



THE *Scout* ASSOCIATION  
OF MALTA

# Victoria Scout Group

N E W S   S H E E T

Nº: 226

[July - September] October 2024

## *From The Group Scout Leader*

Jesmond Scerri

The highlight of this quarter was undoubtedly marked by two incredible activities: the Summer Camp at Dwejra and the Rover Explorer Belt Expedition.

July kicked off with a thrilling adventure as seven members of our Rover Crew set off from Malta to Toulouse for the Rover Scouts Explorer Belt Expedition. Over the course of 17 days, they hiked more than 150 kilometers, exploring rural villages in France, Andorra, and Spain while tackling various challenges along the way. This expedition, a result of months of meticulous preparation, involved route planning, accommodation arrangements, transport logistics, meal planning, and much more. You can read the full account of their journey on page 6. A special thanks goes to Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, whose part-financing through the BeActive grant helped make this unforgettable adventure possible.

Meanwhile, back in Malta, our sections continued with their regular meetings and outdoor activities. The Cub Pack visited the turtle nests in Ramla, while the Scout Troop participated in a canoe-building and testing event. The Venture Unit was crucial in preparing camp stores and carrying out maintenance on our equipment, showing excellent teamwork and dedication. Additionally, we organized teambuilding activities for various schools' staff, contributing to the wider community in true Scouting spirit.

The Summer Camp this year was particularly special as we were joined by the 1<sup>st</sup> Sliema Scout Group for several days. This joint camp offered a fantastic opportunity for leaders and members alike to work together and forge new friendships, embodying the essence of Scouting. Organizing a camp for over 150 people required

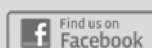


Group photo at summer camp

*Continued overleaf...*

Views expressed in this publication are personal and not necessarily those of the Victoria Scout Group as a whole, or of the Scout Association of Malta.

Published by the **VICTORIA SCOUT GROUP**  
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An aerial view of the campsite

significant planning and coordination, but thanks to the hard work of our leaders, the kitchen team and Camp Chiefs, we ensured a positive experience for everyone. One of the highlights was the BBQ and Campfire, which attracted nearly 500 participants – a remarkable achievement that wouldn't have been possible without the help of all the volunteers involved.

Throughout this quarter, we also focused on three ongoing projects, two of which were funded by Aġenzija Żgħażaġh and one by the Ministry for Gozo and Planning. Funds obtained through these entities are critical in supporting our Group's activities and ensuring we have the necessary equipment to continue offering quality Scouting experiences.

September marked the start of our regular meetings, following a well-deserved break for our leaders. We hosted a meeting at HQ for prospective new parents, introducing them to Scouting and discussing the waiting list. Our first official post-summer activity was a cleanup at Marsalforn Valley, organized in collaboration with the Ministry for Gozo and Planning in honour of World Cleanup Day. Additionally, our Venture Unit participated in the Go-Kart Rally in Malta, representing our Group with two teams at this national event organized by the Scout Association of Malta.

As we look forward to the coming months, our leaders have already crafted an engaging programme that will keep our members learning, growing, and enjoying their Scouting journey. *"The most worth-while thing is to try to put happiness into the lives of others,"* as Lord Baden-Powell wisely said, and this is a value we strive to continue instilling in all our activities. We are committed to shaping our Scouts into well-rounded citizens who will make a positive impact on the world.

## *Thank you!*

- to JV Pharma and ORS Hydration Malta for providing our members with oral hydration tablets and sun screen at camp.
- to all those who lent a helping hand during the group's barbeque, either by donating raffle prizes or other items, or helping in the preparation, cooking and serving of the food.
- to Mr. Alex Rizzo of Ritz Gozo, for donating 2 kayaks.



