

Firstly, it has been great to start to get back to something like 'Scouting as usual' over the past twelve months. That said, this journey has not been without its challenges & struggles as we have had to adapt to changes in the lives of our volunteers and the impact that this has had upon their availability to support us. We still have more work to do on this, however, it is starting to feel closer to something like we used to know before the world went in a strange direction about three years ago.

In the last year, we have had the opportunity to come together to celebrate our former patron's, the late HM Queen, Platinum Jubilee and also to share in the mourning of her passing. This mixed sensation of valued appreciation & loss is one that has, for me, been mirrored locally for us as we have marked the passing of a number of friends of the District including Dave Collins, Ann Howe & John Sharp. It has been a pleasure & a privilege to have had the opportunity to work alongside them and they have left us with a great legacy of showing what it really means to be a volunteer. During the year ahead, with the District Executive Committee, I would like to explore what we might do to keep their memory (and also the memory of those have gone before them) alive as an example & an encouragement to us all.

In the year ahead, I plan to continue to reshape & refocus the District Executive team. With Brian Friar standing down as District Chair and ready to pick up the recombined role of District Secretary & District Appointments Secretary, I am anticipating that this will allow us to find a new balance between experience & new ideas that will make us stronger & more effective as a team. I will always be indebted to Brian for helping to bring me onboard and for everything that he does to ensure that we remain safe, legal & financially sound in all that we do. This year also sees Brian Caley stepping aside as our District Appointments Chair, a role that he has fulfilled for us faithfully & diligently for the past ten years. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Brian for his support & service in this critical role - I have really appreciated it. I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge & thank the members of the committee who have continued to oversee our activities, especially those who have specific areas of responsibility for us including Ian Welch (District Treasurer) & Gordon Ferguson (Hatton Campsite Manager).

One of my priorities for the year ahead is to rebuild our Commissioner team which has become significantly depleted over the last couple of years - although I would like to take the opportunity to think about how we might do things a little differently to allow participation to be more tailored & flexible to strike a good balance between what we need & what people can offer. In the meantime, all the team have continued to show great adaptability & commitment and I would like to thank them (including Andy Law, Ben Steele, Chris Mears, Gill Friar, George Harding, Hilary Crosby, Holly Barnes, Janet Doody, Josh Williams & Michael Hepburn) for ensuring that we have done our best to support for our young people & their leaders. For me, a great example of the strength & capability within our team was when George & Michael stepped up at short notice to plan & lead our participation in last year's Remembrance Sunday service & parade in Leamington town centre - well done & thank you! And we will have plenty more opportunities to test ourselves further as we head towards District Camp later this year...

I am looking forward to more occasions for us to meet up in the year ahead as it will enable me to spend more time with those who are central to everything we do - our young people & our leaders. With this in mind, my final thank you is therefore to all our local volunteers especially our Section Leaders, Group Scout Leaders & Group Executive teams who between them have done & continue to do so much - week in, week out, often unnoticed - to keep everything going & everyone growing. I really appreciate the hard work that you put in and the passion that you have for what you do. With this in mind, it has therefore been particularly pleasing to see the progress that we have made on recognising the contribution that our volunteers have made through the Good Service Awards scheme where we have submitted & had successfully approved 38 awards since we rebooted the process in October 2021.

As always, it remains my pleasure & privilege to continue to serve you as your District Commissioner & I look forward to spending time with you all in the year ahead as we carry on Scouting together.

*Mark*

Mark Payne

District Commissioner - Leamington