
Ajax Sea Scout Group and Explorer Sea Scout Unit

Annual Report
for the year ended 31st March 2011



Ajax under 12½ crew wins Gargoyles Trophy at 2011 National Regatta



Jaguar under 12½ crew wins Gargoyles Trophy at 1977 National Regatta
Full story inside

Keeping it in the Family!

In 1977 Andrew Davison, David Hunter, and Alan Barker from the 1st Molesey 'Jaguar' Scout Group won the Gargoyle Tiller Trophy for coming first in the Under 12½ Coxed Double Dinghies event at the Sea Scout National Regatta (Andrew Davison is pictured on the right).

This year (pictured from left to right) Callum Davison, Charlie Johnson and Alex Soden from Ajax won the same trophy.

Andrew Davison, a member of the winning crew 34 years ago is the father of Callum Davison, a member of this year's winning Ajax crew.

Also at this year's National Regatta another Ajax crew pictured below and comprising (from left to right) Joe Dunn, Henry Carrow, Jamie Stephens, Theo Darlow and Dane Wilson won the Sea Scout Cup for coming first in the Under 12 ½ Gig event.



Congratulations to them all!

**63rd Annual General Meeting
of the Group Council of the
4th Thames Ditton 'Ajax' Sea Scouts**
(Royal Navy Recognised Group No. 60)
**Sunday 18th September 2011 at the
Chiefy Sharman Water Activities Centre**

Agenda

1. Group Scout Leader's welcome.
2. Group Executive Committee Report.
3. Group Scout Leader's Report.
4. Group Scout Leader's nominations for the coming year:
 - a. Group President
 - b. Group Vice-Presidents
 - c. Group Chairman
 - d. Other members of the Group Executive Committee.
5. Confirmation of Section Leaders wishing to sit on GEC for the coming year.
6. Election of lay officials for the coming year:
 - a. Group Treasurer
 - b. Group Secretary
 - c. Independent Examiner.
7. Election of Section Representatives to the Group Executive Committee for the coming year.
8. Any other business.
9. Presentation – World Scout Jamboree 2011

GROUP CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Group Executive Committee (GEC) is headed by a Group Chairperson and is responsible for the financial position of the Group and in particular the raising of funds and the organisation of parental support.

Ajax has not had a Chairperson since our last AGM when Toby Stephens, who was a GEC member for eight years and Chairman for the last two of those years, stepped down following a very active and fruitful stint as Chairman.

Toby saw that the burden of fund raising activities was falling on too few and during his tenure as Chairman he set about redressing this. This led to a number of parents coming forward, enabling us to continue with our existing funding model but with a broader base of parental support. This has resulted in a strengthening of our reserves and the ability to purchase a number of important capital items including most recently a new safety boat and outboard engine plus three Canadian canoes at a total cost of £5,500. These purchases were assisted by a grant of £2,500 received from the Admiralty Fund for RN Recognised Sea Scout Groups.

The Group cannot operate on subscriptions income alone and so for the last decade at least we have had three main fundraising events each year, the Esher May Fair, the Ajax Plant Sale and the beer tent and tea pavilion at the Claygate Flower Show. During the year ending 31 March 2011 these three events netted the following sums for Ajax:

Plant Sale at Ajax WAC:	£2,345
Esher May Fair:	£11,333
Claygate Flower Show:	£1,773

This summer, with the exception of the Claygate Flower Show (where we were scuppered by torrential rain on the morning of the event) we managed to achieve similar results. However to continue with our essential fund raising we absolutely must appoint a Chairperson to head things up and indeed it is a requirement that Scout Groups have one.

Our current lack of a Chairperson also has a negative impact on our recognition by the Royal Navy. The 100 or so RN Recognised Sea Scout Groups are rigorously inspected every 18 months or so and at our last inspection we were marked down because our GEC was not headed up by a Group Chairperson as is required.

Ajax has been RN recognised since its inception in 1948 and has enjoyed many benefits such as regular grant aid for boats and other equipment and the use of RN facilities at Portsmouth and, in earlier years, at Chatham.

