



CUB HIKERS: (From left) Thomas Crook, Matthew Browning, Alex Crook, Harry Cronshaw, James Baker, Benjamin Jones, Benjamin Holt, Dominic Holt.

Be prepared to make a comeback

Devonport cubs go from brink of closure to healthy waiting list

by Anne Gibson

A few months ago, the last dyb-dyb-dyb was about to ring out on the southern tip of Auckland's North Shore.

One of New Zealand's oldest boys' organisations seemed about to shut.

The youngest members of the historic 1st Devonport Scout Group, founded in 1908, had been reduced to only three cubs.

No parents had stepped forward as leaders and the group was about to abandon weekly meetings held for 101 years.

But then one father volunteered to be Akela.

Devonport resident Christopher Jones, a former cub and scout back in England, who is also a graduate from

Oxford University and has a son aged 7, said he would save the cubs.

After just two months, the new Akela has revived the historic organisation and taken his swelling band on some big adventures.

Under his leadership the once-dying organisation now has 19 cubs and a growing waiting list.

The 1st Devonport Cub Group marked a milestone on Queen's Birthday weekend when nine cubs and their parents completed the 16km Auckland Coast to Coast Walkway. They set out from the Onehunga foreshore, traversed One Tree Hill and Mt Eden, trekked with waterbottles through Auckland Domain and down to Quay St where they caught the ferry to Queen's Parade, Devonport.

"The boys still had lots of energy too, they weren't at all exhausted," Christopher said after the cubs hit home base.

"All the parents wanted to come, it was a wonderful day."

It seems the boys love the rules and rituals associated with scouting. "We start our meetings formally with a Grand Howl and a Flag Break. The boys are required to wear the cub scout uniform and at investiture are given a scarf and woggle to show they belong to the 1st Devonport Pack. Boys also love badges and achievements, so we place a lot of emphasis on acquiring skills through the completion of personal interest badges," he said.

Tonight Geoff Chappell of the Te Araroa Trust will present those nine

walking cubs with badges — the Te Araroa (Walkway) Challenge Badge.

Mr Chappell, also a Devonport resident, said it was important to honour the cubs' energy and contribution to his 3000km The Long Pathway walk, which stretches the length of New Zealand.

The Devonport scouting organisation has a proud history. In 1923 the troop built Scoutville, the bach on Rangitoto Island which it still owns.

From 1928-1939, the troop was based in the bunker at the top of Mt Victoria, a venue now used by the Devonport Folk Club. After World War II, the scouts moved to their present den in Allenby Ave.

The Devonport Scouts and Cubs have now served the Devonport Community for over 100 years.

And on Monday nights dyb-dyb-dyb rings out louder than ever.