

January 2010 Ajax News!



Happy New Year and welcome to **Ajax News**, keeping all our Ajax families in touch with recent and future activities involving your children. Alongside the regular Section reports, please note George Barber's piece on the **Rona Sailing Project** – a superb opportunity for all youngsters over the age of 14. Please also give thought to Toby's request for help in the organisation of events. As you may have noticed, Ajax is definitely a family affair!
Susan Hawkings, Editor

Many hands make light work

With the start of a new year we have recently emailed all parents to organise parental support for our 2010 fund-raising events and other Group activities requiring parental support. We had a tremendous fund raising result in 2009, although we still rely heavily on too few parents to organise these events. All Ajax parents commit to provide support when their children join the Group – and providing support can be an enjoyable and rewarding experience. Do please return your completed rota form as soon as possible and certainly by the specified date – and please contact me if you can help with the actual organisation of our events as well as helping out on the day. **Toby Stephens – Group Chairman**

Beavers Go Conkers!

A Conker Challenge provided a lively start to the autumn when vast quantities of conkers arrived at the WAC. After an hour's continual jousting we only succeeded in smashing one conker! The finer points of playing conkers may still need to be mastered but the enthusiasm is certainly there. Hopefully this year's lessons will improve our performance in 2011!

Later in September we were shown around Sunbury Lock by Iwan Drewett's dad, who is the lock keeper there. Luckily a boat arrived just in time for us to watch it going through and see the sluices in action.

Our October Italian food evening was a great success. This was to help encourage Beavers to experience different national cultures. The Beavers busied themselves creating delicious pizza toppings, cooking the pizzas, and last (but not least) eating them all up.

The Colony also visited the Metropolitan Police Mounted Branch at Ember Court where we were shown around by one of the stable girls. For many Beavers it was a great chance to get close to big horses for the first time and the Beavers' excitement also provided useful experience for the horses which have to learn to stay calm in a riot situation!

With the darker nights we took the opportunity to work on our Safety Badge. Suitably kitted out with

fetching Scout high-visibility vests we went out to practice the Green Cross Code. Hopefully the drivers on the Portsmouth Road didn't mind stopping for us at the pedestrian crossing only to have us turn round and re-cross the road straight away!

December saw us fashion Christmas craft creations sprinkled with liberal helpings of glitter, which we are sure took pride of place in every home. However the end of year highlight was our annual tobogganing visit to the Sandown ski slope. All the Beavers enjoyed themselves enormously, especially when they were crashing into each other. A number seemed to be trying to set a new land speed record! After an evening of running back up the slope we are sure they all slept exceptionally well.



Last but not least a big welcome to Charlie Clapham, Abbie Cregg, Emile Johannsen, Poppy Lloyd-Jones, Alex Morris and Isabelle and Mollie Sawden who have recently joined the Colony.



Cubs Cook Out

Our Cubs kicked off in the autumn as full of energy as ever. We took advantage of the fine September weather and the light nights to learn about fire lighting and cooking outdoors. The resultant food offerings varied widely but the most popular by far was the banana stuffed with chocolate – truly delicious! The Group Regatta was also enjoyed by all and provided some new joiners with their first opportunity to go kayaking and power boating.

During our October and November musters we focussed on completing some of the Challenge and Skills Badges. We have now completed the bulk of the requirements for the Creative Challenge, Promise Challenge and Community Challenge Awards and look forward to finalising them in 2010. We also progressed in our staged Swimming Badges at the Xcel Pool in Walton, where there were some great distance performances.

In December we were given a very interesting tour of the Liberal Synagogue in Thames Ditton which was enjoyed by all the Cubs who attended. We rounded off the year with another highly popular trip to the Sandown ski slope for a sledging and ringo party. Even though the conditions were rather chilly (certainly for the adults), the youngsters soon warmed up and peeled off layers of clothing (brrrrr!).

Scouts Welcome New Leader

The first big event this autumn was a change in the leadership of the Troop with Chris West taking over as Scout Leader from Paul Norman who is stepping down after a several years of dedicated service. A big welcome to Chris and our sincerest thanks to Paul for taking the Troop from strength to strength.

The autumn got off to a flying start with the last Cobnor weekend of 2009, where, despite unpredictable winds, our Scouts gained immensely valuable experience in a variety of coastal conditions. These weekends are great experiences and any Troop Scout who hasn't been should make a new year's resolution to come in 2010.

In October we held another wide game in Oxshott Woods and this was hugely popular as ever. We rounded off the year with a Christmas Disco where we turned the WAC into a colourful, high tech, stereo sound party venue and the Scouts 'Macarena-ed' until they dropped. Thanks to all who helped out on the day and to parents for all the food – we couldn't do it without you.

The new year kicked off with a Patrol Leaders' training course, aimed at helping our PLs and APLs to lead and look after the members of their Patrols.