## Projects

- Project Camp Canvas - During the summer camp, the Group used new covers for tents, new hike tents and gazebos, a number of ridge tents that were recently repaired and other equipment bought through the Ministry for Gozo and Planning NGO Scheme 2023. This helped the Group to be able to host over 150 members from its Group as well as from the Sliema Group under canvas.
- During these past few months, the Rover and Venture Scouts undertook a significant project to revamp their room at HQ by painting the walls, installing blinds, restoring old shelving units and constructing a new set of shelves for storing abseiling, climbing, and other equipment. They also improved on their recreational space by purchasing a billiard table, a dartboard, and a speaker stand. These upgrades were made possible through a grant from the A4U scheme by Aġenzija Żgħażaġh.
- An expedition abroad as part of their Explorer Belt Challenge for a group of Rover Scouts was partially funded through a grant by Aġenzija Żgħażaġh under the BeActive scheme.

The Group would like to thank the Ministry for Gozo and Planning and Aġenzija Żgħażaġh for the continuous financial help provided.



Old tents which were given a new lease of life



New shelving will house the equipment in the Venture and Rover room.

## We were there....

- Well done Cub Scout Andrea Schembri and Scout Gabriel Grech! During the Globe Malta Achievements Ceremony held at the US Embassy, Scout Gabriel Grech, Senior Sixer Andrea Schembri and fellow student Soleil (also a Scout with the Xagħra Scout Group), represented their schools and received certificates from Mr. Ken Toko, Deputy Chief of Mission of the U.S. Embassy Valletta, Malta. Andrea carried out investigations and activities as part of the GLOBE programme while Gabriel was a Globe Student Vlogger, in collaboration with NASA.
- In August, members of the Group helped in welcoming and serving food to members of a choir from Latvia who gave service at the Gozo Cathedral.
- On Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> August, the Group provided a guard of honour to H.E. the President of Malta, Myriam Spiteri Debono and to the Minister for Gozo, Clint Camilleri at the agrarian show held on Santa Marija's feast at Villa Rundle Gardens.
- On Friday 20<sup>th</sup> September, the Group took part in the Clean Up the World Campaign organised by the Ministry for Gozo and Planning.
- On Friday 27<sup>th</sup> September, Ventures and Rovers helped during the Fontana Wine Festival.



Gabriel Grech, Andrea Schembri and fellow student Soleil receive their certificates from Mr. Ken Toko, Deputy Chief of Mission of the U.S. Embassy Valletta, Malta.



Clean Up the World activity at Marsalforn Valley



Guard of honour to H.E. Myriam Spiteri Debono, President of Malta

## Awards and Badges

– July to September 2024

### Cub Scout Packs

**Malta Scout Membership, WOSM membership and**

**Start-up Badge:** George Camilleri

**Tenderpaw:** George Camilleri, Danilo Saliba

**Mowgli:** Damien Azzopardi, Ben Abela, Jake Bugeja, Massimo Buhagiar, George Camilleri, Jake Camilleri, Francesco Cefai, Liam Cini, Gabriel Gatt, Nikolai Gatt, Thomas John Gatt, Ivan Kravchenko, Mifsud Jake, Leon Puglisi, Adam Said, Danilo Saliba, Kurt Saliba, Spiteri Luca, Gabriel Tabone, Evan Zammit

**Kaa:** Ben Abela, Francesco Cefai, Evan Zammit

**Hathi:** Massimo Buhagiar, Ivan Kravchenko, Thomas Rapa, Andrea Schembri, Alexey Scicluna, Liam Sultana, Anthony Zammit

**Altar Server:** Neil Bajada, Leon Puglisi, Jake Said, Anthony Zammit, Michael Zammit

**Hobbies:** Mateo Xerri

**Scientist:** George Camilleri

**Sportsman:** Jake Camilleri, Francesco Cefai, Thomas Rapa, Adam Said, Luca Spiteri, Ayden Vella, Mateo Xerri

**Swimmer 1:** Ben Abela, Francesco Cefai, George Camilleri, Gabriel Gatt, Rafael Grech, Andrea La Rosa, Leon Puglisi, Adam Said, Kurt Saliba, Luca Spiteri, Ayden Vella, Anthony Zammit, Michael Zammit

