

A photograph of two young boys in Scouts uniforms sitting on the floor. The boy on the right is looking down at a document on the floor. The boy on the left is looking towards him. They are wearing orange shirts and green and yellow neckerchiefs. The background shows a wooden bench and a striped curtain.

# Annual Report 2023

*The figures recorded here relate to the Census taken in January 2023 and have been compared, below, with those for the two preceding years.*

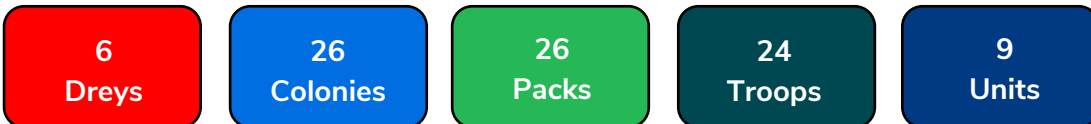


Change from 2022

**+1.8%**

**+9.6%**

## 23 Scout Groups



	6 Dreys	26 Colonies	26 Packs	24 Troops	9 Units	
2021		260 Beaver Scouts	365 Cub Scouts	382 Scouts	157 Explorer Scouts	27 Scout Network
		<b>+54.2%</b>	<b>+26.0%</b>	<b>-3.4%</b>	<b>+3.8%</b>	<b>+88.9%</b>
2022	28 Squirrel Scouts	401 Beaver Scouts	460 Cub Scouts	369 Scouts	163 Explorer Scouts	51 Scout Network
	<b>+178.6%</b>	<b>+1.7%</b>	<b>-8.3%</b>	<b>+2.7%</b>	<b>-1.8%</b>	<b>-15.7%</b>
2023	78 Squirrel Scouts	408 Beaver Scouts	422 Cub Scouts	379 Scouts	160 Explorer Scouts	43 Scout Network

## District Chair's Foreword

Elsewhere in this report we provide just a snippet of the myriad of programme activities that took place in 2022. The Scout Association's framework provides many (different) ways in which we can equip our young people with the skills needed for their on-going life's journey: #SkillsforLife.

As I pen these notes the annual National Volunteers' Week (under the aegis of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations) draws to a close. It has been a chance to recognise the fantastic contribution volunteers make to our communities and say thank you.

We acknowledge and thank leaders (and other volunteers) - in our Groups and Units - who continue to support our young people. There have been challenges during the year, not-the-least the many occasions where a shortage of adult volunteers adds an additional strain on others who are committed to supporting our young people. That opportunity to support our young people as they grow and develop is exactly why we all do it! Of necessity, there are those that undertake two (or more) roles. So many years ago, I was approached by a Scout Group in Leicester that was looking to recruit a new Scout Leader. I was told it's only one night a week and a week's annual camp. We all know that, in reality, it's a voluntary commitment that is far, far greater.

It is very difficult to measure the extent (and value) of this commitment. One way is to look at the number of years of adult service as recorded on our data base, 'Compass.' Such records are as good as the data inputted but a quick analysis reveals that our adult volunteers have given in excess of 3,500 person-years to Scouting in Lonsdale (or elsewhere). For others, including parents and other supporters, such information is scant. There are a few of us with service approaching 60 or 70 years. For some their journey has been much shorter but whatever the commitment has been - and will be - it is much appreciated.

It is appropriate at this time that I mention, particularly, three adult volunteers that have recently retired from their key support roles within the District:

- Kieron Ryan, together with his wife Dorothy, has supported Lonsdale District Scouts for over three decades. For the last 15 years he was Warden of our SilverHelme Activity Centre - with Dorothy as Assistant Warden. Together with a small group of other volunteers, they worked tirelessly to ensure that both the camp site and buildings were fit-for-purpose. The role of Warden is often a demanding one - responding to the many requests from campers (often at all hours!). Additionally, for a period, Dorothy was the Booking Secretary for both of our Activity Centres. A small group of us gathered at SilverHelme late last year to acknowledge their commitment - with the presentation of Silver Acorn awards to them both.
- Steve Clarke was recruited as the result of a chance conversation at the annual sponsored swim, organised by the local Rotary Club, to assist local groups with their fund raising. Steve firstly served as District Treasurer and more lately as Finance Officer - for a total of 14 years. We benefited from all he did; his attention to detail was noteworthy. More recently we are beginning to realise the totality of his commitment which was needed to undertake such key roles. During Steve's attendance at his last Finance sub-Committee meeting, it was a pleasure for me to present him with his Award for Merit.

