



Wistaston Scout Group (35th South West Cheshire)

Registered Charity No: 520281

www.wistastonscoutgroup.org.uk

ANNUAL REPORT YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31st 2024

I reported last year that our youth numbers, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts, had returned to pre pandemic level. I am pleased to say that trend has continued and we now have in excess of 100 young persons in the group and are the largest group in the District.

The latest national census of scouting at the end of 2024 shows a very small increase in overall national numbers and Wistaston Scouts mirrors that increase. Much is made nationally of the numbers waiting to join scouts, often due to the lack of adult leaders. We do have quite a few children on our waiting list but they are all below Beaver age (6 years old), and there should be a space for them once they reach Beaver age. Our leadership numbers have remained almost constant for several years at 31, that is not to say that we could do with more help, we would welcome it

- We have two Beaver colonies with a total of 31 beavers
- We have two Cub packs with a total of 41 cubs
- We have two scout troops with a total of 28 scouts.

I have spoken before of the brilliant young leader system in South West Cheshire. We fully support that system and believe that these youngsters represent the future core of the group leadership team. At the time of the census we had 8 young leaders and I confidently expect that number to increase in the coming months.

Without being complacent we are in a very good place as far as membership is concerned.

Undoubtedly we can do with extra adult support in one or two of the sections so if anyone can spare that mythical hour a week then please let me know. Just to set that myth right it as much as you want to give but it is about 90 minutes per week (the length of a section meeting). You will need to have a Scout DBS which is free and we can arrange and there is some mandatory training: Safety, safeguarding and GDPR which are all on line and First Aid which is a six hour session usually held in our building. From there you can do as much or as little training as you want to do. If anyone wants to take this challenge and join a very happy and integrated team then please contact me via gsl@wistastonscoutgroup.org.uk

The national Scout Programme has been developed to provide our young people with Skills For Life. We fully embrace that concept and programme, in addition we endorse the **OUT** in Sc**OUT**ing. We have a scout centre in a pretty unique location, on the very edge of Joey the Swan, a SSBI, and we make use of that to develop knowledge and learning of the area, in particular its flora and fauna. We have a number of scout camp sites in Cheshire that we use and also other scout buildings located in areas rich in nature, with hiking trails, indoor accommodation etc.

During 2024 all our Beavers had the opportunity to have one night away at Bickerton Scout Hut. Our cubs had two nights away in the Scout Centre and two nights under canvas at Forest Camp Sandiway. Scouts as you would expect have more nights away, all under canvas and in total they all had the opportunity to have a total of 15 nights away.

The scout nights away includes seven nights at the annual summer camp. In 2024 that camp was held at Gwersyll-Y-Bryniau Scout camp site near Pantperthog, Machynlleth, Powys. In total 63 scouts, explorer scouts and leaders enjoyed a week under canvas, being self sufficient, preparing and cooking all their meals and generally having a great time. The site was chosen as it is on one of the Mach Loops used by RAF for low flying fast jet training. This was a daily feature of life in camp, jets roaring overhead. For some strange reason the theme for the camp was Top Gun! In 2025 the summer camp will be held on a site very familiar to us in Criccieth and scout section programmes from now until July will focus on camp preparations.

All these activities, section meetings in the scout centre, in the area around the centre and the camps, provided the opportunity for the youngsters to gain various awards. There are

literally dozens of activity badges which can be gained. Beavers and Cub Scouts in the main complete these under leadership supervision, although they are encouraged to do much of the work at home in their spare time. Scouts also have dozens of activity badges which they can attain and they are encouraged to be self motivated as to which they take on and complete. There are 43 activity badges for Beavers, 58 for Cub Scouts and 80 for Scouts.

In 2024:

- The two beaver colonies awarded a total of 424 activity and challenge badges
- The two cub packs awarded a total of 355 activity and challenge badges
- The two scout troops awarded a total of 251 activity and challenge badges

The activity badges supplement the Challenge Badges which have to be gained in order for the Beaver, Cub or Scout to be awarded the Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards, the highest award in each section and in 2024 the following were awarded

- 17 Chief Scouts Bronze Awards
- 8 Chief Scouts Silver Awards
- 10 Chief Scouts Gold Awards

In addition 5 scouts were awarded the YouShaped Award badge This Award makes it even easier for groups to have a youth shaped programme, where what they do each week is decided on and led by young people's ideas. At the same time, the YouShaped Award also helps young people work with volunteers to learn valuable skills for life, such as communication, teamwork and leadership

Beavers and Cubs attend a celebration afternoon arranged by the District team with other Beavers and Scouts from South West Cheshire where they receive their certificates.

