

Dear members, parents and guardians of the 8th,

2023 has been a year with many changes for us. As you know, we lost our headquarters and regular meeting place at the West Wickham Methodist Church in 2023. Just this Sunday we said our official farewell to the Methodist Church with present and past members attending, and we would like to reiterate our sincere “thank you” for being fabulous hosts for the many decades we were based in Hawes Lane.



Fortunately, we found a new home at the Emmanuel church in The Grove where we have been made very welcome indeed since we started our meetings there in September. I can see us being very happy at our new headquarters for years to come.

We also found a place to store our equipment, even if that move will only happen in 2024. We still need to cross a few Ts and dot a few Is, but we will keep you informed. And we may well need some help with the move!



In 2023 we also lost two experienced leaders with Miranda and Stuart from the Scout section (Stuart was of course also our Group Scout Leader). I would like to thank both for their work at the 8th for which Miranda was recently recognised with the Scout Association's "Award of Merit".

Their departure left a big hole in the leadership of the Scout section, but the section has since rebounded and had many good meetings, camps and other activities, and has started to grow again; in fact, it's bursting at the seams!

Our four thriving sections and around 100 members had, over the last twelve months, many meetings, excursions and camps: The Explorer's Summer Camp in Wales and their annual Christmas Camp; Scouts sailed, kayaked and canoed at the Docklands Scout Project and participated in the Moonwalk night hike; the Cubs' took part in the District's Cyclo Cross (where we brought home the individual win!), visited a Fire Station and went on multiple camps; the Beavers had visits to The Wilderness and a good look around our new headquarters. And, as well as lots of badgework, there were joint camps between the Explorers and Scouts, between the Cubs and Beavers, as well as the St George's Day celebrations at Frylands, where all four sections came together just to name a few. The water sport activities for all sections – usually involving standing on a stand-up paddleboard (and, sometimes, falling off) – have been a particular success, especially since all leaders from all sections have now taken paddlesports safety and rescue training.

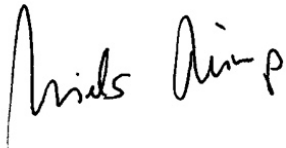


Our members can expect more of this in 2024 (on and off water). One event for next year has already been put into all sections' diaries: a whole-group camp during the weekend of 12th-14th July. We will let you know the details such as the location in the new year; I for one am certainly looking forward to that weekend.

But all of this can only happen with the tireless work of our volunteers; whether that's the four sections' leader teams, or the people behind the scenes – they all deserve a huge “thank you”!

As you can imagine, there are many big and small jobs that need doing to keep an active Scout group alive – and if you would like to help, please drop me a line or speak to one of the leaders at a meeting; it would be marvellous if you became part of the team in 2024.

Until then I hope you have a wonderful Christmas (if that is what you are celebrating) – and that you can get some rest over the festive period.



Niels Rump

Chair of the 8th West Wickham Scout Group

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