**Botanist:** George Mercieca

**Camper:** Massimo Buhagiar, Ivan Kravchenko, George Mercieca, Thomas Rapa, Jake Said, Liam Sultana, Anthony Zammit

**Collector:** Gabriel Attard, Neil Bajada, Jake Bugeja, Francesco Cefai, Jake Said

**Craftsman:** Ben Abela, Damien Azzopardi, Neil Bajada, Nikolai Buttigieg, George Camilleri, Francesco Cefai, Liam Cini, Gabriel Gatt, Nikolai Gatt, Thomas John Gatt, Rafael Grech, Ivan Kravchenko, Andrea La Rosa, Jake Mifsud, Leon Puglisi, Danilo Saliba, Andrea Schembri, Alexey Scicluna, Luca Spiteri, Liam Sultana, Ayden Vella, Mateo Xerri, Anthony Zammit, Evan Zammit, Michael Zammit

**Entertainer:** Neil Bajada, Rafael Grech

**Our Earth:** Thomas Rapa

**Musician:** Ben Abela

Well done to all!

## Erasmus+ Green Ambassadors

*Enhancing skills for environmental leadership by ASL Sarah Grech*

Between 4<sup>th</sup> July - 10<sup>th</sup> July, ASL Sarah Grech and Venture Scouts Simon Mizzi and Tyler Theuma Scerri took part in a project held at Vila Nova de Tazem in Portugal, which project included youths from 6 countries: Malta, Germany, Armenia, Romania, Ukraine and Portugal. Angie Said representing the Gozo Cadets was also part of the group from Gozo.

Youths from ages 18-30 discussed the environmental situations in each country and the different ways how we can live a more sustainable life. Apart from discussions, activities included a trip to the highest mountain in mainland Portugal: Serra da Estrela, and a morning creating activities for children ages 7-13.

Each evening also involved a culture night where each country presented traditional food, dance and activities. Our Maltese night would not be complete without Kinnie, Twistes and a fun game of It- Tigieġa l- Ghamja.

It was definitely an experience that we will hold close to our hearts. From meeting lovely new people to exploring nature in Portugal, our time in Vila Nova de Tazem was one for the books.

A big thank you goes to the Ministry for Gozo, Youths Gozo, Erasmus+ and Reencontro for this wonderful experience.



Group photo of the participants



From left to right: Venture Scouts Tyler Theuma Scerri and Simon Mizzi, Gozo Cadet Angie Said and ASL Sarah Grech

## *Point to Ponder with the Editor Anita Muscat*

### **Summer camp 2024, Group barbeque and campfire**

This year's camp was a special one since it was a joint camp for the Victoria and the 1<sup>st</sup> Sliema Scout Group (Bernard's Own). The Packs, the Troop, the Venture Sections and leaders joined forces and carried out a common programme.

The numbers of campers (at times around 160) was much larger than usual and this involved a much bigger effort in all tasks undertaken before, during and following camp - taking out the equipment from its 'resting place' in the stores, packing it on and unpacking it from the trucks to and from Dwejra, setting up a much larger campsite and later dismantling it, buying (LOTS OF) food and water for the hungry hordes and getting resources for the activities planned. The logistics involved - planning, coordinating, organising, managing, executing and being ever-flexible - for every single task/activity for the 8 days of camp was highly demanding and time-consuming. Notwithstanding these challenges, the leaders managed to overcome the obstacles and present an unforgettable experience to the members of both Groups. Be Prepared was topmost on the agenda!!

