



1st Finchampstead Scout Group Newsletter

May Issue



Welcome to the second termly 1st Finchampstead newsletter, keeping you up-to-date with all the events, activities and general goings-on of the last Scouting term, as well as our plans for the coming weeks. It's been an eventful few months for the group, having entered our ninetieth year of existence in 2009 with some major changes – as well as various comings and goings within the troops, Finchbase has had a long-overdue overhaul whilst the group now has its own piece of shiny and (nearly) new transport. Not only are we the largest group in the district we're now the fastest-growing group in the country which says something about the strength of 1st Finch and all involved – a fantastic achievement for all!

Despite the group remaining as strong as ever, we still need all the help we can get throughout the sections, and we ask that you have a look at the various vacancies at the back of the newsletter and see if you can possibly help out – anything is better than nothing, and very much appreciated by everyone involved in the troop. Thanks have to go out to those who have already contributed, whether through donations, helping on one of the evenings or even signing up as a helper, and to all the leaders and exec members out there already doing their bit.

And of course we can't forget the dozens of Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers, who have contributed greatly to a very successful and enjoyable term for all. Read on for more detail of the events and news on all the sections of 1st Finch.

Here's hoping we can continue for another ninety years!

Log in to the 1st Finch Website at www.1finch.org.uk

A couple of major things have happened since the last newsletter. We entered three floats in the Wokingham carnival and won (again!). Finchbase has been redecorated and now has a fantastic traversing wall named after the late Don Brett who was such a supporter of Scouting and a lover of climbing. What these two things have in common is that they did not happen by themselves, and I am hugely grateful to those who helped make them possible. 1st Finchampstead Scout Group has over 160 young people on its books, who between them must have well over 250 parents and guardians in tow but the sad thing is that it was the same small core of people who yet again gave up their time and energy to help.

One other big piece of news is that we've bought a minibus! We've used money which was originally raised for an extension to Finchbase but as there is no sign of us getting the co-operation of the council in the near future, we decided to put some of it good use. We will however need to raise money to replenish the bank account (our target is £7,500) and that won't happen by itself either.

We need more parents to help out whether on the Executive Committee or simply by coming along when we ask for volunteers. On a specific note, we will soon be on the lookout for a new Treasurer as Jackie McGill is standing down and I'd like to thank her for all her hard work; do you have the skills and a little time to help manage our books?

1st Finchampstead is in danger of being a victim of its own success. I am reminded of the old expression about working a willing horse to death. The core group who do help out regularly won't do so forever and I am worried that if we don't get more people volunteering to spread the load, then the group will struggle to continue.

If you think you can help in any way, in uniform or behind the scenes, and would like to find out more, please contact me at chairman@1finch.org.uk. We particularly want to set up a fundraising group; do you have ideas, a few hours you could give us or would your employer be willing to sponsor the group? Again, please contact me.

Please don't assume someone else will do it. I look forward to hearing from you.

Mark Popplestone, 1st Finchampstead Scout Group Chairman

Willows Beavers Section burst into life in September 2008 with a new inexperienced team in command. The balanced programme and support that we have received has helped us set an exciting agenda for the young members. We have quite a mixed entry age with some members moving on within the first year of the group being established. We therefore set ourselves a slightly aggressive plan to make sure that all of the initial intake achieved at least four of the Challenge badges before moving on to Cubs, something we have managed to achieve.

We started off the year with a few exciting activities for the Beavers including water rockets, volcanoes and coke fountains. We even managed to do some cooking with them on an open fire which was great fun for all.

We decided that we wanted to do a night hike during the winter term so we planned a simple trail through the woods in the country park. We prepared all the Beavers with a torch for them to make the week before the hike; some of the torches even survived until the night of the hike! The snow looked like it was going to prevail over the event but luckily it cleared enough just in time for us to take the Colony for a wander through the mud. The highlight of the evening had to be the thermal imaging cameral produced by one of the parents half way around the walk. It took a while to see anything other than bright orange but once the Beavers moved aside we had some great shots for them to see.

Having nearly got lost in the dark during the night hike we decided it was time to do a spot of orienteering. The lookout proved to be a suitable venue and the three teams managed to find all the posts at their own pace – some coming in a little later than planned. We hid a few tubs of sweets the day before and, using a GPS, the Beavers were set to find them as if they were a Geocache. The leader responsible for planting the sweets managed to get the co-ordinates wrong for his team so don't let him plan a route in future!

It's been a good start for the Willows Colony and the Beavers seem to be enjoying themselves. The leaders certainly are!

Beavers - Oaks



Oaks colony have been very busy on Monday nights this term with a wide range of activities. A trip to Pets at Home earned those who attended the 'Animal Badge' and Pancake night was a great success in both filling hungry stomachs and creating a mess!

The Beavers have been keeping their imaginations and creative sides well honed with nights making bird feeders, futuristic collages and animal houses. The summer will give Oaks a good opportunity to get out an about with plenty of outdoor trips planned – such as pond dipping at Dinton Pastures.

Cubs - Badgers



This term, Badgers Cub Pack has been working towards the Community Challenge Badge. We have celebrated Chinese New Year, Pancake Day and St Patrick's Day. We have also raised money for Comic Relief. We have also enjoyed using the new Climbing Wall which has been used in traversing competitions that has kept the cubs 'hanging' around!

We have also had first aid training with the resuscitation of dummies a clear highlight for many. We also used this session to look at accident prevention by assessing risks in the home environment. We took part and won the District Orienteering Competition and did very well in the recent District Quiz.

