



Loose Swiss

December 2014



REFLECTIONS by David Priestley

At the last AGM, in September, I stepped down after thirteen years as group chairman and a previous eighteen years as an assistant with the cub sections. Of course, I will miss the regular contact, but I have many memories of my time with Loose Swiss.

Like so many, I became involved, as a parent, when my two sons were cubs and there was a lack of adults so I volunteered to help. This then led to membership of the supporters' committee and later group chairman. My late wife often wondered why I continued, after my boys had moved on and my response was "there's not a queue behind me!" but, fortunately, the group have always been well served with adults in recent years, so we continue to provide scouting for youngsters in the area.

I have seen many boys – and in my time, it was only boys – develop in their time in cubs, some who had joined reluctantly after persuasion from parents, but soon became involved and others whose personalities became noticeably more confident as they progressed to seconders and, later, sixers.

I particularly remember one camp on our land when it poured from start to finish, so much so that the scouts packed up and left on the Sunday. When asked if they would like to follow that example, there was a unanimous "NO" from the cubs and the leaders were reluctantly forced to endure the rest of Sunday and Bank Holiday Monday in the rain. It was possibly the only camp where boys came home cleaner than when they arrived!

The group has for many years given £500 to charity each year from our wastepaper income and many will remember the collection after the Boxing Day tsunami when we collected a much larger amount and were able to donate over £1100 to the victims through the Scout Association. Our annual charitable donation, as well as the Children In Need involvement and occasional credits from individual sections, show an interest in local community which is very important.

I have valued my time with the group, and will still be involved in the wastepaper collections and jumble sales, as no-one fully escapes, I have admiration for all the uniformed leaders who give so much time to the welfare of the youngsters in their sections, but also, importantly, the "civilian" and others who work hard to ensure the necessary backup to maintain the high standards we have become accustomed to. John Penrose, as long-serving treasurer is always tenacious in making sure that we got the best value and provided clear and comprehensive reports. It would be invidious to name individuals, as all have contributed, and, of course there are some who are no longer with us that I shall remember with affection and respect.

David Priestley

GROUP SCOUT LEADER, PAUL WORDEN

Well 2014 has seen another year of Scouting at Loose Swiss.

There have been ups and down for the year we felt the loss of Trevor Gallavin and Steph Osbourne, two individuals who have been heavily involved in the Group over the last 30 years which has left a gap in our knowledge and hearts. Our thoughts go to their families and friends. Whilst the increases in numbers of young people and Leaders is seen as a distinct positive, an can I take this opportunity to welcome you all to the Group.

I have now been with the Group for six years and Group Scout Leader for three of those, I still get enjoyment from being involved with meetings with the children and I have seen a number of children, including my son, move through from Beavers to Cubs and onto Scouts each with their additional challenges for the children to deal with. I have presented a number of Bronze and Silver Awards to Beavers and Cubs, but we are still chasing that elusive Gold Award for the Scouts something we are looking to improve over the next twelve months.

This year saw the 100th Anniversary of the start of World War I. As a group we were touched by this as we lost a leader and a patrol leader to the battles. In October a number of the Group were Joined by Tovil Scout Group for a service of remembrance for these two individuals at a memorial in the Loose Valley that has been there since 1922. The war saw a great many things change for individuals, society and the country as a whole and over the next four years we as a Group will try and remember those fallen in keeping with their sacrifice.

In recent months the Group has been involved with the Local Parish Council in respect of the Local Area Plan helping to shape the local area and the facilities it provides.

I have mentioned that our numbers in the sections have increased over the last few years and we have a waiting list for entry into the Group. Whilst this is good that we are attracting Young People to join the movement, it is a shame that we are unable to accommodate them on the ground of a lack of leaders for Beavers. If anyone wishes to volunteer can you please contact either myself or Audrey Beeching via the Group website www.looseswissscouts.com. The Group has attended a number of activities within the District including Parades and Sporting Tournaments. The numbers in attendance shows that the members of the Group are proud to be seen in uniform as Scouts.

Some of you may be aware that we are planning some changes to the layout of headquarters over the next year in order to improve the space available for activities at Pickering Street. If you or someone you know are able to offer any assistance please contact me via the website

I cannot sign off quite yet without mentioning our outgoing Chairman. David Priestley has been involved with the Group for 30 years starting as a Parent helper with one of the Cub Packs and moving through various roles to Group Chairman for over the last 10 years. We are in the process of appointing a new chairman but I wish David a long and happy retirement.

It just leaves me to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and I look forward to seeing you all and your children in 2015.

Paul Worden
November 2014.