The Scouts attend a Celebrating Success afternoon in Warrington organised by the County Team. The Scouts along with others in Cheshire receive their certificates (including the YouShaped awards at that event.

Richard Austin, one of the scout leaders spends much of his time photographing and filming

events, in particular summer camp, he then compiles a recording, some 20 minutes long with an appropriate music soundtrack which is premiered at the AGM and is then available online for download.

As Scouts progress through to Explorer Scouts and on to adult scouting and before they are 25 years of age, they have the opportunity to gain the highest award in Scouting, the Kings Scout Award, I am delighted to report that Tom Austin, one of our Scout section leaders, gained this award in 2024. Huge congratulations to Tom who is only the fourth scout from the Group to achieve this award in its 66 years of existence. He will attend the St George's Day parade at Windsor Castle where a member of the Royal Family will be present.

I am often asked how much time each volunteer gives to scouting so I have done a quick calculation of the number of hours our volunteers put into scouting annually. These are minimum figures and do not include time spent in planning camps. For Summer Camp that time is extensive, planning starts from almost the end of the last camp. Normally there will be at least one recce visit to the site, to check out proposed off site activities and find local shops that can provide for example fresh meat, vegetables and bakery products. That sounds quite easy but when we are catering for over 60 people it can be a time consuming business.

Beaver Section Leader: 158 hours including one camp

Beaver Assistant Leader: 146 hours including one camp

Cub Section Leader: 186 hours including two camps

Cub Assistant Leader: 174 hours including two camps

Scout Leader : 459 hours including camps

Scout Assistant Leader: 447 hours including camps

These figures assume that the leaders all attend the various camps, with the exception of the scout section leaders it does not include summer camp. Many of our beaver and cub leaders do attend summer camp, either for a few days or for the week. If they attend the entire week they are giving up 168 hours of their time.

In addition, Leaders are recognised for their service to Scouting. In 2024 the author was awarded the Silver Wolf which is the highest award for leaders. It is the first such award in

the group and at present there are only two others in South West Cheshire with that award. In addition Alex Smith (Cub Leader Rowallan Pack) was awarded the Medal of Merit for outstanding service. Other awards are in the pipeline. All leaders are awarded Service Awards gained at five yearly intervals from the start of their service. It is always pleasing to present these awards of which there were 15 in 2024.

At the end of 2024 the Scout Association rolled out a new digital membership system to replace the outdated Compass system. The new system has not been without its problems but nothing like the issues which beset Compass on its roll out. It is a vital tool to enable leaders to manage their sections.

At the same time the group has been getting used to the transition from a group executive committee which at times had up to 18 members to a new Trustees Board with a maximum of 12 members. This is still work in progress but the signs are that the change will benefit the group.

In 2024 the inquest into the tragic death in 2019, of Ben Leonard, an Explorer Scout from Stockport, was concluded. Ben died on the Great Orme whilst taking part in a Scout activity. The Coroner was scathing of The Scouts and issued a prevention of future deaths report requiring The Scouts to address 39 issues in a short timescale. Some of these required changes at group level. Two of the most important involved training and risk assessments.

Dealing with training, a new safety module has been introduced and is completed on line and we have until July 2025 for all leaders to complete. This training within the group is progressing well and the deadline will be attained. Those who fail to complete the training face the prospect of suspension.

Risk assessments are nothing new to the group and all leaders are now conversant, and comply, with the requirements. These are now produced for all activities ranging from, for example; games played in the scout centre or at Joey the Swan to basic fire lighting and to the annual summer camp (35 separate assessments for the 2024 event). We have developed a library of all our risk assessments which can be accessed by leaders, downloaded, reviewed and updated where appropriate.

In many respects this has been a challenging year for the leaders and trustees as we adapt to the changes. However during this period one thing has remained constant – the level of commitment of the leaders to our young members and the provision of Skills for Life.

Once again, the group is grateful for the continued support from the Parish Council. As ever they made the offer of funding towards equipment. In 2024 our Trustees agreed to a programme of replacement of our ageing canvas tentage some of which is over 25 years old. The first replacement costing £1500 was purchased in 2024 and we are extremely grateful to the Parish Council for donating £700 towards this cost.

