

Dear members, parents and carers of the 8th,

It is again the time of the year where we look back over the last twelve months; and what a year it has been. Lots of things happened and each and every one will have their favourite moment (or, hopefully, moments). If you asked **me** to pick two moments, I would have to suggest our **first ever Squirrel meeting** just after Easter and our **first group camp** for a very long time in July. These two events generated a buzz that's hard to beat and difficult to top (we will give it a go, though!).

Please find a few impressions from 2024 below:



Clockwise: Beavers at the district's Easter Egg Hunt, our flag-bearers at the Remembrance parade, muddy boots at the St George's Day at Frylands, Squirrels whittling and throwing javelins at the group camp.



Clockwise: Explorers climbing, Cub campfire with Beavers as well as Rainbows and Brownies from our local Girl Guides, Scouts on SUPs, AGM/Group BBQ, and the "official" group photo from the group camp.

It would not be a Christmas newsletter without some "thank-yous". Firstly, to the 100+ children of the 8th. We have been told on more than one occasion how well behaved they are whenever we were in public.

Scouting would not be possible without the tireless work of our fabulous leaders and other volunteers. While we are fortunate to have a strong team of leaders, some sections remain under pressure. Especially the Scouts are stretched – even if our website and social media administrator, **Vicky Simpson**, is in the process of "upgrading" to become a fully-fledged Scout leader.

To alleviate the issue, we have started a parent rota where all parents will be asked to help at a meeting or event to help the leaders run the meeting/event. We will also need to set up a rota in the Squirrels section where we start to have similar concerns.

So: if you can help us, whether on a regular basis in any of our sections or on and off behind the scenes, please do let me know. Or you can speak to one of the leaders at drop-off or collection; thank you.

2024 saw a change in how Scouting is organised in the UK and the old Executive Committee has now formally been morphed into a Trustee Board – and with that change we had some change in personnel: **Helen Wise, Andy Preston, Claire Weedon** and **Di Philips**, our four section leaders, are stepping down from their role on the “exec” as section leaders are not meant to be on the Trustee Board any more. They will of course stay with us to continue organising and running fantastic programmes for our Squirrels, Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers and I would like to thank them for their service as part of the Executive Committee over the years.

I would also like to welcome our new Trustee Board: **Julie Heather, Jo Champkins, Katie Campbell, Colin Hargreen** and **Rick Bennell** (most of them already served on the Executive Committee, so we are in good hands). However, of the current Trustee Board only two members have a child in the 8th (and my daughter will leave the 8th when she turns 18 next year...) so it would be lovely if we could add a further parent's voice to the board. It does not take much time to be a trustee...

Let me use this opportunity to pass on some practical information:

- Please keep your child's/children's data on OSM current – especially contact details and the information about allergies and medication.
- Parking space at and around our headquarters is at a premium and there are many young (and excited) children around, especially at drop-off and collection. This seems to be a particular issue on Tuesdays when the Scouts and Explorers meet. They sometimes play games outside on the Green and this becomes dangerous with cars manoeuvring. This week we even noticed tyre tracks on the little grass patch in the middle of the car park! So please be considerate and careful, and do **not** drive into the small car park in front of the church. If the issue persists, we might have to block the car park off completely.
- If you need a uniform, why not check out our second-hand uniform store run by **Rose Wong** (you can contact her at uniform@8thwestwickham.org.uk)? Rose also collects uniforms you do no longer need – as long as they are in good nick. And if you want to get hold of one of our fabulously red group t-shirts, have a look on our website at 8thwestwickham.org.uk/members to see how to purchase one.
- Lastly, dates for the four parade services for 2025 have been set for 23rd March, 1st June, 28th September and 7th December. (Some sections had already plans for some of these dates before they were set – those activities will of course remain.)

Anyway, the trustees, leaders and other volunteers of the 8th West Wickham Scout Group wish you all a Merry Christmas (if that is what you are celebrating), a peaceful and relaxing time with your loved ones and, most of all, a happy and healthy 2025.

I shall leave you with two pictures from Sunday's Christmas parade service: a Squirrel lighting the candle for First Advent and two of the Beavers hanging the decorations made at last week's meeting on the Christmas tree, and with the information that in Germany children are told to polish their shoes on 5th December as St Nicholas will visit during the night of the 6th December to fill clean shoes with sweets (clever children polish boots, of course).



See you all in 2025!



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