For the next couple of months we will be focussing on Scouting skills and first aid training. An undoubted highlight will be our Broadstone Warren weekend winter camp based in a log cabin with a roaring open fire and with the opportunity for a whole range of exciting outdoor activities.

Congratulations to PL Max Kingdon who, against stiff competition (not least from other Ajax candidates!) has been selected by Esher District to join the Surrey contingent at the 2011 World Jamboree in Sweden. Very well done Max.

Remembrance Sunday

A few months ago Ajax received an invitation from "The Dittons" Scout Group, with whom we have had contacts for many years, to join them for their 2009 Remembrance Sunday service at "The Shack" followed by a parade at the War Memorial at Giggs Hill Green. We were pleased and honoured to accept the invitation and the event, which took place on a damp and chilly 8th November, was attended by the majority of Beavers, Cubs and Sea Scouts.

Ajax has not in recent years taken part in Remembrance Sunday services and our Leaders felt that we should do so, especially as it seems fitting currently that the sacrifices of our troops in Afghanistan should be properly recognised by all of us including our young people.

The service at "The Shack" was delivered by David Cooper, The Dittons Beaver Leader, who devised this specifically for an audience of young people. David did an excellent job and it was great to see all the youngsters from The Dittons and Ajax sitting quietly together and listening intently in front of the log fire in The Shack while David explained about the sacrifices of the troops in the First World War and subsequent conflicts.



At the War Memorial the parade was joined by members of St Nicholas Church, the Thames Ditton Residents Association and other local residents who appeared pleased and impressed by the turnout of the two Scout Groups.

My thanks to all Ajax Leaders and parents who made a special effort to ensure that our young people arrived on time and in smart uniform.

I hope this will become an annual Ajax event.

George Barber, Group Scout Leader

Centenary Parade

In October, Ajax Scouts and Explorers joined with other Royal Navy Recognised Sea Scout Groups to celebrate the centenary of Sea Scouting. A parade and commemoration service was held at the Portsmouth naval base, next to HMS Victory and afterwards we were free to explore the heritage area, visit Nelson's ship the Victory and imagine what life aboard might have been like! An historic and memorable day for all.

Explorers Row From Greenwich to Richmond

In September two Ajax Explorer teams entered the Great River Race from Greenwich to Richmond with the fellas in our Home Counties Gig the Norge and the ladies in a 'Jolly Boat' kindly borrowed for us by Roy Court. The Jolly Boat, although much lighter than a gig to row, required great skill to keep it upright – very tippy indeed! Well done ladies!



Since September it's been all action. We have been developing our kayaking skills by practising Eskimo rolls at an indoor pool – and in October we visited the Xcel Centre in Walton where we conquered their climbing wall. At 13 meters high this proved an intimidating task and no one found it easy.



In November we organised a night expedition in the Fitzroy. The Unit navigated up to Molesey and back whilst enjoying hot chocolate rustled up on Nick's camping stove. All went perfectly until one of the lock gates at Molesey failed to open, trapping us for half an hour. Even more excitement than we expected!

Rona Sailing Project

This is a "heads up" to inform parents and youngsters of an excellent organisation that aims "to give young people the opportunity to enjoy a life changing experience through the sea".

The Rona Sailing Project, based at Southampton, is the longest running sail training organisation in the country and was founded by Lord Amory in 1960. The objectives of the project are exactly in line with some of those of the Scout Association and, in particular, Sea Scouts, i.e. to provide:-

- Sense of involvement and responsibility
- Experience the values of teamwork, self discipline and resourcefulness
- Adventure and fun in a safe and responsible environment

It is for this reason and the fact that the Project is excellent value for money (the six day voyages still cost just £100) that Ajax encourages its young people over the age of 14 to apply for a place.

The Project has three large offshore sailing yachts and the younger trainees sail along the English coast and progress to sailing across the Channel to France and/or the Channel Islands in subsequent years.

Not more than two young people from any one organisation sail together in any one boat at a time so that there is a broad social mix.

Older trainees who give of their best all week can win an Amory Award and could be selected for a place in the Tall Ships Race for the following year. Ajax youngsters have taken part in Tall Ships Races in past years and there are currently several old Ajaccios who have progressed through the Project during their teenage years and are now volunteer Watch Officers and Mates with the Project.

We shall be sending full details shortly to parents of those who will be eligible in 2010.

George Barber, Group Scout Leader

RUN For Fun!

On Sunday 7th February the District Cross Country Run will be held at West End Common. As a Group we have traditionally done very well in the event but last year we did not manage a very good turnout. Let's make this the year we return to form! PARENTS - come and join in! You can run with your child or on your own. It's three miles for Scouts and less for the Cubs and Beavers. Everyone's results count towards the Group result so please come and support!

And finally, please email me at neilsueh@o2.co.uk and let me know what you think of the newsletter and what you would like to see in it – Ed