

Chairman's Chat

February 2017

I hope that you all had a superb Christmas and although it seems such a long time ago I cannot let our first Christmas meet at Pontefract Racecourse go without mentioning what an exceptional meet it was. The atmosphere at both the kids party through the day and the adults party at night was phenomenal. Hand on heart I think I enjoyed it more than any meet I've been to since the first time I won the National Volleyball Meet back in 2006!!

I write this having returned from Leeds DA's first ever winter THS held at 3 Rivers Woodland Park and I really hope that it is an indication of things to come. Although final numbers are not yet in (the THS continues for another week), I expect to see a figure of approaching 100 children and youth having stopped at this event and it was fantastic to see them playing so well together. Don't get me wrong, Leeds DA is about 'all the family', young and old but given the age profile of many DA's who are concerned with how they can replace their aging committees, it is good to be 'bucking the trend' and to know that the future of Leeds DA looks good.

Whilst on the subject of our younger generation, I'd like to thank Keith and Claire for taking 12 youth to the Winter Youth Rally – their first as leaders. All reports were that the rally was one of the best ever with a whole host of new activities added and certainly all the feedback I've heard from the youth was that it was an awesome weekend. The DA can be immensely proud that the youth brought home the Snowflake trophy.

It was also fantastic to see a youth area at Drax in the middle of January and I'm so chuffed to see so many new members signing up to both the youth and junior youth sections. Congratulations to Claire, Keith, Vanessa and Darren – what an excellent start you've made and long may it continue. The youth and juniors are lucky to have such a dedicated, hardworking team.

I was delighted that the Valentines weekend at Kellington Manor was once again a huge success. My thanks go to John Hawtin for organising it and being fully booked within a week or so of bookings opening and many congratulations to Michelle Hill on winning LDA Valentine! It's funny, they say that 'you can't be all things to all people' but with an adults only Valentine weekend and a family friendly THS both selling out over the same weekend I'd suggest we gave it a pretty good go!

It's been a great start to 2017. It looks very likely that in January and February alone we will have had almost 500 unit nights camped. The current popularity of our meets is such that I'd urge you to get your bookings in for the booked meets early. We currently have 2 meets where booking is essential – Eden Camp 3rd – 5th March and Austwick for May Day Bank Holiday weekend 27th March – 2nd April and bookings are optional for Fraithorpe (Spring Bank) and The Bogie Race (Grange Moor).

It's all quite exciting as we look forward to Spring and Summer 2017. Credit to Christine and Andy Wadeson, I cannot remember ever seeing such a hugely impressive, diverse and comprehensive list of sites and THS's either at Leeds DA or any other DA for that matter.

I'd like to bring to your attention a few recent changes/enhancements to the sites list.

Easter

We've added a 5 night meet at Camp Hill in Bedale. This site is in a stately home setting with full adventure attractions including Segways, Quad Bikes, High Ropes, Kids play areas and much, much more. The meet runs from 7th to 12th April. For the second part of the Easter holiday we'll be at Thirsk Racecourse which is less than 9 miles from Camp Hill and we've moved Thirsk forward a day so it now opens on 12th April making it an obvious choice to go from one to the other.

Camping at a Vineyard

Following a suggestion from Karen Johnson (thanks Karen) Sites Officer Christine Wadeson has done a superb job squeezing this meet into our already awesome April schedule. The meet will run from 21st April to 23rd April at Nun Monkton Vineyard and Brewery. Tours of the vineyard will be available.

York Knavesmire (Beer Festival) THS

THS officer Andy Wadeson has successfully negotiated extended dates for 2017 so this one will now run for 18 nights from 15th September to 3rd October.

It's been great to see so many of you in your new branded Leeds DA hoodies and a huge pat on the back to Lorna for successfully completing the order before Christmas – no mean feat. Don't forget you can download the regalia form from our website – <http://www.leedsda.org/>

Happy camping for 2017, let's make it the best yet.

Chris