The problems resulting from our current lack of a Chairperson are further compounded by the recent resignation of our longstanding Vice Chairman Mervyn Jackson whose wife recently passed away and whose children have now left Ajax.

The role of Chairperson does not include detailed responsibility for each of the fund raising events as these are led by separate organising teams. The Chairperson's role is that of an overseer who ensures that all the wheels are turning and that the various events are on course for successful outcomes.

I therefore ask all parents to consider seriously taking on the role of Group Chairperson with the assurance that they will have the support of keen and friendly committee members and all of the Ajax leadership team.

I would like to thank all the members of the GEC and the organising teams for the Plant Sale, Esher May Fair and Claygate Flower Show their outstanding fund raising efforts for the year ending 31st March 2011.

I would also like to thank all those involved in organising our main fund raising events this summer and in particular those who headed up the teams:

Plant Sale:	Alison Barnett
Esher May Fair:	Kevin Simpson
Flower Show:	Matthew Quazar-Tighe

My thanks also go to our Group Treasurer John Moore and Group Secretary Caroline Palmer-Hall and to Assistant Group Scout Leader Mark Marriott for his support and guidance to all those involved in the fund raising events.

Last but not least my thanks to all those families that provided the essential 'on the day' support at our various fund raising events. This year almost every family did its bit and that is exactly how it should be.

Sincerely,

George Barber

GROUP SCOUT LEADER'S REPORT

I am pleased to report that the Ajax Sea Scout Group has enjoyed another successful year with sound and consistent training and plenty of activities on offer for the youngsters in each of the four training Sections.

Our leadership team has continued to provide a varied programme of training and fun events. Many of the Leaders are the parents of youngsters in the Group and have found that it can be rewarding and great fun to organise and run the programmes and events of an Ajax Section.

I have noticed in the last couple of years that where a parent volunteers to be a Leader or Section Assistant with the Beavers they tend to move to the next Section with their son or daughter as they progress through the Group. This provides variety and prevents 'staleness' in our programming since with each successive section the training requirements are more advanced and the activities need to be more and more challenging.

There is therefore always a need for new Leaders, Instructors and Section Assistants, especially in the Beavers and Cubs, to lighten the load and to allow for the progression of Leaders through the Sections.

With the increasing risk of youngsters getting sucked into antisocial activities it is all the more important that young people are given the opportunity to join movements such as the Scout Association and this cannot happen without the adult volunteers required to run the Groups.

I therefore urge parents to consider joining the Ajax team as Leaders, Instructors or Section Assistants and I promise that you will not regret it if you decide to volunteer your time.

I am pleased to report that our Beaver Colony, Cub Pack and Sea Scout Troop are at capacity (bulging at the seams actually) and that by the time you read this report our Explorer Sea Scout Unit (15 to 18 age group) will have almost 20 members – the most we have ever had.

We have waiting lists for our most of our Sections (the longest of which is for our Beavers) and this is all the more reason for recruiting additional Leaders. If we had more Leaders we could consider starting an another Beaver Colony, then a second Cub Pack and then another Sea Scout Troop thereby making places available to twice as many local youngsters.

In 2010 Ajax was invited again by "The Dittons" Scout Group to join them for their Remembrance Service at the "Dittons Shack" and then to parade

with them to the War Memorial on Giggs Hill Green. There was a good turn out from both Groups and the event was greatly enhanced by Patrol Leader Blake Coe who played the last post on his trumpet at the War Memorial.

In January of this year I sent out a note to parents recommending that their youngsters (14 years and over) should take the opportunity of going on a one week offshore sail training cruise with the Amory Trust (Rona Sailing Project). I am most pleased that several members have either already been or will be going on one of these cruises in 2011.

