

5th Beckenham South Scout Group 2008-2009

This year's big adventure was a trip for 63 young people and volunteers to Kandersteg International Scout Centre in Switzerland. The trip had a budget of £38,000 with huge support from bodies like the Jack Petchey Foundation, the Leslie Sell Charitable Trust, Beckenham Round Table and corporate support from Barclays as well as some tremendous fundraising efforts from both the parents and young people at events that included bag-packing at Sainsbury's in Beckenham and a race night.

While in Switzerland, activities included glacier climbing, tobogganing, hiking, rafting and much more. For some of our children this was their first journey abroad. Lots of information about the trip is available on our website under 'group links', www.thefifth.org.uk.

Thanks to a grant from The Bromley Youth Capital Fund, we were able to buy a new minibus for the group and its partnered unit. The minibus is used by all the sections but its main users are the scouts and explorers. The minibus is available for use by local voluntary organisations and we have a booking system and diary online. The minibus cost £ 26,283.15 and we were also granted some money to pay for branding on the sides as well as some seat covers and a wheel lock. A grassroots grant from the Capital Community Foundation will go along way to paying for the insurance on the bus for the next three years.

The Beavers have thrived under Lisa, Elaine and Gary and now have regular sleepovers as well as activities that have included archery, visiting an airfield, building fires and a fun day at Wilberforce. Many of the beavers are well on their way to their Chief Scout Bronze Award

The Cubs saw the transfer of Akela-ship on a Monday from Phil Cole to Helen Armstrong. Phil ran his last cub camp at Whitsun and it was a damp success. Another wet camp... we are due some sun. Phil came back at Christmas to help with the Winter Cub Camp but his time is now taken up with the Explorers.

Helen now runs Chil Pack with the continued help of Tim Banfield who we were delighted to present with his ten-year service award at Christmas. Rikki Pack are now up to speed, running at capacity and doing wonderfully under Andy and Keeley Dawe, Louis Mendez and Adam Young.

Our partnered Explorer Unit is another success story. Links forged with local guides have seen our numbers grow to over 20 young people and under the leadership of Phil Cole, Harry Marshall and Michael Goggin they have got an active and exciting programme running. Highlights included a Christmas Camp, a night making cardboard castles and more. Planning for the summer is well under way and the section can expect to grow further with intakes from the troop.

The scout section continued to grow under the leadership of Chris Elmer and Rob Prendergast. The scouts took part in district events including winning the district quiz and Competition. Trips took place to an RAF base as well as visiting Alton Towers and national camps like Green Beret and the Pedal Car Olympics.

Rob was diagnosed with cancer in January 2009 and has dropped out of scouting to concentrate on his treatment. He is badly missed by the children and adults and stays in touch with us via his friends in the group. He is in our prayers constantly.

A sad loss to the group was Nick Gowing. Nick was ASL, GSL and Parish Liaison during his years with the 5th. He died in September 2008 aged 78 years. Nick was a close friend to John Potter and helped John run many decades of Summer Camps for the troop. Nick's funeral was attended by many of his former scouts while some current scouts served at the altar in uniform.

The coming year promises to be very difficult as we support our friend Robert with his illness and the young people who are very close to him. Despite difficulties to come, the programme is full and

more young people than ever will be presented with exciting opportunities and challenges. Our thanks to all of our many supporters and helpers who give so generously of their time and funds without whom nothing could happen.