

 **OXFORDSHIRE  
SCOUTING**  
**2018/19 REVIEW**

# Chairman

**F**or the past few years, Phil and I have shared the job of authoring the foreword to this annual report, but this year, Phil, quite rightly in the year of his retirement, asked to write something personal that will go out with only his name at the bottom.

I have no doubt that he'll say many things that we would normally have said together, outlining the superb activities that have taken place over the past twelve months, the amazing commitment of all the adults who support young people, and our hopes for the future. But there's one thing that he won't be able to comment upon, and I'm going to take the opportunity to do this. That thing, is, of course, Phil himself and the extraordinary contribution he has made to Scouting in Oxfordshire during his tenure as County Commissioner.

Phil Earl has led our County through an amazing period of growth - not just in numbers of young people enjoying Scouting, but also in the reputation of our charity within the

life of the County. Whether sitting in a committee room, joining young people around a campfire, or helping to direct traffic coming into Youlbury, Phil has approached his role with consummate skill, never forgetting that at the heart of everything we do should be the Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Explorers, Network members and Leaders we serve. He has never been afraid to face making difficult decisions, nor shirked the less exciting parts of his role, many of which take place at strange hours of the day or night and involve copious amounts of time at the computer keyboard.

Phil Earl has been an exceptional County Commissioner. He is my friend, sparring partner, confidant and wise counsel. He is a true Scout. Thank you, Phil. We'll all miss you.

**John May DL**  
County Chairman



# County Commissioner

**T**his is my sixth and final annual report as Oxfordshire's County Commissioner. It has been a real privilege, and a lot of fun, to hold this role, not something I would have ever anticipated doing when I joined Scouting as a Cub Scout nearly 40 years ago ... I am really grateful for having had the opportunity to lead a team so committed to developing Scouting in Oxfordshire. So, this is not only a review on this year, but also a look back over the past six.

As a team, we often reflect on the targets that we set for membership five years ago and I'm delighted that we have largely achieved our goals. This is not to say that numbers are everything, but it is helpful to have something by which to measure success.

- **7,384 youth membership** (target was 7,500 by 2019)
- **9,848 total membership** (target was 10,000 by 2020)
- **26% of youth members aged 12+** (target was 25% by 2019)
- **26% female youth membership** (target was 25% by 2019)
- **41 new sections** opened since 2013

Last year we undertook an online survey of our volunteers to test their opinion on a range of areas of our work, similar to the one we did in 2014. Over 400 people completed the survey and the results have helped shape some focus areas of work that are still ongoing. In most areas we saw improved results this year compared to 2014. People felt that their roles were getting a little easier, they are more aware of what's happening across the County and feel more part of County Scouting.

## Growth

The 2019 annual census recorded growth of 3.7% in total membership against broadly flat results nationally. Each Section and District in our County grew and we opened 4 new Sections and 2 new Groups. There is much opportunity for further growth, both by attracting more of the current population to join Scouting, but also by ensuring that Scouting is available in the rapidly expanding communities across our County. The Trustees are looking at how we can use our financial reserves to support further growth in the coming years. Since 2013, our youth membership has grown by 18% from 6,257 to 7,384 (average national growth has been around 5.5%), meaning that 1,127 more young people are taking part in Scouting now. One area that we know

particularly needs more work in is inclusion and diversity to ensure that Scouting is truly accessible to all – and perceived as being so – in our communities. The team has been discussing how to improve focus and is developing plans.

## Youth Shaped Scouting

A significant change nationally a few years ago was the introduction of Youth Commissioners to our teams. Oxfordshire appointed County Youth Commissioners in late 2016 and Hannah & Ashley do a great job in representing our youth members as part of our County Team and as Trustees. They have undertaken many Sectional and event visits this year to encourage youth shaped Scouting and have also been working with District Commissioners to appoint District Youth Commissioners – it's great to see that our first ones have now been appointed.

## Programme & Events

Having a prescribed programme is one thing that sets Scouting apart from other youth activities. In 2018/19, we have finally got our Programme Support team into action and helping to drive yet further improvements in the quality of the programme that is on offer to young people. This is a significant achievement, ahead of much of the rest of the UK, and has been in our development plan for some time. It will take time to roll out, but the team's purpose is to help ensure that County & District activities & events are run by our event teams to address hard to deliver programme elements and to support Section Leaders that are finding programme elements more challenging to address. This should lead to broader experiences and even more Top Awards.