Together with five other youngsters from local Scout Groups, Max Kingdon (Ajax Explorer Sea Scout) represented Esher District as part of the Surrey Scouts / UK contingent at the World Jamboree in Sweden this summer. You can find images of this huge Scouting event by Googling 'you tube' and then searching 'world scout jamboree 2011'. Max's participation in this year's World Jamboree and all the experiences that go along with it are something that will remain with him for the rest of his life in the same way that a number of other Ajaccios have similar treasured memories from prior Jamborees which they were fortunate enough to attend – all the way back to the 1950s soon after the birth of the Ajax Sea Scout Group. *(Editor's note: As a Patrol Leader, our Group Scout Leader George Barber was himself selected to attend the 1957 World Jamboree in Sutton Coldfield!)*

Due to the lack of a Group Chairperson since September last year I have tried to cover this role and have come to realise that we need all parents to take on a specific responsibility to spread the load even further and to ensure that the Chairperson can focus solely on management rather than detail. I am hugely grateful to our Group Secretary and Group Treasurer and the Executive Committee members who have provided great support this year. I am also grateful to all parents who honoured the commitment that they signed up for when their youngsters joined Ajax and who gave up their time to help at the various fund raising events. Also a very, very big thank you to those parents who organised our fund raising events. I believe that we ask a lot of those organising these events but when I see first class facilities, equipment and boats I know that it is well worth the effort.

So a big, big thank you to every adult who in one way or another has given their support. And a big thank you to all the youngsters in the Group who together with the adults in our leadership team make Ajax such a lively, fun place for learning and adventure.

My special thanks to Assistant Group Scout Leader Mark Marriott who continues to carry out the lion's share of the Group Scout Leader's responsibilities with great dedication throughout the year and who is a rock of support to the leadership team and the Group Executive Committee. Mark's contribution has been especially important during this last year when I have had to cover the role of Group Chairman.

Congratulations to Mark who was presented with the Scout Association Medal of Merit at the Esher District AGM in July this year in recognition of his contribution to Ajax and the wider world of Scouting.

On a personal note I shall be retiring as Group Scout Leader next spring after more than 50 years as a Leader with Ajax. Having reached by then my three score years and ten I would like to give more of my time to my family. I would like to thank the Leaders for marking my 50 years of service by presenting me with a fine brass clock and barometer for my boat. As I "sail into the sunset" I am confident in the knowledge that Ajax has a splendid band of Leaders who will take the Group forward purposefully and successfully over the coming years.

In summary it is great to report on another fantastic year as borne out by the following accounts of the activities of our Sections:

BEAVER SCOUT COLONY

(for boys and girls aged 6 to 8)

Beaver Scout Leader Marcus Butlin writes:

Autumn activities included a visit from a blind gentleman and his guide dog. He gave a very interesting talk about his life, how he copes with his disability and the training the dogs undergo. The Beavers were very interested and asked lots of questions. At the end of the evening we had a collection for the Guide Dogs charity.

Our Beavers responded very well during a discussion about Remembrance Sunday and the turn out for the parade was very good.

The two 'fun' highlights of the season were a visit from Mid-Air Models and our annual visit to Sandown Ski Centre for an evening of sledging, which was very good practice for the weather over Christmas!

The new year found us working towards the Global and Fitness Challenge Badges. We had a visit from the charity Street Child Africa who helped our

Beavers understand the important work they do. That night we raised just over £30 and the Beavers want to raise some more money later in the year.

We also had an enjoyable evening of toe painting and 'one handed fruit peeling'. At our Mexico night the nachos were very popular. We have also completed the Healthy Eating and Air Activities Badges. 20 Beavers attended the District Party and six took part in the District Cross Country Run. At the last muster before Easter we had an introduction to tag rugby!

After Easter we were visited by our GSL George Barber, who presented seven Chief Scout's Bronze Awards (including one to his grandson, Alex). This is the highest award for the Beaver Section so very well done to all concerned. Five Beavers swam up in early May and all have settled happily into Cubs and have attended the District Cub Camp.

We had 100% attendance at the St George's day parade so a big 'well done' to the entire Colony. After that we had a couple of musters designed to welcome our six new 'kits' including games to help us learn each others' names. *(Ed's note: A 'kit' is a young beaver.)* We also had a very enjoyable visit to the Dittons for a joint muster with games, tug-o-war, a barbeque and a camp fire with lots of singing.