In the spirit of Scouting, new friendships were forged and adventures and unique experiences were shared in the breath-taking setting which is Dwejra which is just as unique and so very special. There was swimming and kayaking in the different areas around Dwejra - the Inland Sea, the Blue Hole and the Fungus Rock area known as *il-Port* (with its secret caves and interconnecting passages). Scouts also successfully tested their home-made kayaks. We all marvelled at the spectacular sunsets and sang our hearts' out during balmy nights under starry skies featuring the Milky Way. We had nothing but admiration at the pioneering projects prepared by our Ventures and Rovers and by seasoned pioneering masters such as George Said and Leli Mizzi. The stunning parabolic hyperbola camp gate, as well as the tower, were the highlights which embellished the camp site. However they were also signs of the skills, dedication, ingenuity and the teamwork without which such projects would not be possible. Day in, day out, we enjoyed the delicious food on offer by the kitchen team, and with 160 (hungry) campers, the amounts prepared were gargantuan. (N.B. Amongst others, the camp shopping list included 93

kilos of pasta!!!! Mind you, we did not eat this in a single sitting but eat them we did, up to the last gram of penne, spaghetti, farfalle, tortiglioni, fusilli and noodle.)

The Group's fundraising barbeque was very well attended, with almost 500 guests. The campfire which followed included contributions from all sections and the audience joined in the sing-songs and the atmosphere was truly electric. As usual, the campfire opening was nothing but spectacular.

Camp is now over but the memories and the spirit will linger on in our hearts and minds. Well done to all those who made it happen! This includes members, leaders, Council members, parents and grandparents, sponsors for the barbeque lottery, and other volunteers who responded to our call for help and gave a helping hand whenever and wherever this was needed. Thank you!



Our camp, our home - an aerial view

## *Congratulations ASL Sarah!*

Congratulations ASL Sarah Grech on completing her Advanced Wood Badge Course.



## *Gone Home*

- Carmel/Charlie Micallef - a former leader and Quartermaster of the Group for many years.
- Vincenza Vella - aunt of Rover Crew Leader Dr Christopher Micallef
- Maria Mizzi - mother of Scouter Leli Mizzi

May they rest in peace. Please remember them in your prayers.

## Explorer Belt Challenge – Rover Crew

In July and August, 7 Rover Scouts took part in an expedition as part of their Explorer Badge Challenge. This challenge took Jerrod, Richard, Matthew, Michael Victor, Presley Albert, Darren Paul and James on a demanding 17-day trekking experience across Spain, Andorra and France.

They started off from Toulouse and hiked through the Occitaine Region and Department of Pyrenees Orientales. They visited medieval cities and villages such as Carcassonne, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Alet-les-Bains and stayed at beautiful hamlets such as Cailla and Gesse. They camped in different locations, hiked through gorges, tunnels and across streams and climbed mountains.

As part of the project, the team interacted with locals, learnt about their customs, and investigated the fusion of Spanish and French traditions in the Pic Carlit region. They observed the cultural differences between France, Andorra, and Catalonia and sampled local cuisine.

After completing their trek, the group took a few days to rest and explore Barcelona, and reflected on the experience and the challenges they had to overcome while testing their endurance and survival skills.

Heartfelt thanks go to Aġenzija Żgħażaġh for partially funding the trip through the BeActive Youth Scheme.



From Esperanza to Quillan



Hiking from Quillan to Cailla



At the walled city of Carcassonne



Hiking through Limoux, Esperanza and Alet-les-Bains



On the eve of departure, the Rovers meet at headquarters and checked if they 'are prepared'.

# The Troop - Summer camp memories



And we're off to camp

Preparing home-made ice-cream and doughnuts at camp



The kayak project



SL David and the Scouts discuss the camp programme.

Starry, starry nights and campfires galore.....

## *A Summer of Adventure*

Rover Crew and Venture Unit Report by AVSL Matthew Grech

The past few months have been a period of remarkable activity and achievement for our Rover and Venture Units. From challenging expeditions to community contributions, their efforts have been nothing short of inspiring. Here is a glimpse of their adventures and accomplishments from July to September.