Finally I must pay a huge thankyou to our leaders (including our young leaders) and group trustees for the amazing work they have done to provide scouting during 2024. When thanking the adult leaders I must include their wives, husbands, partners, girlfriends and boyfriends (I believe in sporting circles they are known as WAGS and HABS) for their continued support. Without their assistance we could not provide the quality scouting to our young people which they receive in Wistaston Scouts.

April 2025

John Bennett MBE

Group Lead Volunteer (Group Scout Leader)

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gsl@wistastonscoutgroup.co.uk

SURPLUS AND LOSS ACCOUNT - 2024 Year To Date

INCOME

Subs

Current Year - 2024	£	14,064.00		
Previous Year - 2023	£	172.00	£	14,236.00

Fundraising Etc.

Fundraising	£	2,579.64		
Donations	£	200.00		
Grants	£	-	£	2,779.64

Miscellaneous

Gift Aid	£	-		
Camps & Activities	£	1,016.00		
Summer Camp	£	13,240.95		
Floats/Cashing Cheques	£	-		
Interest	£	-		
Explorer Rent	£	690.00		
Centre Hire Income	£	-		
Other	£	400.00	£	15,346.95

New HQ Funding		£	-	
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£ 32,362.59

Transfers between accounts (Excluded from Income/expenditure)

Moving from

Natwest Main Account	547.81
Natwest Activities account	1408.91
Natwest Summer camp	8058.51
OSM Payment Cards	347.81

Moving To

Natwest Main Account	572.41
Natwest Activities account	270.00
Natwest Summer camp	1756.72
OSM Payment Cards	7763.91
Transfer balance	0.00

TOTAL Income

£ 32,362.59

Opening Balances 01/01/2024

Cash	£	-
Natwest Main Account	£	30,791.37
Natwest Activities Account	£	6,454.29
Natwest Summer Camp Accc	£	-
OSM Payment Cards	£	2,533.84
Unbanked Cheques	£	-
Assets		
Liabilities	£	-

Total £ 39,779.50

EXPENDITURE

Utilities

Electricity	£	1,315.00		
Water	£	384.35		
Gas	£	768.00		
Phone/Broadband	£	83.11	£	2,550.46

General

Training	£	-		
Insurance	£	1,717.87		
Capitation	£	6,384.50		
Subs Expenditure	£	270.44		
Hygiene services	£	73.20		
HQ Expenditure	£	2,360.85	£	10,806.86

Equipment

Scout & Guide Shop	£	1,582.76		
Camping Gas	£	90.00		
General	£	-	£	1,672.76

Sectional Expenses	£	1,067.47
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Floats/Cashing Cheques	£	-
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Fundraising Expenditure	£	585.04
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Camp & Activity Expenditure	£	1,623.42
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Summer Camp Expenditure	£	13,835.51
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Gifts	£	-
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Other	£	-
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New Equipment Expenditure	£	3,667.91
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£ 35,809.43

Net Surplus **-£ 3,446.84**

£ 32,362.59

Current Balance

Cash	£	-
Natwest Main Account	£	29,853.14
Natwest Activities Account	£	5,372.48
Natwest Summer Camp Account	£	690.84
OSM Payment Cards	£	416.20
Unbanked Cheques	£	-
Assets	£	-
Liabilities	£	-
Summer Camp Expected Expenditure	£	-
Summer Camp OSM	£	-
Total	£	36,332.66

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of the

35th SMC SCOUT GROUP/DISTRICT/COUNTY/AREA SCOUT COUNCIL

I report on the accounts of the Group/District/County/Area for the year ended 31/12/24
which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet and related notes set out on pages.....

This report is made solely to the trustees in accordance with Section 145 of the Charities Act 2011. My work has been undertaken so that I might state to the charity's trustees those matters I am required to state to them in an Independent Examiner's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's trustees for my examination work.

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner

The Group's/District's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this year (under Section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act)) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- Examine the accounts (under Section 145 of the Charities Act);
- To follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners (under Section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act); and
- To state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Group/District and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent Examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention (other than that disclosed below *):

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements

- to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 130 of the Charities Act ;and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act
have not been met; or

2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply

Name: Simon Prestage

Qualification: RETIRED BANK MANAGER

Address: 53 SANDYLANDS PARK

Date: 9TH JUNE 2025