Our new kits were invested at Walton Firs Activity Centre in Cobham where the Colony also enjoyed the assault course and the maze. We have also visited Esher fire station, although the visit was cut a bit short when the fireman had to go out on a real emergency! At our last muster before the summer we all greatly enjoyed an evening of creative stories and as a finale, our traditional water fight!

We currently have 24 Beavers including ten girls. In addition to me we have one uniformed Leader, Assistant Beaver Leader Arun Mehra and three other parents who are helping regularly as Section Assistants: Sandra Cregg, Alice Squire and Mathew Clapham. A very big thank you to them all.

CUB SCOUT PACK

(for boys and girls aged 8 to 11)

Retiring Cub Scout Leader Paul Williams and current Cub Scout Leader David Goodman write:

It has been an excellent year for our Cubs and also for our leadership team. We have enjoyed a fun filled programme of activities and we have taken part in many Esher District events. Blessed with a strong adult team we have been able to deliver a varied programme of games and activities and we have undertaken a number of badges including

Local Knowledge, Emergency Aid and the Community and Promise Challenges. Currently the Pack has 32 members overall, including nine girls.

In April we took part in the District St George's Day Parade on a sunny day in Thames Ditton. And in May we helped open the Esher May Fair where we were inspected by the Mayor. We were smartly turned out and a credit to the Group! Even the Leaders scrubbed up well!

June saw the District Group Camp at Walton Firs Campsite where we were joined by members of the other local Scout Groups. There were many great activities that had been organised by all the Groups from around the District. Our own water cannons and tent peg painting proved as popular as ever. The Saturday evening was rounded off with a campfire and another great firework display.

Before the summer break we organised some Saturday boating musters to give the Cubs a chance to experience some kayaking and pulling. The weather was good and the opportunity to get on the river was much enjoyed by those who took part. We also had a memorable evening muster at Painshill Park where we built some shelters. We all had a tremendous time and totally exhausted ourselves!

During our September musters we took advantage of the fine weather and light nights to learn about fire lighting and cooking outdoors. We tried different styles of fires and also tried cooking sausages and onions. We had some roaring fires which crisped up the sausages in just a few minutes and some that were more controlled and gave fine results after about an hour!

The month of October saw the annual District Sausage Sizzle hosted at The Dittons HQ. Our Cubs had much fun playing games, collecting firewood, lighting fires, cooking yet more sausages and then eating them!

We completed some more badges during the dark winter musters, including Road Safety and Emergency Aid. We also cooked some small Christmas cakes in November which we iced in December. We are not quite sure what the parents made of them! We also had a Halloween Party where friends were invited. We made a charge for this and the money collected was given to the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. A lovely gentleman came along to one of our musters with his guide dog to collect the donation. He gave us an excellent talk in which he told us about his life as a blind person. The Cubs were fascinated and asked a great number of questions!

In November we joined The Dittons Scout Group for their annual Remembrance Day Service which was followed by a Parade to the War Memorial at Giggs Hill Green. It was great to see such a good turnout from Ajax and from the local community.

For our final muster in December we took the Cubs once again to the Sandown Park ski slope for a sledging and ringo party. Even though the conditions were as usual rather chilly (certainly for the adults), the youngsters soon warmed up and had a wonderful time.

In the New Year we turned out on a chilly Sunday morning in February for the District Cross Country Run held at West End Common. We had a good number of entrants and all who took part enjoyed the event.

In March we had a swimming muster at the Hampton outdoor pool. The Cubs made further progress with their Swimming badges and a number are now working towards Stage 3. This is a great level of achievement to reach in Cubs and puts them in a very good position when they move up to Troop and take part in regular boating activities. It is a rule at Ajax that nobody is allowed to take part in any water activities unless they can swim 50 metres in light clothing and then stay afloat for five long minutes!! Something to work on if that sounds like a bit of a challenge.

