

North Yorkshire Scouts – Unsung Hero Awards 2026

North Hambleton District Scouts

Unsung Hero: Leadership – Nicki Heaton

Nicki has been Cub Scout Lead Volunteer for Bedale Cubs since 2024 and she has made a huge difference to the Cub Pack there. She has changed the programme to be more inclusive and accessible for all Cubs. Her leadership of the volunteer team is inspiring and she genuinely cares about the thoughts and opinions of her leaders ensuring that everyone feels listened to. She cares about every Cub meeting ensuring that the Cubs have an incredible time each week and she prepares extensively to ensure this. The Cubs don't just earn their badges but learn about the difference they can make to the world. Nicki's leadership means that all the Cubs get as much as they can out of Scouting and that they are all fully involved.

Unsung Hero: Community Champion – Hana Crisp

Hana has served as Treasurer of Bedale Scout Group for nearly 15 years and is shortly stepping down. During her tenure, Hana has been instrumental in guiding Bedale Scout Group through a significant transformation: the journey from a Scout Hut to a fully established HQ. She has overseen and managed finances accounting for build costs, including the successful administration of a major grant, multiple smaller grants, and countless fundraising efforts — from group fêtes and car boot sales to an impressive quantity of cake stall takings. She provided steady leadership during the pandemic and her work ensured continuity, stability, and confidence during an exceptionally challenging time. Much of Hana's contribution happens quietly; however, she is absolutely critical to the smooth running of the Group. Hana's dedication, reliability, and professionalism have underpinned the success of Bedale Scout Group. Even in her final year as a Trustee, Hana has been instrumental in moving the Group's finances firmly into the 21st century, making financial administration easier for both herself and section leaders. She will be immensely missed when she steps down. Hana — thank you for everything you have given to Scouting and to the young people of Bedale Scout Group.

Unsung Hero: Team Player – Graham Sandel

For over 23 years, Graham has been a vital part of the troop—always prepared and now helping to deliver Skills for Life to young people in Bedale through the Bedale Pioneer Scout Troop. Whether it's a program night, activity, camp, hike, or paddle, Graham is always there, supporting the Team Lead and making sure everything runs smoothly for countless Scouts. Unlike his Team Lead, Graham has not inherited a relaxed approach to timekeeping. He's reliably punctual and, 99% of the time, has everything he needs—aside from the occasional forgotten waterproof or was it boots? During his 23 years of service, Graham has supported not only Bedale Scouts but also District and County events and camps. It's safe to say that Ian, Bedale's Scouting Team Lead, would be lost without Graham's dedication, experience, and ability to step in to assist or lead, whatever the situation. Thank you, Graham, for everything you do.

Chief Scout's Commendation for Good Service

The Chief Scout's Commendation for Good Service is awarded to those volunteers with 5 or more years of good service which stands out. These awards are nominated by our local leadership teams and recognise the very real contribution made to the Scouts by each volunteer.

Benjamin Russell

Benjamin Russell is Group Lead Volunteer at Romanby Scouts in North Hambleton. Ben fosters a strong team environment, encouraging training while leading by example with his own learning. Constantly seeking to grow adult and youth numbers, he ensures the group operates efficiently. His proactive leadership and dedication have been vital to the group's continued success.

The Award for Merit

The Award for Merit is awarded for outstanding service. It implies keen, conscientious, imaginative and dedicated service over a sustained period of at least 10 years duration.

Ben Lambert is a much valued volunteer at Great Ayton Scouts. Ben's remarkable passion and dedication make him an inspiring leader. He brings energy and integrity to every meeting, mentoring new volunteers to create a cohesive, empowered team. Ben works tirelessly to provide meaningful, adventurous experiences, ensuring every young person feels included and encouraged.

The Silver Acorn

The Silver Acorn is awarded after at least 20 years' service, which should be specially distinguished and appreciably better than outstanding.

Paula Spence is a committed volunteer within North Hambleton District and the Appleton Welbury Scouts. A scenario we might all be familiar with - initially, Paula became involved as just a supporter - but very quickly became the Cub Scout Leader, a role which she still holds today - and is now also the Group Lead Volunteer. She provides highly interesting and exciting programmes, which has enabled numerous young people to achieve their top awards. She organises creative and adventurous weekly programmes, along with camps, hikes, trips and expeditions - as well as all the administration that goes with this! The Appleton Welbury group is in a very small rural village where Paula has become extremely well known for her Scouting activities and is almost a local celebrity. The time she gives to Scouting is huge!

The Bar to the Silver Acorn

The Bar to the Silver Acorn is awarded after at least five years of similarly distinguished service after receiving the Silver Acorn.

Mark Turner has over 40 years of dedicated service, Mark is a cornerstone of the Scouting community. Currently serving as the District Lead Volunteer for North Hambleton and Team Leader for the Stokesley Scouts, he has been instrumental in delivering high-quality, balanced programs. Mark's leadership style is defined by collaboration and mentorship. Rather than working alone, he has built and nurtured a robust team of leaders, empowering them through effective delegation and encouraging their long-term growth within the wider Scouting movement. His commitment is truly immense, often dedicating time to Scouting activities nearly every day of the week. Respected by colleagues and the local community alike, Mark's unwavering passion and extraordinary leadership continue to leave a lasting impact on North Yorkshire Scouting.