Talking of events, our County Events team has had another busy year delivering a wide range of opportunities for all our Sections. We have spent time in recent years improving the governance around events to ensure that they are well managed, and that risk is appropriately addressed. The programme of events is being looked at to ensure that it remains relevant and is contributing to the overall experience for young people. Our AGM will be being held at CubWorld, a whole County Cub Scout camp. And planning is underway for our next whole County camp which will be held in 2021.

You will see from the Programme section of this report that there have been a lot of international expeditions in the past year. The range and number of international experiences has grown in the past few years and we now support local group expeditions as well as County expeditions to international Jamborees, for winter activities and for community work. During 2018/19 the unit that will attend the four-yearly World Scout Jamboree in North America has gelled as a group and raised a huge amount of money and we have started looking towards our next community expedition in 2021 as well as sending two Units to the European Scout Jamboree in Poland next year.

## Awards & Recognition

In 2014 we held our first annual Awards Day celebration, an event that we have repeated each year. This day brings together everyone who has achieved a 'Top Award' (Chief Scout, Queen's Scout, DofE) in the past year in all Sections and celebrates their achievement with a ceremony and day of fun for families. It has been a real success and we get great feedback from families on what the day means to them all. This year, 900 people received awards which takes the total to around 5,000 since 2014!

Over the past year we have recognised the commitment of 31 of our volunteers with national Scouting awards. Of particular note, 14 volunteers received St George's Day awards this year which are given for service of exceptionally high standard. My congratulations to you all. Valuing and rewarding our volunteers has been a real focus in the past five years and we have significantly increased the number of awards made annually. In the past six months we have established the County Awards Advisory Group to ensure that no one is overlooked where an award is deserved.

## Supporting volunteers

We have launched 2 new County Scout Active Support ('SAS') Units this year and now have 7 compared to 4 in 2013. These SAS Units provide specialised support to events, primarily activities and training. With a total membership of 189, they are a real asset to our County.

All of our volunteers follow a training programme to equip them for their role. As ever, the training team have been very busy over the past 12 months running a wide range of courses, training validations, personal learning plan sessions and ongoing learning. The team has also been supporting the regional delivery of Manager & Supporter training in its first full year of delivery. It's impossible to quantify just how much training has been provided, but it will be many thousands of hours over the past six years!

We have more Young Leaders (14-17 year olds) than ever and have made improvements in the way that they are identified, supported and trained since an improved focus on them started four years ago. Our survey showed that over 50% of Sections, have Young Leaders, and when they are integrated properly within a leadership team, are a huge benefit to Section leadership. We also know that they are very likely to become adult Leaders when they turn 18.

During this year we have developed and launched a new website. The new site is much easier to manage than the previous one, but more importantly provides an improved interface for searching and booking on to volunteer training, simpler ways for parents to register new joiners or for new volunteers to find a role and online tools for our volunteers to make some administrative tasks quicker. The website is part of our ongoing commitment to provide a better external face to Scouting in the County and sits alongside improvements in how we use social media and internal communications, including our regular newsletter 'The Ox'. Our survey showed that the work we have done on communications has seen an improvement from 78% to 87% in how well informed our volunteers consider they are.

## Investments to support Scouting

Oxfordshire County Scout Council is a registered charity and is fortunate to have reserves that are unrestricted or designated to development of c. £400,000. Having reserves is fine, but something we have been keen to do is ensure

that these reserves are being used to support and develop Scouting. The Trustees are continually looking at how to support the County Team in delivering our development plan and have allowed us to make numerous financial investments with a commitment to continue this. In 2018/19 the charity made investments from reserves of £56,000 which has contributed to total investments of an estimated £200,000 over the past five years.

Through the support of the Trustees, we have now had staff employed by the County for three years. Our County Administrator supports the County Team, District Commissioners and Training team as well as being a 'go to' person for everyone across the County. Our Growth & Support Officer works with Districts to recruit, induct and support primarily GSLs to ensure that they are supporting local Scouting in the best way possible. Employing staff is a real commitment, both financially and in volunteer time, but has proved to be a massive benefit and has made a big difference in making volunteer roles easier in so many areas.

Future investments include continuing to grow the staff team, continuing to support a broad range of training and development for volunteers – particularly in adventurous activities, supporting international expeditions for young people and providing good quality facilities for meetings and volunteer training.