Swiss Valley Report Nov 2014

Camp bookings for the year along with our regular visitors:

June:-

Suttons Scout Group again made a return to the valley for their annual camp.

July:- We welcomed the members of **The Vine Church** for their family camp. It was a great success with many activities for both the children and adults. Over

the long weekend approximately 250 to 300 people attended.

Hurstpierpoint Scout Group also arrived during the month and stayed for the week.

August:- Paragon Explorer Unit returned to the valley and spent a long weekend.

September:- Tiger Cubs held their Leader and Family camp.

Generally:- April saw the completion of the Chestnut Coppicing and clearance of all the under wood. All the felled timber was logged into manageable lengths and transported out for storage to the main entrance to prevent unauthorised removal as happened previously.



Salts Pond received its yearly attention clearing two channels of watercourse to increase the flow of water. The banks were also cleared of fallen and overhanging trees and shrubs.

The repairs to the damaged railings and rag stone wall were eventually completed and signed off. A submission to MBC for permission to remove a three limbed Ash tree growing out of the Rag wall has been made and awaits the licence. Japanese Knotweed has again been treated on the banks of the pond.

The biggest problem that arose early in the year, January 2014, following the heavy rains was the landslip on footpath 59 beside Salts Pond. This FP has been officially closed to public access since February. Negotiations are still ongoing as to who is responsible for the safety of this FP. During September following further contacts and talks KCC have taken on the contract to carry out the reinstatement of the footpath and are waiting on two or three days clear weather before starting! The



landslip affects our neighbour who is of course extremely concerned with the coming winter. Currently I have been in contact with several Soil Stabilization engineers of whom one has been on site and provided information on the following steps that need to be made. Resolving this problem could be extremely expensive for the group and negotiations with the Scout Associations are ongoing.

During May an English Oak tree was planted in memory of Pam Cole who was a member of the Valley Fund Raising Committee. A well attended ceremony with many friends and group members in attendance to what was a very moving event. It was great to welcome Martin Cole, a past member of L+S, and his family to the ceremony.

Finally my thanks go out to all the volunteers who throughout the year have turned out each month to assist with the many projects that have been ongoing each month.

To the 5 or 6 Saturday work group volunteers, who would welcome further help from amongst the parents, and the 10 to 15 from the joint Loose Footpath and L+S group who attend the twice monthly Monday work projects.

THANK YOU

Bob Jesshope

Swiss Valley Warden.

Willow Beaver Colony newsletter article 11.2014

Willow Beavers have been their usual busy selves in 2014, enjoying lots of activities both at HQ and outside. In March the Beavers visited Buttercups Sanctuary for Goats, learning what was involved in looking after the goats, and getting "hands on" experience of grooming and feeding them, and earning their Animal Friend badge. Other popular activities during the summer included making & racing boats on the Brooks in Loose village, hiking in Mote Park, a visit from a paramedic ambulance & first aid practice, and visiting the Loose Scarecrow Festival. On 19th July Willow Beavers joined several other Colonies from Maidstone South District at the District Beaver Funday. Despite having to be re-located from Swiss Valley to Boughton Monchelsea Scout HQ at the last minute, (for safety reasons) this was a very successful day out, with the Beavers enjoying activities such as archery, water rockets, a coconut shy, crossbows, campfire cooking, string trail and various craft activities.

It has been a year of change for the adult team in Willow Colony. In June Red Fox (Sarah Smith) was officially invested as an Assistant Beaver Leader by the Paul Worden, Loose Swiss GSL, and in July Willow Beavers sadly waved goodbye to Colony Helper, Grey Squirrel (Kay Bradley), who was unable to continue helping due to other commitments. We would like to thank Kay for her many years of invaluable help. We would also like to welcome to our Loose Swiss team Steve & Nick, two brave Beaver dads, who have volunteered to become Colony Helpers. Willow Beavers are now looking forward to finishing 2014 in style with a Xmas party at Lower Grange Farm with Maple Colony & the annual Loose Swiss Carol Concert at All Saints Church, Loose.

New Assistant Leader has joined the pack!

I was a parent helper at Monday night Beavers whilst my youngest, Oliver, was there. I had also helped when Sam was a Beaver who is now 14! It felt good to be back and be able to assist as they were very short of helpers. However, due to work commitments I was unable to commit to becoming an assistant leader as it was hard to get home from work in time and didn't want to let the group down.

Oliver moved to Cubs in September where they also needed a new assistant and with the later start time, I agreed to help.

Since starting with Lion Pack we have done lots of activities and I'm learning new things every week. As I'd only helped at Beavers, the Grand Howl was new to me and I've still yet to master how to fold the flag!