April had us continuing the energetic theme with the Fitness Challenge in our sights. We followed this with another swimming muster, this time at the Imber Court pool. The Cubs all worked really hard and we are delighted that all members, even those who only came up from Beavers at Easter, have now managed to earn a staged Swimming Badge.

Come May and it was time for another St George's Day Parade, this year in Claygate where all ten Groups in our District came together for an excellent service delivered by one of our new District Chaplains. Two weeks later and we were once again providing a guard of honour for the mayor of Elmbridge at a super successful Esher May Fair.

In June we learned about the work of Wildlife Aid and the Cubs had the opportunity to inspect a three-legged hedgehog that had been rescued by the charity. Their interest in the subject was evident from the unusual quiet that descended on the WAC for the entire duration of the muster. At the end of the session the Cubs kindly donated tins and packets of dog food to help the charity with its work.

June also had us back at Walton Firs for this year's District Cub Camp. With almost the entire Pack attending and persistent rain hampering the setup, we were very pleased when the clouds finally cleared. The Cubs, of course, took the rain in their stride and were able to sample lots of activities that had been provided both by the Groups that were camping and by Walton Firs itself. Some of the most popular included climbing, caving and, believe it or not, a bucking bronco!

Before the summer break we finished with four boating musters, including a Saturday morning in July. The Cubs were able to experience kayaking, pulling (rowing), power boating and also sailing in Laser Picos, with every member of the Pack being awarded their Water Activities Badge.

Finally, at the end of July some senior members of the Pack were delighted to be invited to join the Scouts for a weekend at their Summer Camp on Mersea Island in Essex. They were able to join in with all the camp activities, cooking, eating and sleeping as part of a Troop Patrol. They were also able to enjoy more kayaking and sailing, this time on more challenging coastal waters. It certainly provided a good insight into what to expect as they progress into the Troop and the weekend was of course over all too quickly.

As the incoming Cub Scout Leader, I would like to extend a big thank you to all the parents who have helped in all sorts of different ways to make it such an enjoyable year for all our Cubs. Thanks also to the many Leaders, Skills Instructors and helpers from various Sections who provided so much support at our Cub Camp and with our water based musters in June and July. Particular thanks of course to the regular Section leadership team of Jenny Scott, Jude Garner and Nick Barber who have provided tremendous help and support week in and week out, always with such good humour. During the year we were delighted also to welcome Anne Morgan to the team. I myself joined the team at the start of the year, coming up from Beavers. I would especially like to thank retiring CSL Paul Williams for all he has done for our Cubs over the years and for the help he has given me in my new appointment. We are as always on the lookout for additional help and new ideas, so please do get in touch if you would like to get involved.

SEA SCOUT TROOP

(For boys and girls 11 to 15)

Scout Leader Chris West writes:

This has been a very busy year for the Troop, crammed with activities and competitions. We did

our utmost to enter as many District competitions as possible as well as maintaining our full programme of regular activities both on and off the water.

The Troop numbers remain at around 36, our full capacity, with good numbers coming up from Cubs but equally large numbers going up to our Explorer Unit. We also have an external waiting list.

Following last year's summer camp we were soon off on our last coastal sailing weekend of the season at our Cobnor base. We were lucky with the weather and managed to get a decent amount of sailing done.

Once the evenings closed in we transitioned to our indoor winter musters on Thursdays, whilst continuing to boat as much as possible on Saturdays. On Thursdays we concentrated on First Aid and Scouting Skills ready for the District competition in the New Year. As ever we finished off the year with our Troop Christmas Party at the WAC for which we were again joined by our friends from Warspite.

The New Year began busily with a series of District events and weekend activities. The first was the District Scouting Skills and First Aid competition, in which our team achieved an excellent result, coming second overall in the Scouting Skills section. Soon after that we were off for our annual winter weekend camp at Broadstone Warren, a wonderful site in the middle of the Ashdown Forest where we stay in a superb log cabin with a huge inglenook fireplace . . . just perfect for toasting marshmallows!! This year we crammed in all the usual activities plus a few new ones including archery, a high ropes cube course and grass sledging.