## And finally ...

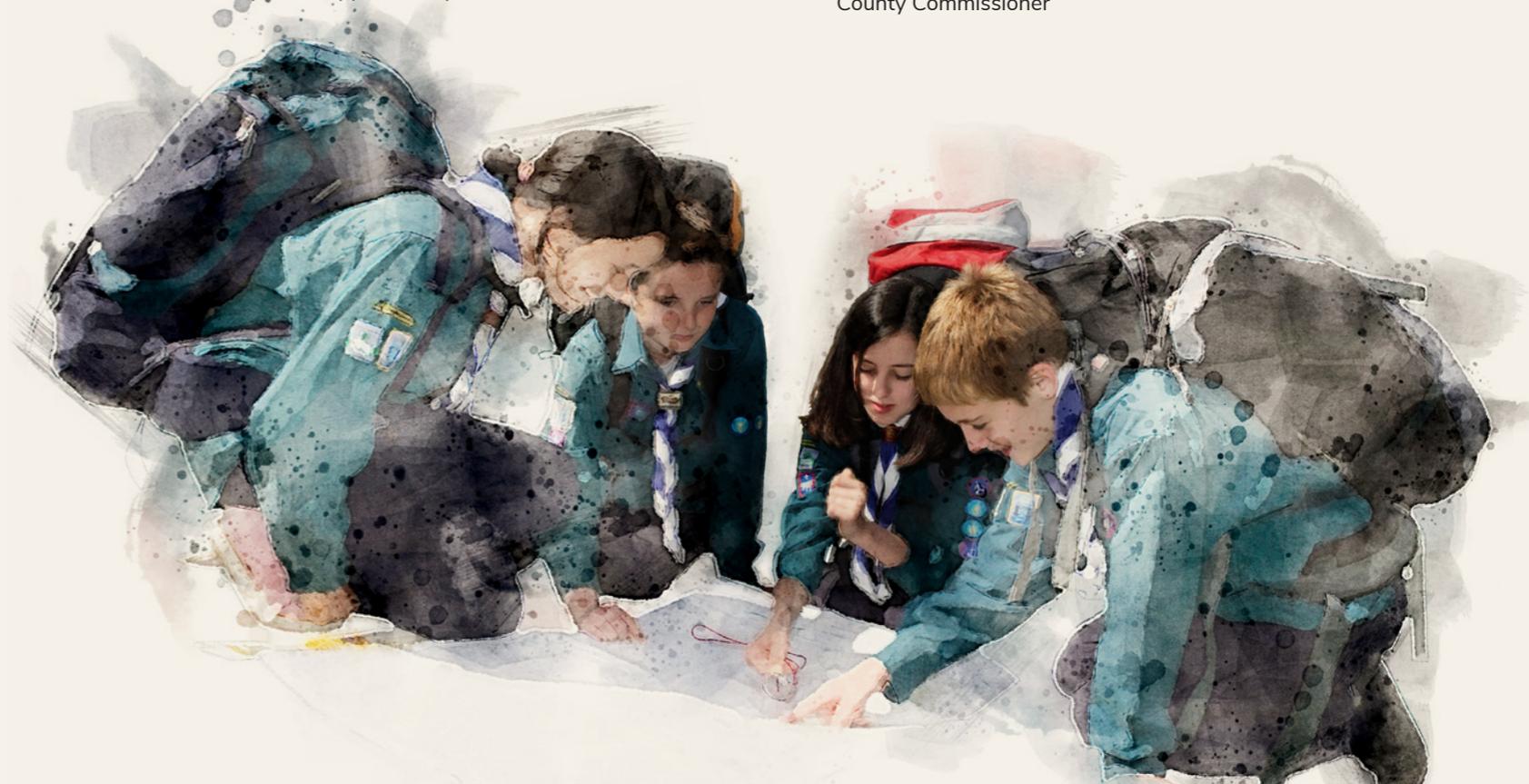
I am delighted that Wendy Tatham has been appointed to lead Oxfordshire Scouting, taking over from me at our AGM in July. Having known Wendy for a while and worked more closely with her in the past few months as we transition, I am confident she will do a great job. I am equally confident that she will get the support that I have been so lucky to have had from the County Team and rest of our volunteers during my time in the role. Good luck, Wendy!