The pinnacle of the summer for our Rover Crew was the Explorer Belt Challenge. This extraordinary 17-day hike took the Crew on a rigorous yet exhilarating journey across the Pyrenees, starting in France and ending in Andorra, with a well-deserved post-trip in Barcelona, Spain. Covering over 180 kilometres on foot, this adventure tested the Rovers' physical and mental endurance. This expedition was made possible through the generous support of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh via the BeActive scheme, for which we are profoundly grateful. This journey has undoubtedly forged lasting memories and bonds among the Crew. Our Rovers played a crucial role in the success of this year's annual yet special summer camp. Their leadership and organisational skills ensured the smooth running of the camp. From meticulous preparation to taking on leadership roles within various sections, the Rovers' dedication was evident. Their commitment to the Group and their willingness to assist wherever needed were instrumental in making the camp a resounding success.

The Ventures had an equally busy summer, filled with exciting projects and collaborations. Their efforts began with the maintenance of camp equipment in preparation for the summer camp. During the camp, the Ventures collaborated with the Sliema Unit, participating in a superb programme that fostered camaraderie and teamwork.

A standout moment for the Ventures was their pioneering project, which became the highlight of this year's annual summer BBQ campfire. Their creativity, skill, and teamwork were on full display as they constructed an impressive structure that left everyone in awe. This project added a memorable touch to the summer celebrations.

The Ventures also participated in the Go-Kart Rally in Verdala, competing alongside other Units from Malta. This event provided a fun and competitive

atmosphere, as well as an excellent opportunity to build friendships with fellow Scouts from across the island. The Ventures represented our Group with pride and thoroughly enjoyed this unique experience. Both the Rover and Venture Units played vital roles in various events held by our Group over the summer. Their involvement exemplifies their strong commitment to the success of the Group and their active participation in the wider community.

From the Pyrenees to pioneering projects and everything in between, this summer has showcased the dedication, teamwork, and adventurous spirit that define our Rovers and Ventures. Their contributions highlight the strength of our Scout Group and reinforce their role as valuable members of the broader Scouting community.



Getting ready for camp



The Victoria Ventures and Rovers and the Sliema Ventures are off on a very particular night hike.



Scout Law # 13 A Scout is always hungry!



Striking camp and packing all equipment is quite a task.



Fun and competition time at the Go-Kart Rally

## *What an experience!*

During the month of August, a group of 12 altar boys from Gozo gave service in the Basilica of St Peter, in the Vatican City.

On Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> August, they had their investiture ceremony as Vatican altar boys, which ceremony was presided over by Gozitan Cardinal Mario Grech. The ceremony was held in the presence of their families and the priests who accompanied them.

On Sunday 11<sup>th</sup>, they had a private audience with His Holiness Pope Francis at his residence at Santa Marta's House in the Vatican City.

5 of these altar boys are Scouts with the Victoria Scout Group. Well done to Warren Cauchi, Jacob Grech, Joseph Mizzi, Loren Mizzi and Matthias Ryan Zammit Micallef.



From left to right: Warren Cauchi, Jacob Grech, Joseph Mizzi, Loren Mizzi and Matthias Ryan Zammit Micallef



The altar boys meet Pope Francis during a private audience.

## *Saturday and Seonee Packs Report by Cub Scout Leader Anita Muscat*

The highlight of this 3-month period was surely summer camp. However there was another treat in store before that. The last meeting before camp was an outdoor one held at Ramla Bay. There the Cubs visited the turtle nest and learnt more about the nesting and the hatching processes, facts and figures about the life of turtles and the threats which these endangered and protected species face. A clean-up of the environs of the nest followed. It was then time for a refreshing swim.

Thank you Ms Marvic Refalo, representative of Nature Trust, FEE Malta for once again taking the time to meet the Cubs, sharing your expertise with us all and providing equipment for the clean-up.

