

Foreword by Paul Hammond Group Chief of 1st Gateshead FSE and President of GSE UK

Welcome to our very first newsletter!

As recently as the 1984 there had been 19 Catholic scouting groups in our diocese, consisting of 688 members. What happened? Did they lose their vision? Or perhaps they didn't have a strong enough vision in the first place? Proverbs 29:18-27 says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."

The Catholic faith was originally integrated into scouting by Venerable Fr Jacques Sevin SJ. The founder of scouting, Lord Baden-Powell, was deeply impressed and famously said of him, "He made the best realisation of my own thoughts." Fr Sevin's vision and methods have been preserved and enriched over the past six decades by the Guides and Scouts of Europe (UIGSE-FSE), which is the only scouting movement recognised by the Holy See as a "Lay Association of the Faithful", and of which our newly relaunched UK Association is now an associate member.

The "Scouts of Europe" pedagogy is holistic and has 5 overall aims:

1. Health (physical, mental and intellectual)
2. Character
3. Practicality
4. Service
5. Sense of God

How does this pedagogy differ from mainstream scouting, you might ask? Well, we keep boys and girls separate, and the whole family is encouraged to be involved. The vast majority of time is spent outdoors and in uniform, and the emphasis is on peer mentoring, self-initiative and growth in virtue, rather than on collecting as many badges and experiences as we can. Everything is infused with faith and prayer as we strive to raise saints.

Today, within our wider families, friendship circles and communities we see many Catholic children falling away from the practice of their faith during their teenage years. I think part of the reason for this is that they haven't been taught how to integrate their faith into their everyday activities. This is where we come in! I can't think of a better way of achieving this integration than by Catholic scouting. Is there any youth activity (football, orchestra, theatre school, martial arts, catechism class?) which is more holistic than scouting? In France, 75% of the vocations to the priesthood come from Catholic scouting. What other youth activity can match that?!

Thank you for journeying with us during this formative period and for all you bring to our group! I pray that you and your family will be blessed through our work and be an even greater blessing to others.



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Latest with the cubs

BY AKELA

Badges:

First aid - the grey pack are progressing well and almost ready to complete the badge. Akelita will assess in April's session whether or not the boys are ready to complete.

Carpentry - more work is required on the badge and the next few sessions we will be delving further into this area.

Troubadour - the black pack has now completed this badge and will be awarded with the troubadour badge. Congratulations boys.

The black pack will start on their first aid badge. Learning key basic techniques such as bandaging wounds and using neckerchiefs as sling for hurt limbs.

White pack will choose which badge they wish to undertake next in April's session at minsteracres. There are many options to choose from. These can be found in the Mowgli booklet.

Promise ceremony:

I am aiming to have a promise ceremony in the next couple of months for cubs who are ready to progress.

I think these will be: David, James, Kennedy and Tom. These cubs have completed most of their progression items and only require a couple more before being ready for their promise!

Remember: bring a friend along to the cubs and when he joins you will receive a special badge!



“We’ve enjoyed our experiences so far and really like being outdoors. It’s really great fun with great activities and friendly people.”

ELIAS - BROWN PACK SIXER





Latest with the scouts

BY KAA

Promise:

Following 3 months of preparation, including significant amounts of memorisation and many other difficult tests to complete, the following 7 scouts made their Scout Promise just before Christmas, in the presence of Bishop Stephen, Fr Peter and Fr Emmanuel: Aidan, Nosazee, George, Alfred, Joseph, Melvin. The Promise Ceremony was preceded by a memorable Promise Eve ceremony with torches and speeches.

The other scouts will have an opportunity to make their Promise at the Summer Camp if they work towards it between April and June.

In parallel the scouts are working towards their "Second Class" badge, which will take in certain other badges along the way. There are 35 to choose from, and different scouts can work towards different ones.

Action Posts:

Aidan was voted in as the new Patrol Leader, and some of the Action Posts were reassigned.

Other Activities:

Other activities so far this year: building a rocket stove from scratch; using a gas fire and Kelly kettle; using different methods of creating a spark and different types of tinder to light a fire; learning about the scout virtues of frankness and purity; participating in the Polish overnight way of the cross; learning new scout songs; getting kitted up with proper uniforms and patches; log cutting; stretches and exercises; initial planning of a Hebert Course; and, of course, "capture the flag" and football!

Coming up soon:

Making wooden "skis" for some team races; learning about the scout virtue of devotedness; alternating focus on the various Action posts.

"Scouting is a way to build our personality to be more independent, brave and strong. We take up the responsibilities of serving others, to put our fellow scouts before ourselves and most importantly to be closer to Christ."