So that just leaves me to say a lot of thank yous – which is going to be a bit like an Oscars acceptance speech! Thank you to Michelle and Chris, our staff team – doing your day job alongside volunteers is a difficult job and you do it really well and have made such a difference to our County. Thank you to John, Robert, Ben and Brian, who have served as Chairman or Treasurer during my time, and to all the other County Trustees – governance is a very important and often unseen part of our organisation. Thank you to the whole of the County Team over the years, but particularly to those that have been Youth Commissioners (Hannah and Ashley), my deputies (Pat, Shaun, Sarah, Alec, Dawn, Michelle, Becky, Marcus, Siobhan, Christine), District Commissioners (Liz, Martin, Richard, Andrew, Anna, Anthony, Nick, Alec, Chris, Michael, Gill and David) and County Training Managers (Colin, John and Shaun) – it's been great fun working with you and there is no way that what has been achieved in the last six years would have been done without your vision, input and sheer hard work. Thank you to my children - Jack, Sam, Ben

& Zoe – you have supported me and been dragged around to so many meetings, events and activities, (mostly!) without complaint. And finally and, for me, most importantly, thank you to every single one of our amazing Section Leaders and Group/Unit Supporters – you are the ones who deliver the

Scouting programme, make a direct difference to our young people and provide them with life changing experiences and #skillsforlife.

**Phil Earl**  
County Commissioner





## Youth Commissioners

**2019** has been a very exciting year for us as Youth Commissioners; it is the year that we visited even more Groups during YouShape month than before and we are very close to a full District Youth Commissioner (DYC) team, with only a couple of Districts to go! This year has very much been about ensuring Youth Shaped Scouting can be delivered in as much as the County as possible and we feel that we are well on the way with the appointment of the DYCs. We have also been involved in the appointment of our new County Commissioner, Wendy, who we are very excited to work with!

In terms of projects, we have started to develop ideas for some community impact work that can be built into both local and national level Scouting. This is something we will continue to develop throughout our appointments and are keen to run with. We feel that getting involved in the community around us is a vital part of understanding the culture and differences that make us who we are. This is something that national Scouting is focusing on and we feel is an important part of supporting our young people to develop their understanding of the community around them.

In the summer of next year, EuroJam is happening in Gdansk in Poland and we are both part of the leadership team taking 72 young people on this amazing adventure. We are so excited about this wonderful opportunity and the planning is already very much underway!

We also just want to say thank you to all of you who have supported us in our roles so far, we really do appreciate it and have loved seeing so many of you embrace the YouShape programme!

Here's to another great year!

**Hannah Venn & Ashley Falkner** -  
County Youth Commissioners



# Programme

**2018-19** has been the first full year that the Programme Team has operated alongside the County Events Team rather than together, with the primary objective being to ensure direct focus on the quality of programme being delivered.

As a first task, members of the Programme Team have been out supporting the Districts at their respective Section Leaders' meetings advising on how best to make their events support the core programme and, in particular, the elements of the programme that Leaders find difficult to deliver within the Section meetings.

We've also been attending District Management meetings to update Group Scout Leaders on the changes we are making to programme support and how the Programme Team can work with their Leaders where they are struggling with aspects of the core programme. This might include programme planning with the aim that these Sections will be better able to deliver the top awards to their Young People.

The International part of the team has been particularly busy in the last year, supporting or leading trips to Holland, Switzerland, Norway, Bosnia and, shortly, 40 young people from the County will be making their way to the Jamborette in Haarlem, Holland. Finally, 72 young people, which will

make up the contingent for the first European Jamboree in 15 years to be held in summer 2020, have been selected. This, of course, alongside supporting the Oxfordshire Unit that will attend the World Scout Jamboree in North America in summer 2019.

In addition, domestic international support has included the Jamboree on the Internet and Jamboree on the Air which was more popular than ever. Members of the County have also been fundraising and collecting equipment to send back to Scouts in The Gambia.

Thanks must go to our Assistant County Commissioners in the Programme Team for their work and adaption to changes in how we are focussing on programme support – Nick Tappin, Lorraine Crowther, Dawn Jeffs & Wendy Tatham (Sectional programme), Alex Lyczowski (International) and Jo Hawtin (DofE & QSA).

**Marcus Goodwin** – Deputy County Commissioner – Programme

# Events

**2018-19** has been another busy year for our fantastic team of Event Managers, with 15 different events having been run. In the autumn, Beavers enjoyed a fun-filled day of activities at Wittenham Clumps, where they tried their hand at pond-dipping, meadow sweeping and fire lighting amongst others. Christmas saw the return of the annual Sing-a-long Santa event, with presents and a campfire, as well as a wide range of winter-themed crafts and games.