Everything that has been achieved is much appreciated. Our grateful thanks also to all who have supported Scouting in Lonsdale District during 2022.

**Tony Andrews**  
District Chair

## District Commissioner's Report

We started 2022 with renewed hope, after the previous years of uncertainty surrounding the pandemic. We were back doing what we do best: making sure that every young person was having a Scouting experience that was full of adventure, skills, friendship and a powerful sense of belonging. The 2022 annual census of membership showed that Lonsdale District Scouts had a record-breaking growth of 17%.

The newest Scouting section, Squirrels, for 4- and 5-year-olds, started the year with two Dreys and ended it with six Dreys - an amazing achievement! The section has now become firmly rooted in the District to meet the needs of the age group hardest hit by the effects of Covid-19. We are committed to extending Squirrels to our priority communities, in low-income areas, and making sure that we provide for a more diverse range of people.

We are always very proud of our programme in Lonsdale and this year was no exception. We held many 'nights away' both in Groups and at District level. Our young people across all sections achieved top awards including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Explorer Belts, Young Leader Belts, Scouts of the World Awards and one of the last to be awarded, Queen's Scout Awards. These along with Chief Scout Awards in all sections are proof that as a District our programme is in a good place. We are strengthening our programme team and are improving the support that we give them.

We were back to holding large District events in April when we were again able to celebrate St George's Day, with a very loud procession in Morecambe, along the Promenade.

Our two Activity Centres have seen a return in numbers camping, both from Scouting members and Schools. The sites' volunteers work very hard throughout the year to keep them in tip top condition. The Activity Centres Management Board has developed a strategy for both sites that should help us maintain and develop the sites keeping them relevant and in touch with modern needs as well providing a place for traditional Scouting activities.

In the Summer of 2022, we once again attended the County International Camp, Red Rose 2022. With nearly half of our Groups represented plus Lonsdale having the biggest contingent of Explorer Scouts on the camp. We enjoyed a very sunny week making new friends, meeting old friends and having lots of fun. The leaders that attended have said that they can't wait to do it all again in 2024!

All of the above would not be possible without our army of incredible volunteers. Together we have a single goal: to help more young people gain 'Skills for Life'. In Lonsdale we stay committed to supporting all our members and we value everything that they do. Finally, we have held two Adult Awards Ceremonies in 2022 at which we thanked many of our volunteers for all for their hard work and commitment.

With more of these fabulous volunteers we can reach the 'North Star.'

Mandy Sweet  
District Commissioner

## Awards 2022

The Chief Scout made these Awards to adult members of Lonsdale District during 2022:

### Silver Acorn

*'in recognition of specially distinguished service'*

Dorothy Ryan	Lonsdale District
Keiron Ryan	Lonsdale District
Michael Woods	Lonsdale District

### Bar to the Award for Merit

*'in recognition of further outstanding service'*

Andrew Holland	16 <sup>th</sup> Lancaster (St Paul's)
Nicola Orton	Lonsdale District
Deborah Smith	13 <sup>th</sup> Lancaster
Fiona Wetton	11 <sup>th</sup> Morecambe and Heysham (Parish Church)

### Award for Merit

*'in recognition of outstanding service'*

Mark Bleasdale	13 <sup>th</sup> Lancaster
Susan Blenkinship	16 <sup>th</sup> Morecambe and Heysham (Church of the Ascension)
Stephen Clarke	Lonsdale District
Stephen Landles	33 <sup>rd</sup> Lancaster Sea Scouts
Janet Mechie	1 <sup>st</sup> Slyne with Hest
Donna Pearson	16 <sup>th</sup> Morecambe and Heysham (Church of the Ascension)
David Saul	5 <sup>th</sup> Lancaster (Cathedral and St Bernadette's)

