



Navy Command

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See Distribution

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RN INSPECTION OF 1st AVOCH SEA SCOUTS – 23 SEP 09

1. This inspection was held at Avoch Primary School. In attendance were representatives from the local Council, Scout Region and District, other Sea Scout Groups, the Coastguard and the Inverness Careers Office plus many parents and other local supporters of the Group.
2. Prior to the inspection Lt Cdr Griffiths was kindly taken on a daylight tour to see the Groups boat assets and recent improvements to their stores.
3. The inspection commenced with the now customary welcome by a piper at the entrance to the school. The Group were all fallen in ready for Colours and made an impressive sight in the school hall. Colours was conducted with full and appropriate ceremony by the Scouts with a good standard of piping, both on the bagpipes and bosun's call. The tradition of conducting the ceremony in Gaelic is now well established.
4. On inspection all were very smartly turned out and demonstrated a clear pride in their uniform – well done. Most disciplined throughout the inspection, when spoken to they answered clearly and positively describing a full, fun and rewarding programme of activities. Water activities are a prominent feature within the Group and they now offer the opportunity for the young people to gain RYA sailing and power and BCU qualifications with many in the group holding both RYA and BCU awards. Sailing has become a prime activity, through the active liaison with Chanonry Sailing Club, and 2 of the Explorers are now successfully competing at regional and national events. It is most pleasing to see Scouts and Explorers with their advanced nautical skills awards and holding water activity authorisations, something few groups achieve.
5. On completion of the inspection the Group received a 15 minute presentation from the Inverness RN Careers Officer before dispersing to their chosen activity bases. These were mainly decided upon by the individual watches (patrols) and all were well thought through and presented, demonstrating the clear ability and potential of these young people and the personal development that membership of the Group

encourages. The activities included engine maintenance, boat rigging and rope work, a presentation on the history of Scouting and the Group, a presentation by an Explorer Scout on his trip to Malawi, radio skills (imaginatively being practiced through playing a game of battleships), a most entertaining demonstration of circus skills and the Coastguard Cliff Rescue team involving the Explorer Scouts in a demonstration of their rescue equipment and techniques.

6. Whilst previous summer camps have been held at Lochgoilhead and Auchengillan this year they held a week long activity camp centred on Chanonry Sailing Club. During the week the Scouts and Explorers had opportunity to undertake all forms of water activities and to complete the various BCU and RYA awards they have been working towards. Unfortunately the wind was not kind enough for everyone to take their final sailing assessment but it is hoped to complete this soon. Immediately after this week the Explorers participated at the Auchengillan International Jamboree as Staff members of the Water Activities Team. They did very well earning high praise from the leader of the team for their skills, enthusiasm and dedication. Well Done.

7. They have aspirations to have both Cub and Beaver sections but have not found the leaders necessary to start these sections. There is a move to start Cubs and Beavers in the nearby village of Fortrose and if so a combined group may be formed.

8. The Group has developed, over a relatively short period, a well balanced fleet of their own boats. Recent acquisitions include a pioneer multi powerboat and 4 Topaz Uno sailing dinghies, the latter with the assistance of a lottery fund grant. All are well maintained and licensed. The exception to this is the clinker built pulling boat, which has recently returned from being made watertight with new planking, which is an ongoing restoration project. They also have access to a considerable range of other boats and canoes which means that they can offer the full range of water activities. With the small Honda ribs now 5 years old there are plans to replace these and donate the old ones to a new Scout Group that is opening on Orkney.

9. They continue to meet in the local Primary School with whom they have a good relationship. Following their last report the storage shed in the school grounds has been re-roofed and completely refurbished throughout with funds from the local Council and Education Authority and a lot of self help by the Scouts. This now offers sound, watertight storage for their equipment and a workshop for boat maintenance through the winter.

10. The highly dedicated leadership team is small but slowly growing in numbers and qualifications. It was good to see that more skills instructors are joining and undertaking the coaching courses necessary to lead activities.

11. There is an active Group Executive who ably support the Leadership team and who have been most successful in getting grants to purchase equipment. The new Secretary and Treasurer are most enthusiastic and they may have found a new Chairman, the current one wishing to step down by the next AGM. Parental support is also sound and improving and hopefully will continue to grow after the demonstration of what the young people achieve in the Group this evening.

12. The inspection ended with the investiture of 4 Scouts and 1 Leader, a badge presentation and evening Colours, again conducted with appropriate, full and formal ceremony. The Group were then fallen out and assembled informally for the

Inspecting Officers address during which he announced that they had once again passed inspection and presented the Certificate of recognition to the Group scout Leader, Mr D Martin.

13. This was a first class inspection of a young but thriving Sea Scout Group who have established and maintained very high standards of safety and programme. They most ably proved themselves worthy of RN Recognition and are congratulated on the progress they have made since their last inspection. Despite their remoteness and the great difficulty in attending RN Recognised Scheme events, they are quickly developing into one of the best Groups within the scheme and are a fine example of what can be achieved with energy, initiative and drive from Leaders and young people alike.

14. It is always a pleasure to visit Avoch and Lt Cdr Griffiths once again thoroughly enjoyed this inspection. He sincerely thanks his hosts, particularly Mr D Martin, for their warm welcome and generous hospitality throughout the day.



D T Griffiths
Lieutenant Commander Royal Navy

Distribution:

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