The Cubs have had a busy year, with the chess competition and swimming gala both being well attended. Highlights of the Cub year have included a day of Laser Tag, whilst 100 young people also enjoyed a taster session of scuba diving.

For the Scout Section, 2018-19 featured the usual favourites of Aqua Camp in the summer, and CPCW in October. The former saw 325 Scouts take to the water in kayaks, canoes, dragon boats and rafts, with many gaining their 'Time on the Water', 'Dragon Boating' and 'Nautical Skills' badges as a result. At CPCW, over 200 Scouts battled it out to win the coveted trophy, enjoying activities including laser tag, backwoods cooking, and a fabulous game of 'human snooker' along the way.



For our older members, we launched a trip in 2018 to Gilwell 24, a national event which offers activities far bigger and more adrenaline-filled than can be offered at County level. Whilst few managed to make it through the whole 24 hours of adventurous activities without needing a nap, a brilliant time was had by all, and we are already fully booked for 2019. In addition, we ran the ever-popular CESAW with its now traditional colour run (which was enjoyed by all in spite of the rain). Many Explorer and Network Units also challenged themselves at the annual RaidOx event, working through a list of fiendishly tricky challenges including a hiking boot-themed cake creation, and sourcing a 'royal tea-towel'. The victors were Falcon ESU from Yarnton, however no doubt many of this year's Units will be back again in November to battle it out for the title.

Rounding off a busy calendar, we also ran a number of events for all Sections; in May, the County Awards Day celebrated the achievements of 850 young people, who joined us with their families for a day of activities at Youlbury Scout Campsite. February half term saw yet another incredible week of performances by the Oxfordshire Scout & Guide Gang Show, with sell-out performances, before finally in March 2019 the Winter Challenge gave over 800 walkers the chance to hike 18 miles along the Ridgeway, battling wintry winds and chilly rain as they did so.

2018 also saw the launch of a new event – Oxon Gathering – specifically targeted at our adult volunteers. Over 100 adults came together for a fun-filled weekend of training and information sessions, sharing of best practice, and of course plenty of entertaining activities too.

As ever, we would like to extend our thanks to all of the adult volunteers and young people who work hard to make our increasingly busy programme of events such a success. We would particularly like to thank Natalie Soanes, who stepped down from her role leading Beaver events in 2018, after many years of exceptional service.

**Michelle Cox & Becky Stanworth** – Deputy County Commissioner - Events

## Growth

A variety of external evidence has demonstrated that Scouting is hugely beneficial to both young people and volunteers and is accepted as a way to gain #skillsforlife. As a result, growing the provision for Scouting could not be more important.

It is important that we recognise that everyone has a part to play in growing the movement from encouraging young people to join Scouting to welcoming in new adults to help. Many people across Oxfordshire have worked exceptionally hard over the past year and more, and their vision and persistence has resulted in new Groups and Sections opening throughout the County. We are now providing Scouting to almost 7,500 young people - an increase of 3.7% (218 young people) over the year.

Whilst Beavers, Cubs and Scouts all grew in 2018/19, it has been the Explorer Scout Section in Oxfordshire that has seen phenomenal growth of 23%. This is proof that the excellent work of our adult volunteers is paying off and we are confident this growth will continue as more young people come to realise how their journey through Scouting can give them amazing experiences that they can't get elsewhere and access to gain Chief Scout and Queen's Scout Awards alongside The Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Our volunteers aren't just adults, and the number of 14-17 year old Young Leaders has also grown in 2018/19. These Young Leaders gain valuable experience that will help them in their work and volunteering lives ahead and through their training they can gain recognition from the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM).

All Scout Districts in Oxfordshire added new Sections in the last year and it has been particularly pleasing to see the opening of new Groups as additional communities decide to embrace Scouting. We welcome them into our family and appreciate the hard work and commitment local people and Scouters put in to make it happen.



We are constantly looking for ways to recruit more adult support into Scouting and this year there have been 'Grow your Group' workshops and even a recruitment day at Oxford Brookes University. We have again increased the number of our adult volunteers but need to continue to encourage more adults to join as flexible volunteers and help us offer even better Scouting to more young people.

With thousands of new homes being built across Oxfordshire we are planning for future Scouting and are working with

local communities to ensure Scouting is available to all. Some key areas that will be targeted over the next year include Wallingford, West Oxfordshire, Farringdon and Woodstock.