### Chief Scout's Commendation for Good Service

*'in recognition of good service'*

Nancy Bond	Lonsdale District
Joanne Brown	2 <sup>nd</sup> Bolton-le-Sands
Thomas Burditt	1 <sup>st</sup> Silverdale
Kerry Caldicott	Westgate and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Morecambe
Peter Caldicott	Westgate and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Morecambe
Patrick Cherry	1 <sup>st</sup> Silverdale
Joanne Coates	Centurion with Westgate
Andrew Croskery	1 <sup>st</sup> Overton (St Helen's)
Karen Cruickshank	Caton Church
Catherine Davidson	53 <sup>rd</sup> Lancaster
Samuel Dawkins	Galgate
Emma Drummond	Galgate
Ian Edmunds-Parrington	16 <sup>th</sup> Lancaster (St Paul's)
Ian Haines	1 <sup>st</sup> Carnforth
Alexander James	16 <sup>th</sup> Morecambe and Heysham (Church of the Ascension)
Sian James	16 <sup>th</sup> Morecambe and Heysham (Church of the Ascension)
Daniella Martin	16 <sup>th</sup> Lancaster (St Paul's)
Martin May	33 <sup>rd</sup> Lancaster Sea Scouts
Scott Pritchard	16 <sup>th</sup> Lancaster (St Paul's)
Joshua Stennett	Lonsdale District
Christopher Stephenson	Lonsdale District



## Bangladesh and India 2022: An Adventure of a Lifetime

On the 9 December 2022, the group met at Terminal 1 of Manchester Airport excited to embark on the adventure of a lifetime. However, this was far from the start of the journey as we had spent the past three years preparing for the trip. With the COVID pandemic making fundraising increasingly difficult, members of the contingent had to adapt and find new ways to raise the trip fees. In 2021, the trip was postponed a year - this resulted in the contingent halving in size which ultimately was a blessing in disguise, as it enabled the remaining 27 of us to become a tight-knit group.

The flight itself was surreal and whilst I was loving the Emirates experience, I couldn't help but watch the clock run down in anticipation of arrival. On arrival, we were immediately hit with a cultural shock as we experienced our first drive on an Asian road - a great contrast to ours back home. Despite our fatigue we couldn't peel our eyes away from the window. No matter how mentally prepared we felt we were, in advance of this trip, there was no hiding away from the absolute poverty all around us.

A personal highlight from the Bangladesh leg of the trip was an unexpected one and I think that will resonate with many other members of the contingent. Our tour guide stopped the bus for an impromptu walk around a huge fish farm. As we wandered around, something of a crowd had gathered behind us; who were these tourists and why were they looking at our fish? In this crowd there was a young boy and his brothers, all keen to talk to their visitors. His name was Romeo and despite not going to school and working for his family instead, he spoke English very well and even took time to teach us a bit of his language. Interactions like this throughout the trip were a true eye-opener as it showed how these young people, who had very little, were so happy with what they did have: each other.

During our time in Bangladesh, we had the opportunity to meet local Scouts. Over 5,000 miles separated our homes yet we all had a common interest in Scouting which was ultimately what brought us together. Unfortunately, we had been unable to participate in the Jamboree but the Bangladesh Scouts were kind enough to accommodate us in one of their national campsites and they were extremely hospitable during our stay.

One of the major aspects of the trip was exploring religion and culture in both Bangladesh and India. It was interesting to see how the local people worshipped and what role it played in their lives. We visited mosques, temples and even a church. It goes without saying, food is a major part of culture in India and, although sometimes sceptical, we loved trying new dishes. I can see why India is considered to be one of the best cuisines in the world.

And so, the day was upon us, the day we had all been looking forward to. To visit one of the wonders of the world on Christmas morning was certainly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. It is difficult to put into words the feeling of sheer awe that hits you as you approach the Taj Mahal. It felt that three years of uncertainty, preparation and raising funds had led to this moment.

However, this wasn't quite the end of the trip and there was another stand out moment to follow. This was our visit to the Dera Amer Elephant Camp where we had the chance to meet and feed a magnificent Asian elephant. The chance to be so close and personal with such an animal was a great experience and not one which we would have in England.

In reflection, this trip was an absolute success - teaching me to be more appreciative of what I have, realising that my problems are minimal compared to the daily struggle of some people in these regions, and, most importantly, I had a fantastic time with a group of great people.