N.B. Two Pack leaders Betty Berry and Anita Muscat are also volunteers with Nature Trust and are part of the team of volunteers who patrol the beach at night and watch over the nests 24/7.

Summer camp at Dwejra followed soon after. This was a special camp as 34 Cubs from the Victoria Group shared their days at camp with 21 Cubs from the Sliema Scout Group. A big family indeed! The theme for camp was pirates. All activities revolved around the topic. On day 1, the Cubs were stranded on an island. On day 2, they found ways and means of surviving on the island while on day 3 they managed to escape from the island. Activities and crafts included safety at sea and swimming sessions, crafting a pirate hat, an eye patch and a parrot to perch on one's shoulder. Face painting, 'tattoos', camp charades and the creation of a pirate name for each and every Cub were also part of the programme. Then there were the colourful pirate flags, one for each tent. A Morse code exchange by torchlight and an astronomy session rounded off day 1. There is no light pollution at Dwejra which is classified as a Dark Sky Heritage Area and so the night skies can be enjoyed without any interference. And they are really magnificent as are all the sunsets we experienced.

On Day 2, the Cubs carried out experiments to filter some dirty water. Different groups used different materials and methods to go about it but all of them were successful in their endeavours!! Later the Packs visited the Marine Environmental Education Centre at Dwejra and learnt more about the unique flora and fauna found at Dwejra and its marine environment. Dwejra is part of the EU Natura 2000 network. Dwejra is also a Marine Protected Area. In the afternoon they took part in the medley of

water games organised where teams made up of Cubs, Scouts, Ventures and Rovers competed against each other. All the games were great. However the best one was undoubtedly the mud pit where the participants had to crawl in the mud and dig deep in search of hidden treasure! Some of them were unrecognizable by the time they exited the pit and needed a thorough hose-down to remove all traces of their mud-bath therapy!!

During their final day at camp, the Cubs rehearsed their sea shanties for the evening's Group campfire. They went swimming, kayaking, built a small boat out of reeds and launched it at sea and took part in some water games at the Inland Sea. The highlight of the afternoon was surely the boat trip from the Inland Sea out into the open sea at Dwejra. This was a first for most of the Cubs and it gave them an idea of another area of Dwejra, (equally beautiful as all the others) which they had not experienced yet.

In the evening the Sliema and the Victoria Cubs said goodbye to each other as most of the former returned to Malta.

Well done Me Hearties! Shiver me timbers, you are truly pirate souls with stout pirate hearts! Hope to meet you again soon!

3 Cubs were invested at camp. We welcome George from the Victoria Group and Markus and Matthew from the Sliema Group as new members in our Scouting family.

**Cub prayer at camp: We give thanks for being here together in the name of Scouting. We ask that we may learn to work hard and play fairly. We ask to see the needs of others so we may help them. We ask for strength to do a good deed every day and to live to our Scout Promise. Amen.**



Water filtering experiments at the Inland Sea area



Junior pirates in full regalia with their hats and trusty parrot



One version of a Jolly Roger



Visit to the turtle nest at Ramla Bay



Guess what? Camp charades is fun....



Rehearsing some sea shanties for the campfire



A little bit of mud therapy does wonders for one's skin. So they say.....



Morse Code session at camp

# Summer Camp 2024, Group Barbeque and Campfire

These are just a few of the hundreds of photos taken at camp.

Unfortunately it is impossible to share them all. This is just an 'assaggio'. Enjoy .....



Sunsets at Dwejra are simply magnificent.



Seasoned Scout masters share their expertise with eager novices to build the tower.



And the camp gate is up. Well done Leli Mizzi and George Said and all the helpers!



Aerial view of the campsite during the Group barbeque



Aerial view of the campsite during the campfire



GSL Jesmond (Victoria) and GSL Timmy (Sliema) during the campfire



Chief Commissioner Anton Pisani at camp



Flag down on Summer Camp 2024



Group photo of the Victoria and Sliema Scout Groups at camp