Lion Pack staff and Cubs have been very welcoming along with everyone from Loose Swiss and I feel part of the family! Although, I'm still getting to know you all.

Since September we have been doing lots of different activities such as:

Arts & Craft, Painting Poppies, Fitness Challenge, Nike Hike (think my team won that evening), French Bread Pizzas, The meaning of Remembrance Day, First Aid, Children in Need evening, Science badge work.

I also attended the Remembrance Day Service where I had the privilege of laying the wreath on behalf of Loose Swiss. The annual fireworks evening was good again this year, thanks to everyone who was involved in running this event. I have attended for many years and it's a great evening. Shame the weather was not on our side this year but in the true spirit of Scouting, it didn't dampen our spirits!

I would encourage anyone who can spare the time to help out with Loose Swiss, not only are they a great bunch of people who give their time voluntarily, but we also have great fun teaching new skills to the children whilst having fun.

I'm looking forward to the Cub Leaders' Christmas meal and the many activities to come.

Bagheera

Lion Pack

Loose Swiss Scouts Fireworks Display 2014

It was that time of year again, when on November the 8th the group had their Fireworks display in Loose Valley. After an extremely busy week and collecting the greatest amount of pallets and wood possible we were able to build our biggest bonfire so far, at almost 15ft tall and 15ft wide it was a bit of a monster.

Even though we managed to fight off the wet and the rain for most of the day, unfortunately we were hit with a down pour close to the start of the fireworks, which meant we had to make the decision to start slightly early.

Even with this small setback the team managed to put on a great display to celebrate Guy Fawkes.

We apologise for the start of the fireworks, but we wanted to offer the best display we could and as good as we are we can't control the weather. We hope everyone had a great evening and thanks to everyone that came and all of the leaders/helpers that help throughout the day.

Steve Harley Scout Leader



For someone who is supposed to be teaching the Scout motto of "Be Prepared", I have been remarkably complacent when it comes to writing something for the newsletter...so it will be rather short and sweet this time around. After taking on the role of the Maclean Troop Scout Leader, getting the admin, finances, programme, badges all up-to-date and general organisation of how we run meetings has been no mean feat and the efforts of the Maclean leaders has been instrumental in this. As I write, I can hear some of the Scouts undertaking a challenge to film an advert as a modern version of the nativity story. Having time to write a newsletter article during a Wednesday night Troop meeting last term would have been unthinkable.

Talking of which, in the lead up to the summer we made the most of the good weather in Swiss Valley and the village. One of the more memorable meetings was spent at the Brooks, testing out some boats made from junk. Memorable, in the sense that the Scouts had an unbridled enthusiasm for getting wet. With the loss of quite a few of our eldest children back in the summer and now a big period before some of our children are due to move on to Explorers, it looks like we could be bursting at the seams this time next year!

As a result, we have adopted a different approach since the summer, concentrating on getting back-to-basics by organising the children into Patrols and working on some of the traditional Scouting skills. This might be at odds with a recent announcement from the Scout Association, but I'm pretty sure most of the children can identify, if not tie, around five or six knots, including the fabled Alpine Butterfly.

We are also looking forward to going to Wintercamp at Gilwell Park early next year. The strapline for the camp is "Welcome to the sub-zero adventure", and the Scouts will be spending two nights under canvas (whatever the weather) and can have a go at a whole bunch of activities that we couldn't ordinarily put on for them...expect a write-up in the next newsletter.

Stuart Patton
SL Maclean Troop



Children in Need 2014

A BIG THANK YOU to you all for supporting this years Children In Need Appeal, as a Group we raised £530 for the 2014 appeal to support good causes for children throughout the UK.



Maple Beavers

An exciting time over the last few months for our Beavers,

We have had visits from a paramedic and a doctor, so lots of bandaging! We made and sailed boats on the brook, constructed things from sweets, made planes and did a quiz around Loose including a visit to the allotments where the beavers surprised us with their knowledge of fruit and vegetables. Our year ended with a joint meeting with Tiger Cubs where everyone enjoyed the water slide and BBQ.

We attended a Beaver Fun Day with other Beavers from the district where they tried archery and cooking over a fire and a variety of other activities.

Our young leaders put on a science evening with different bases which included moving things across water, testing magnets, volcanoes and fireworks.

Some beavers have gone up to cubs, most gaining their Bronze award and we have welcomed new Beavers into the colony. We have also gained a new leader, Michelle Creek who is very welcome.

We are working towards Christmas, to learn a song for the carol service and going to a party at the scout barn, Sandling.