AIDAN - PATROL LEADER





Winter Camp

BY LOUISE (AKA AKELITA)

For the first Winter Camp, the cubs and scouts spent a weekend in Powburn Scouts' Centre in Northumberland. It was full of fun activities that foster learning and challenged the cubs and scouts.

It commenced with the scouts and cubs gathering around the fire singing songs and sharing the joyful night over toasted marshmallows. The night ended with a prayer from each of the boys as they thank and ask God to bless this weekend.

The following day, the assembly drove to the Holy Island and met Fr. Shaun O'Neill from whom the boys learned the Catholic history of Lindisfarne and the various saints and holy men of God who used to live there. This was followed by a challenge to walk around the island passing by muddy roads, sandy beaches and a wildlife sanctuary. The cubs and scouts compete to build the highest stone tower by the beach. Upon return to the scout's center, the cubs had some competitive games and the night concluded with the boys gathered around for prayer.

Sunday was spent by first and foremost attending the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass at St Mary Immaculate Church celebrated by Fr. David Phillips who himself was a scout. Snacks for were served at the reception area of the church, thanks to the congregation. The boys were then led to a very interesting hermitage where they learned about the life of a hermit from a trustee of the hermitage. The boys then climbed towards the top a hill overlooking beautiful scenery. The visit culminated by a prayer at the church located on the grounds of the hermitage.

Upon return to the scout's center, the boys spent the remaining hours shooting arrows and doing other fun games.

Overall, everyone shared laughter, learning, victory and joy from all the activities, games and prayer time and of course along with sandwiches, burgers, hotdogs and toasted marshmallows.

Special thanks to all the volunteers and helpers for assisting us with this event!

"A week of camp life is worth six months of theoretical teaching in the meeting room."

ROBERT BADEN-POWELL
FOUNDER OF SCOUTING





Fundraising

BY AKELA

As often mentioned by Paul (aka Kaa), we are always in need of extra funds to try and clear some of the startup deficit we currently have and to allow us to buy tools, timber and other equipment and to do some more adventurous activities such as rafting, climbing etc.

There are plenty of ways to raise funds. Here are a few ideas:

- bake sale: get baking in your local community and sell some delicious treats
- bbq: fire up the grill for a charity BBQ day with friends or neighbours
- book sale: raise money through your community selling unwanted books
- car wash: help shine up local cars in a community car wash event
- eBay: sell any unwanted items you have lying around on eBay
- Facebook fundraising: use Facebook fundraising tools on your social media posts
- sponsored walk / run: get sponsored for a charity walk or run

Please give this some thought. Anything donated will make a huge difference for the cubs and scouts.

It would be preferable if the people giving the money could be mainly adults outside of our group, such as your parishioners, friends and wider family members.

Do not forget to Gift Aid! A simple way to boost your donations by an extra 25%. It costs you nothing and helps us so much!

Finally! We're now breaking even due to some generous grants we received during 2023, but that we still have that initial set-up deficit to pay back. Please aid us in any way you can to continue this wonderful youth ministry.



GSE UK Charity number: 1198968

INCOME AND
EXPENDITURE

DATA FOR FINANCIAL
YEAR ENDING 31
JANUARY 2023

TOTAL INCOME: £2,869

TOTAL EXPENDITURE:
£8,007



Upcoming Schedule

April 13th - Saturday at Minsteracres

April 18th - Thursday at Mount Community Centre

May 2nd - Thursday at Mount Community Centre

May 18th - Flag day at Beamish

June 1 - Day-trip

June 6th - Thursday at Mount Community Centre

June 22nd - Saturday at Minsteracres

Beamish flag day: Saturday May 18th

Entry is free for any uniformed cubs and scouts.

We have 25 child tickets and 6 leader tickets, available on a first-come, first-served basis. Any parents, guardians, extra leaders, siblings or friends wanting to attend will unfortunately need to pay the full entrance fee (unless you already have an annual pass).

It looks like there could be brass band performances, traditional displays, craft activities and a chance to learn more about the Empire and Flag Days with a highlight of the day being a parade at 2.30pm. We may be allowed to undertake some scouting activities on site.



Catholic Men and Boys' Weekend

Fri 3rd May (4pm) to Mon 6th May (4pm) 2024

Knock Christian Centre, Eden Valley (near Penrith) – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

A relaxed retreat in simple accommodation, facilitated by the “Men of St Joseph” and “Catholic Man UK”
Mass, confessions, talks, testimonies, exposition, recreation, social time, hillwalking, football, pool, table tennis, basketball, badminton, outdoor chess/draughts