**Siobhan Wilson & Christine Mason**  
Deputy County Commissioner - Growth

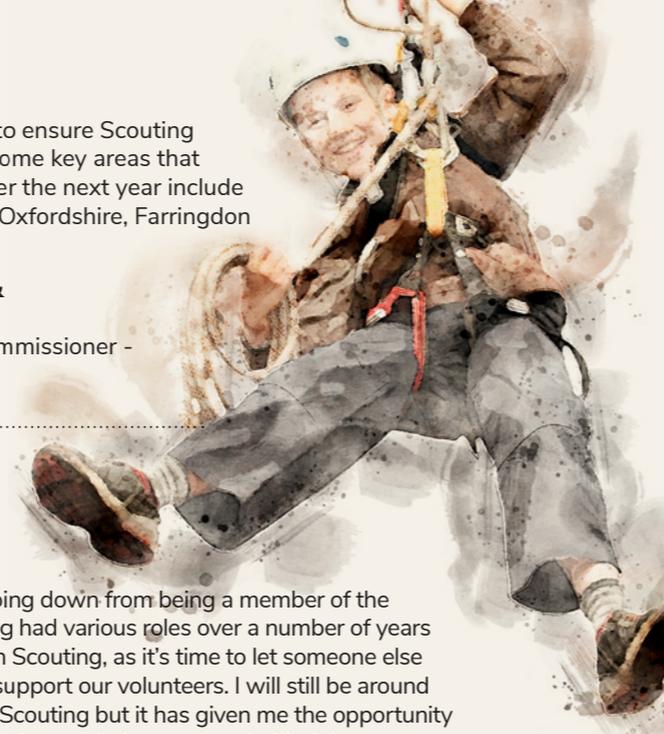
## Adult Support

**A**dult Support is an area of Scouting that often goes unnoticed, busy supporting adults in the background to ensure that young people can continue to experience fun and adventure whilst being developed to become the best person they can be and influence those around them to make the world a better place, and so it should.

Each year, hundreds of adults across the County attend training and receive coaching in their role totally free of charge, and it's not all about how to show Scouts to put up tents and cook for 40 people, but also skills that the adults will find useful in everyday life. Whether it be learning how to stand up and talk in front of a room of people, first aid skills, media skills, or how to manage a bunch of volunteers we offer true #skillsforlife for all our adults both new and experienced.

This year I am stepping down from being a member of the County Team, having had various roles over a number of years supporting Adults in Scouting, as it's time to let someone else support those that support our volunteers. I will still be around doing other roles in Scouting but it has given me the opportunity to reflect on the amazing work that goes on behind the scenes to support the direction that Phil, our County Commissioner and the Programme team together with John, our County Chairman and the County Executive Committee, whilst ensuring that our adults are ready to steer the Scouting machine, whilst ensuring that they have fun along the way.

Each year over 150 modular courses are scheduled for those that need to attend training prior to validating their knowledge in working in their role. A scheme that allows the greatest flexibility



in meeting the needs of our adults and Young Leaders whilst recognising prior knowledge and learning that the individual may have to ensure that they all have the skills and knowledge necessary for their role. Colin Davidson as County Training Manager and his team continue to provide the right training in the right location and expand the offering where possible to give more options in Coaching, Mentoring and what it means to be a Trustee in supporting Scouting. The importance of District Commissioners and Group Scout Leaders in supporting Adult Training is still as important and key to the development of our adults as ever.

I have given up counting the number of meals and support hours offered by the County Scout Active Support Units in operation each year. With Oxchefs, Activity Support, Fairies and the Gang Show Active Support Units soon to be joined by two new Units to ensure that the adults supporting Sections can put their efforts into directly developing our young people whilst other volunteer Active Support Units make things happen around them. Thanks to them all and to Val and Bill Butcher for ensuring that they get the necessary support in making it all happen.

We are very fortunate to have Richard Harwen in the role as Assistant County Commissioner for Young Leader Unit Leaders. Statistics show that a large number of new Leaders in our Sections come from those that were previously Young Leaders and have already experienced the role of being a Leader, through being an Explorer Scout Young Leader, actively supporting the delivery of Scouting. Our high-quality training for Explorer Scouts running 11 modules and 4 missions as a Young Leader also attracts 14 – 18 year olds completing The

Duke of Edinburgh's Award or Queen's Guide Award, creating more opportunities for more young adults inside and outside of Scouting.

