



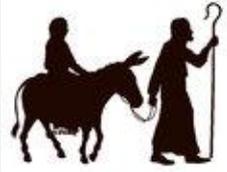
Scouting East



The Journal of East Belfast Scouting

No. 411

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2020



From the Editor

Hello everyone,

After a few months absence, I thought perhaps it was time to put together another issue of the Newsheet as we approach what will be a very different Christmas to last year. No one could have predicted back in January just how difficult 2020 would be, and the toll that the ongoing pandemic would take not just on physical health but also on mental and emotional well-being, and we continue to remember those who have experienced ill health or bereavement, concerns for loved ones known to us who are vulnerable and shielding or continuing to recover from the effects of the virus, particularly at this time Colin and Suzi's daughter Cherry, a schoolteacher in England. Our thoughts are also with those who have worked tirelessly on the frontline to maintain essential services, many of whom are now physically exhausted and emotionally drained. It is important not to ignore the impact on our younger members too, many of whom have faced a disrupted school year, cancellation of events they had excitedly been looking forward to, restrictions to sports and hobbies and opportunities to mix with friends.

At the time of writing only a small number of Sections in East have been offering some face to face Scouting activities outdoors as and when restrictions and weather permit, and reports of some of these activities are included in this issue. Some other Sections have been meeting intermittently online and completing badgework at home – I was delighted to receive a hand-made Christmas card from 99th Pack personally delivered by a very smartly dressed Cub. While we all look forward to a time when restrictions ease and things begin to return to normality, the reality is that is likely still to be months away and further restrictions are anticipated at least in the period from January to April. The District Safety Sub-Committee will continue to review risk assessments from those wishing to resume meeting outdoors or indoors whenever these are received and respond promptly and constructively. With almost all of our Groups and Units being Church-sponsored, we recognise and share the concerns of many of our Church Councils, Select Vestries and Kirk Sessions about the logistics of returning

to meeting safely indoors in church halls and will not push any of our Leaders to do so until they feel ready and detailed plans to minimise risks are agreed.

It is great to be able to report some good news – with publication of the 2021 St George’s Day Awards - with richly deserved awards announced for four long-standing members of our District. We look forward to celebrating with them and recognising their years of dedicated service to young people within East Belfast once restrictions ease. Betty has also at long last received news of some additional Good Service Awards (Award for Merit, Chief Scout’s Commendation) which have been in the pipeline for some time, and hopes to present these, together with a batch of Long-Service certificates and some Training certificates at the earliest opportunity once we are all able to meet together again safely.



The Silver Acorn, in recognition of specially-distinguished service

Ann Hanna
Antonia Hoskins

District Vice-President
CSL, 27th Belfast



249 x 231

The Silver Wolf, in recognition of service of the most exceptional character

John Corry
Bruce McCormack

District Vice-President
GSL, 99th Belfast

Many of you will have received emails intermittently from HQ about training – admittedly probably not at the forefront of many Leaders’ minds at the moment. However we do still have ~27 Leaders in East whose appointments are still provisional or pre-provisional, and more than 20 who still need to complete Getting Started or GDPR or to complete or renew Safety and Safeguarding training. These can now all be completed online – please forward your certificates

to me on completion so that your Compass record can be updated. If you have any queries about what is required or how to access the links please ask. There are >50 Leaders who now need to complete or renew first response training and there have been discussions recently amongst the NI Training Team about how to deliver training safely during the pandemic and start to clear the backlog. We will keep you updated, but if you have recently completed an alternative first aid course please send me your certificates so that your record can be updated.

Often at this time of year we would be preparing for our District Christingle Service and Beaver Christmas Party. Some of our younger members would be attending Christmas at Crawfordsburn or Follow the Star, or participating in school or Church nativity plays or carol concerts. Often our Sections would undertake a Christmas Good-turn to help others in society. I do hope in some small way that this tradition can be maintained despite the current restrictions and with adequate risk assessments in place to ensure safety– is there something the young people in our District might do to bring some cheer to our elderly neighbours who are feeling lonely and isolated particularly if family are not able to visit at present, or to thank those who are working on the frontline during the Christmas and New Year period? A card or note, a planted bulb, a scanned painting or drawing or a Zoom or telephone call (with appropriate adult supervision) can make all the difference and let people know they are not forgotten. Or how about a pre-recorded or live virtual concert or nativity play – we have all been inspired by some of the innovation reported on the local news – and I am sure the Ministers of our congregations would help to distribute links via congregational websites.