We also entered a team in the District day hike for the first time in a few years and I'm very pleased to say they came second. This is a great achievement and I'm very proud of the team for doing so well and next year we will win!

Cobnor weekends are always brilliant and in May and June this year the emphasis was on giving the Scouts extended sailing experience in coastal waters. We got everyone attending the weekend together on the water for on a day's expedition to East Head where we had a picnic before the wind conveniently took us back to Cobnor on a run. The sailing was challenging and the Scouts, some of whom were sailing single handedly in Picos, did exceptionally well! We even managed to spot the odd seal swimming in the harbour.

At the end of June it was time for Scoutabout, a joint Scout and Guide county extravaganza that happens once every three years. The idea of camping with 5000 other Scouts and Guides is a bit daunting to say the least but we arrived full of enthusiasm on the Friday evening to set up camp. The Scouts were brilliant and erected one marquee and six small tents very efficiently before tearing off to explore the huge site at Ardingly. The range of activities was amazing and included caving, shooting, diving, quad biking, climbing, wood skills, dunking (in water of course), bungee running and concerts in the evening. As Leaders, we saw the Scouts when it was time for food and sleep – otherwise they were out there having a ball. Needless to say they were completely shattered by Sunday night. The whole weekend was fast, furious and tremendous fun!!

At the beginning of July it was once again time for the National Sea Scout Regatta at Hampton Court. It was an exhilarating weekend for Ajax as we made it through to the finals in no less than five events and we came away with two trophies. Henry Carrow, Theo Darlow, Joe Dunn, Jamie Stephens and Dane Wilson won the Under 12½ Gig event whilst Callum Davison, Charlie Johnson and Alex Soden carried away the Gargoyle Trophy (see front page story) in the Under 12½ Coxed Double Dinghy event. The competition was stiff but a second place was also achieved by Ollie Sancroft in the Under 16 Slalom Kayak event and our Under 16 Gig crew were just pipped at the post. All were fantastic achievements and a positive base to build on for next year's regatta!

This year's Summer Camp on Mersea Island in Essex represented a number of firsts. It was our first time at Ivy Farm on Mersea and also my first time in overall charge of a Group Summer Camp!

The new site we had found on the north eastern corner of Mersea island is located in easy reach of open water where, from a pleasant little beach, we could go out boating at all states of the tide. This offered the potential for a huge amount of water activities both for the Scouts and the Explorers.

The site had the benefit of an immaculate shower and toilet block, as well as a huge barn which came in very useful for storing equipment and food.

An advance party comprising a few Leaders plus the Explorers arrived a few days early to pitch most of the tents and to set up camp. After two nights in camp the Explorers were subjected to an 'Operation X', a surprise activity where they were given just a few minutes to gather all they needed

to survive the night and then despatched to a remote off-site location under oars in a gig. Once at their destination they had prepare and cook raw food and construct their own shelter to survive the night. The entire activity was of course thoroughly planned by the Leaders and there was a random check during the night to make sure that all was well. Nonetheless it was a very exciting adventure for the Explorers.

By Tuesday evening when the Troop arrived, the leadership team was fully prepared for ten days of non-stop activities including kayaking, canoeing, sailing and hiking.

Among the highlights for the Troop were our traditional "Coxswain's Cruises" where each Patrol in turn plans an overnight expedition under oars in the gig. The preparation they are required to undertake includes the journey plan itself plus working out all the food and equipment they will need for an overnight stay in a remote location. On discovering that he and his Patrol had forgotten the poles for one of their tents, one Scout showed exceptional ingenuity by rigging up the gig oars to make a frame for the tent.

For the middle weekend we reintroduced a longstanding Ajax tradition of inviting the older Cubs, especially those who will shortly be coming up to the Troop, to spend the weekend in camp as a member of a Patrol. Six brave souls stepped up to enter the Patrol tents and to experience some coastal sailing and kayaking – and to learn how a Patrol works, cooks and eats together – much braver than me!

