

NORTH WEST DURHAM BATTALION BOYS' BRIGADE

REPORT OF BATTALION PRESIDENT - JUNE 2012

This has been a bit of a strange year, where we've sort of gone back to normal, following the closure of the Newton Hall Company, after a rather different year last year trying to help and include them, but all unfortunately to no avail.

So we return to the 6 Companies that we had in the Battalion, who soldier faithfully on, often struggling against competition from elsewhere and with small numbers to work with. Even officer availability is now becoming a problem with people working in retail, on shifts or standby systems. All of this adds to the problems we face in retaining boys and providing attractive programmes and events.

However as Rachel has shown in the statistics earlier, boy numbers are stable for the most part, although not growing, which is our overwhelming target. One area of great concern however is South Moor, with a decrease to only 2 boys on the returns last October.

There are no quick fix solutions, and the Brigade is trying to formulate new initiatives to help Companies to get through these hard times and to grow their numbers.

One such initiative was presented recently at Broomley Grange to all Battalion Presidents and Secretaries, which is called "Strategy for Growth", and aims to help Companies to grow their membership by 10%. I was unable to attend this meeting, but we had 4 from the Battalion who did, and it would be useful to get some feedback to all Companies on this and on how it will work. I look forward to seeing the details of this and the results.

My own personal feeling has always been that to attract new members, we need to get them involved at a young age and therefore need to target the parents of young boys by showing them that we can offer something that is interesting, fun, safe and hopefully different to what others are providing.

Finally, I would like to thank those who have held office during the past year, and especially those who have once again organised and run the events for the boys.

Many thanks to you all for the work that you do in your Companies, and in support of the Battalion and here's hoping for growth within the Battalion next year.

Paul Knowles.