"Activities don't just run themselves" I remember Akela saying. She was right. With an army of adults making use of countless items of kit to support our activities, the Assistant County Commissioner (ACC) Activities, Robert Selway and his team are always thinking ahead to make sure that the equipment is safe and ready to be used and that more specialist training and permits are managed to meet the needs of Scouting in Oxfordshire. The annual winter expedition taking 75 people from Oxfordshire Scouting into snow bound mountains is an event to be marvelled providing the necessary skills, experience and fun for all concerned.

All our Scouting work continues without a hiccup on a weekday evening, but we mustn't forget to shout about the great things that are going on and look for ways to spread the word about the rewards and fun that can be had being an adult volunteer in Scouting. We have seen many good articles in the press and on the radio in the past year from our Unit and International Service Team to the next Jamboree shouting about the great experiences that they are up to through to great articles in the press and on the radio about how Scouting helps with empathy and the importance of active listening. All media activities have been supported by our ACC Communications, Martin Steers. As Martin is also moving on from this role this year, I would like to thank him for the work, guidance and advice that he has given me and Oxfordshire Scouting in getting the word out.

My thanks to all our adult volunteers and Young Leaders for the tireless support and service helping make Scouting better and easier for even more young people.

**Shaun Kendall** - Deputy County Commissioner – Adult Support

# World Scout Jamboree

Since it was formed in late 2017, the Jamboree Unit has been working hard to fundraise a whopping £160,000 to allow its members to attend the 24th World Scout Jamboree in North America this summer. Thanks to a huge amount of commitment from all 36 young people and their families, the target has nearly been met! The money is all fundraised rather than being paid by families to ensure that the Jamboree is open to all. As well as the regular weekend training camps, the fundraising work also brings the whole Unit together and helps them learn to work as one ahead of the three-week expedition!

The summer of 2018 was filled with festivals and fun; the Unit fundraised at Blenheim's Battle Proms event, as well as helping at Cropredy Festival, the Big Feastival and the Broughton Cycle Sportive. The County climbing wall also proved a valuable fundraising opportunity, and our dedicated team of parents took it to a wide variety of local fetes and events. Unit members at Wallingford School established a fortnightly tuck shop (with kind permission from their headteacher) and several families worked together to arrange a series of highly profitable car washes.

Christmas was a particularly hectic time for the Unit, with events every single weekend during December, and often many events on the same day. The Santa Sleigh carried out



a tour of Oxfordshire, spreading festive cheer whilst collecting donations. The whole Unit also contributed to a weekend creating some unique Christmas gifts, all of which were then sold at local craft fairs. We were also lucky enough to be offered bag packing sessions at a number of large supermarkets.

Spurred on by our successful end to 2018 (December generated £16,000 alone!), the Unit has continued to work tirelessly towards our final target. A 'virtual triathlon' saw the whole Unit collectively run, swim and cycle more than 10,500km during April, and the fitness theme continued with the Oxon Greenbelt 10k Run in May of this year. The Unit has also utilised fundraising opportunities at existing events, including car parking at Oxfordshire Scout & Guide Gang Show, providing bacon butties and sweets at the Winter Challenge event in March, and supporting the County Awards Day in May. The whole County were also given a chance to both support, and benefit from, the Unit's efforts

by participating in the County Raffle; profit from tickets sold by Scout Groups and Explorer Units was split with the Jamboree Unit, with over 12,000 tickets sold in total.

Equally important as the large events, however, have been the regular smaller efforts of individual Unit members and their families; from odd jobs to car boot sales, open gardens to afternoon teas, and many successful 'Jamboree in a Bag' sessions run for local Beaver Colonies and Cub Packs. Each one of our brilliant Unit members has been working their socks off since day one, and it's been incredibly inspiring and rewarding to watch them grow in confidence, independence and leadership as a result. The 18 months since the Unit was first selected have flown by, and we're now into the final countdown for the Jamboree. There is no doubt that the fundraising target was both ambitious and incredibly challenging, but our Unit members have proven themselves to be determined and resourceful, as well as endlessly optimistic!

As Unit Leaders, we could not be prouder of what our young people have achieved. We would like to thank their parents and families for their ongoing support, and all of the many Scouting volunteers who have helped us along the way. We look forward to being able to report back on a wonderful Jamboree experience in next year's review.

**Becky Stanworth, Joff Greer, Rob Spence & Graham Duckworth** – Unit 61 Leaders



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