The weather managed to stay almost completely dry for the whole two weeks and we had a decent amount of sunshine. On the one day of rain another visit to the local leisure pool proved a popular solution.

I'm told by all who were there that the camp was considered a great success and if the number of badges I gave out on the last day is anything to go by then I must agree. All the Scouts were brilliant in rising to the many challenges they were presented with including all that cooking and washing up! And on top of that they have to contend with the more challenging boating conditions that are encountered on the coast. Particular mention should made of Oliver Sancroft and Andrew Moore who received special recognition awards. These awards are presented to the young person in each Section that the leadership team believes to have shown the greatest improvement and who has provided a good example of Scouting to others. I'd

also like to mention Theo Darlow, Callum Davison, Charlie Johnson, Jamie Stephens and Dane Wilson for the remarkable achievement of completing four Challenge awards, no mean feat!

Overall it's been a very active year with lots of achievement and fun for all. I would like to say a huge thank you to the entire team of Assistant Scout Leaders and Instructors for their tireless work to support the Troop. We couldn't do it without you.

EXPLORER SEA SCOUT UNIT

(For young men and women aged 15 to 18)

Explorer Sea Scout Leader Dinah Mallett and Assistant Explorer Leader Nick Barber write:

As usual it's been a busy year for our Explorers. Last summer seven members of the Unit participated in JubJam, a jamboree celebrating the centenary of Dutch Scouting which took place in Roemond, Holland. Elliot Salmon, Ben Rutherford and Robbie Mallett travelled with the Leaders as part of an advance party to set up the camp before the arrival of the Troop. The Explorer site was approximately a mile from the Troop site so for the first time in many years the Explorers were independent of the Troop and totally self-sufficient! As part of a programme to encourage international contact they hosted an evening meal for a group of 18 Dutch Scouts and made many friends. The evening entertainment was superb with huge "club tents" where evening events were organised. In addition there were full size stages on site for visiting rock bands. One Explorer compared it to the Glastonbury Festival with boating as a daytime activity!

In September the Explorers participated in the Great River Race, rowing the 22 miles from Greenwich to Richmond in just over 4 hours.

During the winter various badges were gained by members of the Unit including Nautical Skills, First Aid, Community, Water Activities and all five stages of the IT Badge!

In January Luke Quazar-Tighe, in the company of Nick Barber and Matthew Quazar-Tighe, had a fantastic time at this year's District winter walking weekend on Kinder Scout in the Peak District. Crisp, clear, sunny weather made the walking a real pleasure. All in all an awesome experience!

Other winter activities included night swimming in the snow at Hampton open air pool, kayaking sessions at a local school swimming pool, a District wide game, plus night kayaking and power boating on the Thames.

During the early part of this year the Unit also helped with the refit of one of our Scout Class dinghies which has been out of action far too long.

In March Joe Farmer and Max Kingdon provided valuable help to our Troop leadership team at their winter camp at Broadstone Warren – and they had good fun as well.

In this year's District backwoods cooking competition, Luke Quazar-Tighe and Elliot Salmon gained second place for Ajax – a really great result. This event involves the cooking of food without the use of pots and pans. This year's challenges included the preparation and cooking of nettle soup and cherry crumble, the latter having to be cooked on a hot stone.

In June, the Unit joined up with the Kingston Scout Canoe Club for some useful training sessions where they benefited from the considerable knowledge and experience of the Club's specialist instructors.

Most recently nine Explorers attended our Group Summer Camp on Mersea Island in Essex where their own separate programme included a wide range of boating activities plus an 'Operation X' where they were dispatched up river in the gig to a secret location with only a tarpaulin and sisal from which to construct a shelter. They were also required to gut and cook fish over an open fire prior to spending the night in their makeshift shelter before returning to civilisation the following day. During the course of camp additional members of the Unit gained their Water Activities badge and the older ones their RYA Powerboat Level 2 with a coastal endorsement. All in all an action packed summer camp to round off an action packed twelve months.