During 2020, our lives have changed beyond all recognition and individually and collectively we have all been impacted to a greater or lesser extent and in various ways by the pandemic. Many things we took for granted have been lost, at least temporarily, and we face an uncertain start to 2021 although the promise of a vaccine now offers a glimmer of light at the end of a dark and treacherous tunnel. Scouting is of course open to those of all faiths (and none), but by incorporating the spiritual dimension regularly into our Scouting programme during the year, we can provide meaningful opportunities for our members to explore various faiths and to develop in their own personal faith journey. I know for many Leaders within the Groups in our District, myself included, the Christian faith is central to our lives and often a motivating factor to serve the young people in our churches and local community. The distress and despair caused by the pandemic has caused many, young and old, to reflect deeply on the meaning of life and to reassess plans and priorities for the future. May we all experience a renewed sense of purpose and hope at this special time of year as we reflect on the Christian message of the birth of Jesus, God's Son, to be the Saviour of all who put their trust in Him. With best wishes to all for a relaxing, and above all safe, Christmas.

Merry Christmas, *David*

Census 2021

Many of you will now be aware that National HQ have taken the decision to proceed with a Census in January and to increase the capitation fee by £7.50 per member this year (although this is likely to be a permanent increase). I am pleased to say that following discussions at virtual meetings of our District Executive and of GSLs and Group Representatives, that the District Executive have agreed for this year only to contribute £7.50 per member returned on the census to the cost of the capitation fee, to ease the burden on the families associated with our Groups.

Our Treasurer Suzi and I attended a meeting of the Belfast County Finance Sub-Committee and it is our understanding at present that the County levy will be suspended this year. Some of you may have read about Scouting's Recovery Fund to support Groups across the UK facing the greatest financial difficulty. I queried this with the CC, and unfortunately none of the Groups in our District met the criteria. I will though continue to forward on any information I receive about recovery and hardship grants from external sources that our Groups might be eligible to apply for. GSLs will receive notification and passwords for completion of the Census in January and I would ask for your co-operation to ensure that this is completed by the closing date. A Census of Squirrels in NI will also be undertaken and details distributed separately.

In relation to the Census return, the following message was circulated to all members by the UK Chief Commissioner, Tim Kidd:

UK membership fees make it possible for us to provide the essential services that keep Scouts running. These include support for online and face-to-face programmes, training programmes, awards, safety guidance, safeguarding services and insurance. These are fixed costs with no scope for reduction based on lower membership figures. If members aren't declared correctly on the census, then there won't be sufficient insurance in place and there is a risk of critical services being impacted. This includes how effectively we can respond to safeguarding issues, process disclosure checks, provide legal support and liability protection when needed, and respond to critical incidents. Whether your section has been active or not recently, unfortunately the annual membership is not 'pay as you go.' If a young person is still a member of the movement, then the full UK and local membership fee needs to be paid. We know the vast majority of our volunteers operate within our values of integrity, respect, care, cooperation and belief. Yet given the disruptions of this year, some may feel inclined to under-declare membership figures to avoid membership fees. I ask you, please, do not be tempted to do this. Getting a true picture of our membership means we're more likely to be able to attract external funding. In turn, this means we can keep the membership fee affordable to families.

And from NI Commissioner, Stephen Donaldson:

I need to talk about the thorny issue of Census and membership fees. Quite simply if you don't register your Group Census you cannot continue Scouting. The truth of the matter is we are a membership organisation, your fees cover your insurance, safeguarding, safety and staff costs. If Scouts NI have no income we cannot sustain staff to help you out, nor can we send the required money to Gilwell to support your insurance to carry on.

The following is a breakdown of how membership fees are spent.

April 2020

Support for you.

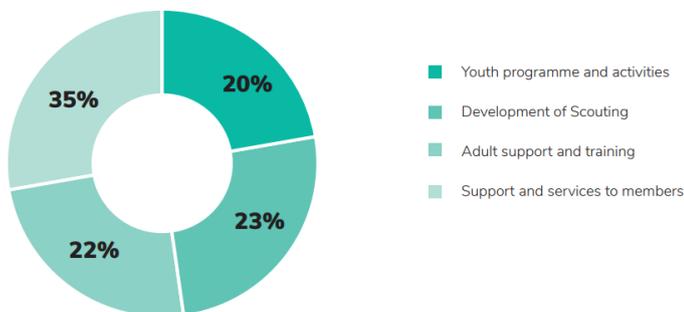
Headquarters' services and support

Membership fees help us deliver a wide range of services and support. From reassuring safeguarding support and insurance, to a friendly voice at the end of the phone, we are committed to making sure we're here for you. Our services include:

- Programme support
- Support for the recruitment and retention of volunteers
- Volunteer training
- Disclosure checking service and volunteer vetting
- Safeguarding support
- Insurance for all members
- Scout Information Centre
- Legal services
- Scout Adventures Centres
- 24/7 critical incident support
- Regional growth and development support*
- Induction and direct support to volunteer line managers*
- Member communications and brand centre
- Support for UK Contingents
- Development grants
- Archive and heritage service
- National media and campaigns

*Regionally based staff (England only, supported by England only member fees. Noting that a proportion of member fees are returned to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland Headquarters)

How your membership fees are spent (2018-19)



Membership fees account for 60% of the net income into UK Headquarters. We work hard to generate further income from fundraising, corporate partnerships, conferencing, Scout Store, Scout Adventures and our Scout insurance provider, Unity, to help keep membership fees down.

You, our volunteers, are our most precious resource. Thanks for everything you do.



© Copyright Scouts 2020. Registered Charity Numbers 306101 (England and Wales) and SC038437 (Scotland).

David



News from 30th Pack



30th Cubs have continued a limited programme of outdoor activities on Saturday afternoons during November and December, with members attending on a rota basis, current restrictions and weather-permitting. Some of the Cubs have continued to work on the Garden of Remembrance within the grounds of the church, weeding and planting crocus, daffodil and snowdrop bulbs under the direction of Alison and Donna. Of course no one can remember where exactly we planted them, so that will be a pleasant surprise to look forward to in spring!

13 Cubs completed their Athlete Badge and 9 Athlete Plus at Billy Neill Playing Fields with Shane and several of the guys from the Explorer Unit. We also had a Zoom session with Local Historian, Aidan Campbell, and one of the oldest former members of the 30th Pack, Robert McDowell, to enable the Cubs to work on the remaining parts of the Local Knowledge badge. It was fascinating to hear and see photos of how Gilnahirk had changed over the course of the last century, and Aidan had even unearthed some old photos of the members of the Scout Group. A couple more outdoor laser tag sessions were organised with Mobile Team Adventure at Shaw's Bridge, and there was also an opportunity to invest the new Cubs who have moved up from Beavers and to appoint some new Sixers following the departure of the older Cubs to the Scout Troop.

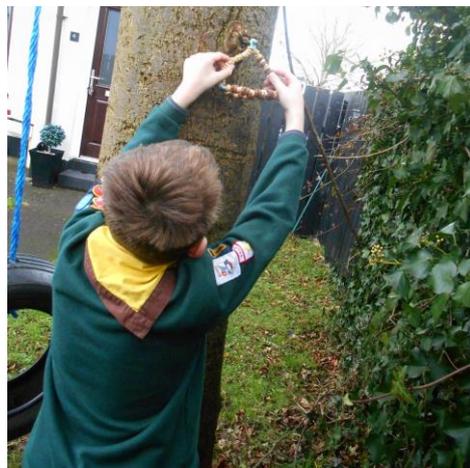
We also recently undertook a Nature walk at Belvoir with Petra and Liz from the Forestry Service (and a friendly robin who gate-crashed the activity and accompanied us everywhere we went). They amazed us all with their wealth of knowledge, and the Cubs were enthralled learning about how the forest changes through the seasons, and now in winter. We enjoyed hiding in small groups from each other in the dense bamboo forest that completely camouflaged and muffled all sound of the Cubs– the Leaders wondered can we plant one in Gilnahirk as our new HQ? Some of the boys have been continuing to work on the Naturalist Badge at home and the Leaders have been intrigued by the various designs for bird feeders- everything from a slice of bread stuck through a hanging branch, to an unsteady see-saw style plank slung in the tree, to a modified milk carton.

We are delighted to report that Carlos is now a fully-fledged archery instructor. Many thanks to Carlos and to Alex from our own Troop and Michael and Matthew from 7th who ran a series of archery sessions at Ardnally over a number of Saturday afternoons for small groups at a time. Most of the Cubs hit the boss (if not necessarily the Bullseye) but thankfully very few missed the target completely, necessitating a search in the muddy field for missing arrows.

