallery etc. In fact if you have some good

pictures of events or Group work please send them to Kevin and we can put them up showing what you all get up to. I am sure some groups already have their own web sites, but if not and you would like a page on our web site or a link to your own web site please again let Kevin know.

Now the not so good news. Of course I started this month by attending the funeral of Len Saxton. I didn't know Len personally as I have not been involved in the district for very long. However it was a touching service and clearly Len was a great loss to Scouting in Lower Halstow. The role of GSL at Lower Halstow is being taken on by Sean McDonough. Sean has been doing the assistance GSL roll for some time and I am sure he will prove to be a great GSL at Lower Halstow.

I am afraid I am now going to have a bit of a moan! Which is really disappointing but it needs to be said. Over the last few weeks myself the treasurer and Chairman have been putting together a budget for the district for the coming year. This culminated in an Exec budget setting meeting where the budget for next year has been set and agreed. However whilst we were analysing the figures it is clear that we don't have the funds to do all we would like and some fundraising is going to be necessary. However we were at first confused as to why bookings for the camp site were up yet the expected funds were down. This is because more district people are booking and using the site which is great and you should be doing this as it is your site to use. However the crunch came when we found out that we have lost some booking to external users as Groups had the site booked. However the groups then did not use the site and one group didn't even let the booking clerk know that they wouldn't be using the site. We only found out when the duty warden went up to open the site and no one turned up. The funds we pay in our capitation will only just cover the running costs of the site and we must get external users in if we are going to continue to grow the site and provide additional activities. In turn the cost of running the site for the coming year is going to be excessive, or insurance premiums have gone from £1398.00 to £1865.00 and of course we all knew what the price of electricity did last year. Therefore the executive has come up with a proposal to charge a cancellation fee. This will work on the basis of the closer you cancel to the booking the more you will pay. I am aware myself sometimes of getting commitment of people to come to an event so it is likely the cancellation fee will only apply close to the event. There will be full details on this after the AGM.

At the Lightweight camp there was what should be described as a near miss! This involved a group of scouts putting a un opened tin of soup onto a gas stove. I am sure you can imagine the result. Fortunately no one was hurt and I think it was a really good lesson for the young people on the camp. However it did drawn my attention to the type of stove this group and others were using on the camp. The stove in question is the Camping Gaz blue stove with a pierceable cartridge. Last year Scout insurance services issued a bulletin saying that they would advise against using these stoves and groups had 12 months to arrange a

replacement. I am not sure of the exact date but I have now decided these stoves and lamps will no longer be allowed on Bexon Lane camp site. Anyone found using these stoves and lamps will be asked to remove them from the site. Therefore as leaders can you please make sure your young people know about this and your groups dispose of this equipment? In fact why not put a stoves and lamps evening into your programme. If you don't have anyone in your group with the skills please contact the fellowship as they are plenty of people who would be happy to come and help you with this.

### Fund Raising

Finally! As you will gather from my comments above regarding money the District is not in dire need of money, but we do have ambitions to try and provide a more comprehensive range of activities at the site, which not only will be good for our own Youngsters but will also attract other groups to our camp site. I have put together a proposal to purchase some pedal go carts, and would like to get a Prusiking available on site, along with purchasing some new games equipment and amateur radio gear. Now my self and some of the district team have some plans to do some sponsored events, however it would be really good if we could encourage the groups to support the site, and I will be writing to all the Groups separately regarding this. However if you as a leader yourself, or would like to organize an event to help raise funds for the District site then this would be great. Let me know if you have any ideas or would like to be involved in anything I am trying to arrange.

Well I know there is more to say, but I think that is quite enough for this month. The new CCC is also out, but I am no longer going to send this as an attachment you will be able to find this on our web site or the Kent Scouts web site. Please make an effort to read it.

Hope to see you all soon, and if not before at St Georges Day.

Yours in Scouting

Paul Austin  
Sittingbourne and Milton DC