The cubs have enjoyed an evening learning about maps and features found on maps, and another highlight has been a series of swimming trials preparing the team for the up-coming gala.

Niall Collier

Cubs - Leopards



Over the Spring term Leopards have been very busy making good use of the new traversing wall in Finchbase alongside our normal nights, during which we've squeezed in plenty over the last few weeks.

Leopards have been given their dose of camponology (bell ringing to the uninitiated), chocolate tasting and road safety to name but a few such activities, and have had great fun along the way.

Next up – fitness, kayaking and cycling!

Scouts - Goldfinch



Goldfinch troop have been keeping fit this term, everybody donning their jogging shoes and eating plenty of healthy food to try and earn their 'Fitness Challenge' badge. The Scouts have been run through fitness circuit training, swimming night, and even a diet and food evening (which some enjoyed more than others).

Plenty of scouts turned up on a cold (and slightly snowy!) February night for the Crazy Night Hike with a comedy theme; the challenges included a joke-based "treasure" (cup of tea ingredients!) hunt and the age-old Chinese handcuff trick which confused some of the leaders more than the scouts!

Over the summer term we'll be concentrating on our Outdoor Challenge badges, taking advantage of the hopefully warm summer evenings. Here's hoping!

Scouts - Greenfinch



As ever Greenfinch have fitted lots into an exciting programme for Spring. The Greenfinch Scouts joined Goldfinch troop in taking part in a cold but enjoyable Crazy Night Hike with a variety of bases spread round Finchampstead; donning their thinking caps and honing their patrol's teamwork to complete a wide range of challenges. They also have been out and about for a wide game on Ambarrow Hill and dusting up on outdoor skills – fire lighting, cooking and essential kit just a few of the activities the Scouts have been busy with.

Next term will see Greenfinch furthering these outdoor skills in anticipation of the July Summer Camp – axe and saw training, tent pitching and plenty of hikes in the pipeline.



Although not formally part of 1st Finchampstead Scout Group (Explorers are a district section), we do have very close links with the Group, meeting in Finchbase every Monday and taking Scouts from the troops as they reach 14+.

Phoenix Explorers continues to grow & have a successful programme. Spring term has seen us help paint the HQ, improve our pyrotechnics (fire lighting), make ourselves look like a scene from Casualty (fake first aid), making pancakes, going bowling and climbing.

Alongside the weekly Monday meetings, members have also taken part in a “Winter Camp” at Gilwell – a national scout organised event, attended Winter Hill Walking in Snowdonia – a district organised event and at the end of March are going on a camp at Earlywood, an event that is being run and organised by the Explorers themselves. We also took part in training for the 3 Towers Hike competition in April, for which we entered three teams – gaining a third and fourth place amongst three very impressive times.

As you can see the Explorers are an active section with a membership of around 30. The average attendance is 24 each week, even with the inevitable pressure of studies preventing everyone coming every week.

The active and varied programme is planned and run by a small team of the Explorers (known as the Forum) with help & support from the leadership team. We are always looking for more adult help either with Phoenix or to help get another Explorer Unit running elsewhere in Wokingham. There are around 20 Scouts in Wokingham District who are due to move into Explorers in September. Phoenix currently cannot take them - we need more adults!

Keith Gambles



Attention Parents: An important reminder as to the code of conduct in terms of Finchbase and dropping the little (and not so little) ones off – all children must be walked into the building, not dropped off in the car park. This is so responsibility for that child can be handed over to the leaders in Finchbase and thus they are covered by Scout insurance – if this does not happen your child is legally both out of our responsibility and not covered by our insurance. So stretch your legs and take them inside – it’s not exactly far.

We are now collecting Sainsburys Active Kids vouchers and Tesco vouchers for equipment for the group so if you’ve got any sitting around spare at home it would be great if you could drop them in.

Check out the 1st Finch site at www.1finch.org.uk, there’s plenty more news and updates on there including information on the fundraising for the minibus. In addition, the Exec are looking for sponsorship and promotion ideas for Finch so if you’re a budding Saatchi or just think you might have a suggestion let us know whether it be directly or through an email.

In honour of our 90th birthday as a group and to start off the fundraising for the minibus, some of the Leaders are undertaking a big challenge at the end of June. They are going to be taking on the Three Peaks Challenge, for which they will be climbing the three highest mountain peaks in Scotland, England and Wales within 24 hours. So on the last Sunday in June, the leaders will be starting at the base of Ben Nevis, close to Fort William in Scotland and will be finishing by running down Snowdon, in the Welsh mountains before the end of Monday. Please give generously – more details on the group web site, which will have live feeds on our progress throughout the challenge.

And thanks to all those who contributed to the newsletter out of the leadership team!

1st Finchampstead Vacancies



As mentioned repeatedly within this newsletter there are loads of jobs that still need fulfilling within the group and the more help we get the better; even if it's only a very small input it eases the load on other leaders and is always appreciated.

Here's a list of the vacancies we'd like to fill within the group, contact Mark Popplestone, Simon Gosden or Dave Judge if you think you can help or just want to find out more:

- Treasurer
- Finchbase Manager
- Minibus Manager
- Scout Leader (for new troop)
- Assistant Scout, Cub and Beaver Leaders
- Helpers for all sections
- Instructors – e.g Sailing, Canoeing, Kayaking, Climbing, Walking, Caving, Air Rifle Shooting, Mountain Biking
- Fundraising Chairperson
- Media Personnel
- Assistant Quarter Master