NATIONAL REGATTA

As usual the National Sea Scout Pulling and Canoeing Regatta took place on the Thames in Thames Ditton at the beginning of July. Particular congratulations to our under 12½ team who won both the Coxed Double Dinghy event and the Gig event.

ROYAL NAVY RECOGNITION

Ajax is one of just 100 Sea Scout Groups in the UK to be officially recognised by the Royal Navy. This prestigious recognition brings many tangible benefits, not least access to significant grant aid funds. In order to retain our recognition we are formally inspected by a serving RN Officer every 18 months or so.

Our most recent inspection took place in January of this year. In his report following the inspection, the Staff Officer Scouts Lt Cdr David Griffiths summed up as follows:

“Ajax Sea Scouts is a first class Sea Scout Group which consistently delivers a good and balanced programme to all of its young people. Their excellent development and employment of Patrol Leaders is an example to all and readily demonstrates just what young people are capable of given the opportunity. Most smart and well disciplined they are fine ambassadors for the RN and once again most comprehensively demonstrated that they fully earn and deserve RN Recognition – Well Done.”

Well done indeed to all those youngsters and adults who worked so very hard to achieve this outstanding report.

Our very best wishes go to David Griffiths who has been an outstandingly supportive RN Inspecting Officer and who has now retired from the service. We wish him all possible happiness and success in his future career.

RYA TRAINING CENTRE

For over 25 years Ajax has operated a Royal Yachting Association Training Centre jointly with our friends and neighbours Warspite Sea Scouts. This year has seen a major strengthening and broadening of our joint activities. Firstly, following the retirement of Warspite's Don Everitt as Chief Instructor we have reorganised our RYA Training Centre as follows: Richard Hunt of Warspite has taken over from Adrian Sancroft as Centre Principal whilst Adrian has taken on the role of Chief Instructor (Sailing). We have then further strengthened our Centre leadership team with the appointment of Peter Wadsworth as Chief Instructor (Powerboating). Finally, and again jointly with Warspite we have now become a recognised Amateur Rowing Association Awarding Centre with Don Everitt appointed as Chief Instructor (Pulling).

A big thank you must go to Richard and to Peter for countless hours of endeavour in fully revising and updating the operating procedures of our Centre and for successfully shepherding us through our first RYA Centre inspection under our new leadership team.

During the year, through the Centre we have again organised, both on the Thames and at our Chichester boating base at Cobnor, a variety of RYA training courses both in sailing and in power boating. As a result, again this year many of our young members have gained internationally recognised RYA qualifications at various levels of achievement. In addition, as part of our continuing programme of adult training, many of our Leaders have also gained or upgraded their RYA qualifications enabling us to deliver even more to the youngsters in the Group.

Our thanks to all our RYA instructors, who have given so generously of their time not least Mark Faulkner who has again delivered several RYA First Aid courses to the benefit not only of Ajax and Warspite members but also a large number of adults and Explorers from around the country.

OUR FLEET

During the year, with grant aid assistance from the Admiralty Fund for RN Recognised Sea Scout Groups, we have further strengthened our fleet. Firstly we have purchased a new Rigiflex safety boat complete with a brand new Honda outboard engine. This important acquisition provides us with additional safety cover on the Thames, both to supplement the Connie West, our Dory Safety boat, and to provide backup in the event of any mechanical failure. Secondly we have purchased three brand new Canadian open canoes. This particular type of craft has long been missing from our fleet and this acquisition will enable us to deliver a more complete training programme in kayaking and canoeing.

FINALLY – MY THANKS

Sincerest thanks to our tremendous team of Leaders, Instructors and Section Assistants without whom, Ajax could not operate. Our thanks to all those 'other halves' whose tolerance and support has made it possible for our adult team to devote the necessary time to make Ajax such a fun and exciting place for all our youngsters. A big thanks to our Group Executive Committee and to all those who have organised the fundraising activities without which the Group could not operate.

George Barber
GROUP SCOUT LEADER

Ajax Sea Scout Group and Explorer Sea Scout Unit

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Group Vice Chairman	Vacant	
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