Isaac Phelan - Participant





## Lonsdale Explorer Scouts at Red Rose 2022

In August 2022, Lonsdale Explorers (as well as many Groups from around Lonsdale District) attended the County International Camp - Red Rose - at the Westmorland Showground. Whilst the Explorer Section had already returned to camping after the COVID-19 lockdowns, this was on a different scale - with 83 Explorers in attendance, making us the largest contingent on the camp!

Our Explorers, along with others from around the County and further afield, camped on an Explorer-specific subcamp, themed to 'musicals'. Each day Explorers took part in exciting activities across the various programme zones including:

- Splash - boating and water activities on Lake Windermere.
- Monopoly run activity around Bowness, Windermere and Ambleside.
- Adventure - a range of adventurous activities to choose from including caving, mountain biking, hillwalking and many more.
- Discovery - an opportunity to explore the local area and Lake District.
- Fun - an array of on-site activities.

In addition to the daytime programme, Explorers greatly enjoyed the evening entertainment whilst others preferred to relax and play games in our fortress of dining shelters (which seemed to become known amongst others on the subcamp as 'The Spaceship!').

We asked several Explorers what their favourite memory of the camp was:

- Evelyn: dancing on the hill in the sunset.
- Alice: dancing in the colours at the paint party.
- Lewis: exploring during the Monopoly game.
- Walter: splashing around during water sports.
- Ella: the Ed Sheeran and dua lipa rip off artists.
- Eleanor: the spontaneous water fight.

Organising a camp for so many Explorers provided many logistical challenges, so thanks must go to all who volunteered to organise the equipment, catering, administration and throughout the week on camp. A special thanks also to those Groups who lent equipment and to the District Executive for a grant towards purchasing new equipment for the Explorer Section.

Red Rose returns in 2024, and we're hoping just as many, if not more, Explorers will take part in this incredible experience.

## Lonsdale Explorer Scouts









## District Executive Committee

Lonsdale District Scout Council is a registered charity and members of the District Executive Committee are the Charity's Trustees. The Committee exists to support the District Commissioner in meeting the responsibilities of her appointment. It is the Council's 'executive body' and is thus answerable to the Council for its actions. The Committee is required to report annually to the District Scout Council's Annual General Meeting.

Going forward, with the adoption of a new Constitution (as required by the changes to Policy, Organisation and Rules of The Scout Association, the District Executive Committee becomes the District Trustee Board. There will be a more specific focus on governance. Many of the other matters, which are of an operational nature, will be supported by other teams (or groups) within the District.

To assist the District Executive Committee, in fulfilling its responsibilities, there are currently five sub-Committees each established with delegated responsibilities. Let's review their remit and work during the year.

**Activity Centres Management Board:** The Activity Centres Management Board (ACMB), a sub-Committee of the Lonsdale District Executive, is responsible - to the Trustees - for the management of the District's two Activity Centres, located at Littledale and SilverHelme.

The day-to-day operation, at each Activity Centre, is carried out under the stewardship of the Operating Group, led by Chris Stephenson. At the end of 2022, the SilverHelme volunteer Warden, Kieron Ryan, retired. Mick Woods remains as volunteer Warden at Littledale. There has been no direct replacement for Kieron at SilverHelme, instead a core team of volunteers now runs the site. This has proved highly effective and is shown in the many improvements across the site.

2022 was a difficult year financially, due to the after effects of COVID-19; this resulted in reduced income. There have been a number of improvements in recent months, both on-site and with overall visibility/ communications that have been converted into improved revenue. By the end of March 2023, the bookings had already almost covered the total annual normal costs. Both sites are also attracting more bookings from Duke of Edinburgh's Award school groups.

Notable developments during the year include the upgrade of the Archery range at Littledale and the installation of new orienteering activities on both sites, including Squirrel and Beaver Trails at SilverHelme. There has been significant progress with general maintenance on both sites, led weekly by a core band of volunteers and also weekend Explorer "Environment Camps" run on both sites. A new booking system has also been implemented and the web site has been upgraded, including site and activity information packs for different types of groups.