David, CSL 30th









Well done to Zach, Adam and Corey from 30th Cubs who recently organised a bun sale to raise funds for the Cancer Fund for Children and raised an incredible £500

7th Belfast scouts have had two events since returning. In November we met for the first time since March and had a good turn out with most of our Scouts returning and welcoming some who have just moved up from Cubs. We spent the afternoon lighting fires and cooking pizza in cardboard ovens. Those who still had awards to finish worked towards completing the elements they still had outstanding.

Our senior Scouts who are due to move to Explorers in January walked the coastal path from Orlock to Crawfordsburn, Stopping at Ballyholme for lunch. Our young people had a dry but cold day and enjoyed the walk. This also allows two of the Scouts to finish their Chief Scout's Gold Award.

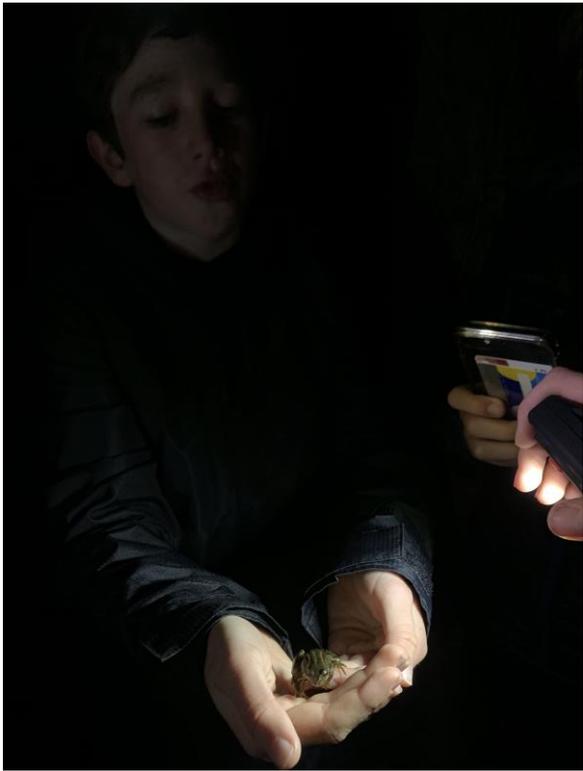
Michael, 7th SL



Season's Greetings from the 30th Scout Troup Gilnahirk. We have been meeting outdoors regularly during the autumn term, this has been helped greatly by the weather, our Thursday evenings so far have all been dry! In November we met at Belvoir Forest Park where we split into two teams and took part in some night geocaching. Not only did we find lots of geocache containers but there was plenty of forest wild life too including the amphibious kind. The Scouts enjoyed the geocaching so much so, a couple of weeks later we decided to construct our own caches and hide them in Gilnahirk. We did get to camouflage and place them but the folk at Geocaching are unable to verify any new geocaches under the current conditions. We will update you when they are listed on the app, ready to be found! At Gilnahirk we are lucky to have some great public spaces such as Gilnahirk and Tullycarnet Parks, where we were able to play wide games and practise night navigation manoeuvres. Long may the dry and crispy evenings continue! Merry Christmas!

Stevie W, 30th SL







News from Ballyhanwood Unit

Although we were unable to attend a formal Parade and Church Service on Remembrance Sunday, Ballyhanwood Unit and 30th Leaders were approached again this year to help with the Royal British Legion's Poppy Appeal. Many of the elderly members of the Royal British Legion were shielding and they were particularly grateful for our help this year. We arranged a rota for collections at Kings Square and Cherryvalley shops throughout the day on Saturday 7th November and were amazed by the generosity of the public, collecting our highest ever total in one day of more than £1400 across the two locations.





AESL Shane also organised for some of the members of the Unit to help the Cub Scouts to compete their Athlete and Athlete Plus badges on a very cold and wet afternoon at Billy Neill Playing Fields. Undeterred, we divided the Cubs into small bubbles based on their school class and close contacts, with each group working with one of the Explorers on various running, jumping and throwing tasks ending with a socially distanced race around the perimeter of the playing fields. A big thank you to Ben, Jonny and Lewis for their help and to Shane for organising.

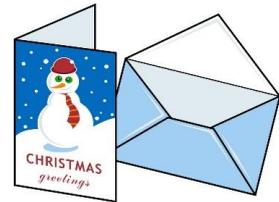




David, ESL Ballyhanwood Unit

Forthcoming Events

All face to face District events have been cancelled until further notice but some meetings will continue to be scheduled by Teams /Zoom



Merry Christmas!



**News & Views, Letters & Comments,
Reports & Announcements to the Editor:**



David Bell

Email: d.bell@qub.ac.uk

Not later than **31st December** for the January issue please!