Littledale received a grant of £1,288 from the Harris Charity to purchase some Disc (Frisbee) Golf equipment for Littledale. We have also been offered a grant to partially cover the cost of defibrillators for both sites (additional funding is required). In the coming months we will be looking for grants / donations to help cover further site improvements including the SilverHelme drive, a permanent outdoor kitchen at SilverHelme and hammock circles and pizza ovens on both sites.

There remain challenges in running archery, air rifle shooting, climbing/abseiling, crate stacking and tomahawk throwing (chargeable activities) due to the lack of available trained instructors. During 2023 significant work will be required to manage the trees on both sites due to 'ash dieback' and *Phytophthora ramorum* tree disease.

**Appointments Advisory Committee:** This committee supports the District Commissioner, who has overall responsibility for the appointment of adult volunteers. It assists with the process of appointing and welcoming volunteers by advising on their suitability (having met with them to explore a number of prescribed, key topics). Even after the pandemic, the committee has continued with the use of 'Zoom' to conduct (virtual) meetings. We applaud the support of the panel members in using this electronic method of working (which has proven to be more efficient in the prompt processing of most applications).

**Awards Advisory Committee:** The committee provides support and guidance to the District Commissioner when considering awards (particularly those for gallantry, meritorious conduct or good service). Joining the District Commissioner are members who have significant experience - in various roles - and who are well-versed in the level of commitment required for any award. The Local Training Manager also joins meetings of the committee as many of those who are initially considered may not meet the mandatory training requirements relevant to the award they are being considered for. For many of those considered [for an award] it will perhaps be many months before they know the results of our deliberations. During the year under review 35 of our adult volunteers received good service awards, as detailed elsewhere in this report (having collectively committed several centuries of service in supporting the young people in Lonsdale District and elsewhere).

**Finance sub-Committee:** Our job is to make sure we have enough money to support the running costs of the District, as well as helping to develop our Groups and encourage District-wide events. This money is not easy to get, and we must spend it as effectively as possible. We also need to run our finances conservatively so that we can absorb issues in any particular year without a threat to our long-term survival. But against those objectives, last year we spent more than our income. We made a loss.





This would concern us were it not for the healthy cash balances that have been established over many years by our predecessors and deliberately maintained by us. We regard the current year as a difficult year for us and our Groups/Units in the District. To support them we agreed not to raise the funds we levy on our Groups/Units despite the centre having done so. And although some of the financial effects of COVID-19 remain with us, the generous government funding is finished. So, if we get less income, it follows we must dip into our reserves. We have continued this policy post the end of the financial year and we reduced our levy by 50p to contain an increase nationally of the same amount. We carefully monitor our reserves, which remain above the minimum we have set as policy. Nevertheless, not covering our expenses is not sustainable in the long term and gives away the strong position our predecessors built for us. We will need to spend carefully.

We have completed the programme to increase the income available for distribution from the Sharpe Bequest by investing this money in shares. As expected, the value of the shares is volatile, but the income stream is stable and an order of magnitude above our previous income.

At the end of the year our Finance Officer of many years standing, Stephen Clarke, resigned and finished during March. On an interim basis the work is covered by the District Chair, Tony Andrews. This is not a sustainable solution and a priority for this year is to recruit a replacement Finance Officer.

**14-25 Finance and Support Group:** The 14 -25 Finance and Support Group exists to provide support to both the District Explorer Scout Units and the Scout Network. Throughout the year, we have spent a large portion of our time attempting to simplify and standardise processes for the Explorer Scout Sections, with the aim of reducing the administrative burden upon Explorer Scout Leaders. This has meant we have focused mostly on back of house type tasks, that, while essential, can be time consuming. Our main priorities have been around ensuring all Units have the correct access to their finances, to allow activities, etc, to be able to be planned and funded correctly. We have also embarked upon a trial of the 'Online Scout Manager' accounts package with the view to use in every Unit to allow for speedier and more accurate accounting to take place.

We have also aimed to make the joining process for the Explorer Scout Section easier, both for the Explorer Scout and their family but also for the Unit Leaders and the District Explorer Scout Administrator. This will reduce the amount of administration involved and speed up the collection of the required data. We will continue to look at these areas in the coming year, but also want to look at the linking journey, from Scout Section to Explorer Scout Section to encourage our young members to stay within Scouting.

