



Vol III
Important Stories

1st Abbots Langley
3rd North Watford Scout Group

Formerly the 44th S.W. Herts
1st Abbots Langley Scout Group

May 2011, Revised September 2018

CONTENTS

Important Stories	
Woodsmoke	5
Link Up -Liechtenstein (1954 to 1974)	11
Gang shows (1946 to 1955 is there more?)	23
Boxing Day Walk (1946 to present day)	31
The World Aspidistra Show	47
Caving	57
Building the Climbing wall at Mansion House Farm	63
Building the Climbing wall at Lees Wood	65
The Dean Hole	66
Climbing	67
A collection of short stories and useful information	70
The GP Guild, Ladies Guild and Fellowship	74
Camps	78
Jamboree	89
People Past and Present	91
Acknowledgements	131

Woodsmoke

Humble Beginnings

The 1st Abbots Langley Group Magazine "Woodsmoke" was the brainchild of the late **Bill White**, to whom the upstairs meeting room at HQ is dedicated. The first issue was released in March 1954 and it was produced bi-monthly for a subscription fee of 6d an issue. Bill wrote the Editorial and the Group Scout Master Frank "Skip" Hoadly had a regular page entitled "Skip Speaks". There were reports from The Rover leader C.J. Botwright, the Senior Scout Master, Arthur Miles whose aim was to include articles by the boys and news of notices and events, The Cub Corner and the Old Scouts.

"Brother Scouts and Friends

This really is a red letter day. The 1st. Abbots Langley boys have stirred themselves and produced a Magazine. Well! Well! Of course, you all know how good we are at running Socials, parties and shows, but can we run a Magazine?

After many conferences, complete with ice packs on furrowed brows, we have awakened the necessary enthusiasm and agreed to have a go. Our contributors rushed for writing materials to produce their articles, and with dripping pens poised, are now feverishly awaiting the word go for the next issue.

But what about you? Can we count on your enthusiastic support? We hope you will find something interesting in our pages, and for those who are not yet connected with the groups activities perhaps we shall be able to arouse your curiosity, and eventually have you well and truly roped in to our family circle.

Well now, as we said earlier, we want your support for this new venture, and hope you will purchase your copy regularly, but this need not be all; the Editor will be pleased to receive letters for publication, suitable verses, or any small item of interest, and if you have any criticism, lets have those as well, we can take it!"

**Bill White's editorial Issue 1
Woodsmoke March 1954**

Through Bill's personal devotion, dedication and example the standard set was extremely high. So high in fact, that the magazine was given an International award. Like many other things in scouting it was a fine example of voluntary effort and team spirit.

For the first time in the history of the group, information could be circulated to give prior warning of events and happenings in a more formal manner, without slips of paper being lost. Bill was keen on international issues and by November 1954 has a group magazine exchange going on with fourteen other groups from around the country.

"The local press were very kind to us, The Observer, Post, Hemel Hempstead Gazette, and Langley Times, all wish us success with our new venture, so lets keep it up chaps, and give them something to write about.

The production of our magazine is of course, like so many things in Scouting, a fine example of voluntary effort and team spirit.

Well, eventually we get the "bods" writing the various articles smoothed out and in due course all the copy rolls in. Then the fun starts. Who's got a typewriter? Who can type? What can we do about a duplicator? Old Scout Eddie Miller says his wife can type, so we load her up with the copy and some stencils, only to discover later, that she is running across the High Street umpteen times a day to borrow Mr. Lyon's typewriter when he isn't using it. However, Mrs Miller is made of the right stuff and eventually the stencils are ready.

Now for the duplicating. Skip says we can borrow his old flat duplicator. Did he say old? Surely this printed the communiqués for the battle of Hastings, but with help from Eddie, (incidentally, he had to obtain many late passes) and the assistance of my wife with one eye on the TV, we rolled out about 3000 pages.

Then our brand new covers arrived, hotly pursued by Doug Road, who got cracking so fast with the stitching machine he didn't even stop to take his coat off, that he broke the bally thing, and off we went scrounging again to borrow another.

Well of course as you all know we made it in time for the concert, and having sold about 250 copies we all feel that the effort has been well justified and we sincerely hope all our readers will help their friends to obtain a copy of this and future issues.

***Bill White Issue 2
Woodsmoke May 1954***

In the 7th issue in March 1955 Bill published expenditure associated in producing the Woodsmoke issues to date and the figures showed a loss of 19/8 on the year. It was felt that this was acceptable as the magazine was not intended to be a profit making effort, but for the purpose of stimulating interest in the Group and in Scouting generally.

There was every indication that the circulation and revenue figures would continue to grow and the request for an annual subscription for a year in advance had been met with a good response by 110 subscribers.

By November 1955 the yearly subscription for six issues of Woodsmoke was 3/- and. by the 11th issue Bill White had identified that the low response to the competitions was the result of the boys in the troop not reading the magazine. So instead of distributing copies at the meetings he sent the magazine directly home to the parents with a plea that anyone interesting in Scouting should read it. Imagine how much effort this must have taken by the volunteers who delivered it direct to the door.

Circulation

March 1954 150 copies.

January 1955 235 copies
November 1955 300 copies which included 60 copies sent to other Scout groups and countries
January 1957 nearly 400 copies
March 1958 450 copies
1961 500 copies

From its inception Bill had an international following as he was also Group Treasurer and Hon Secretary of the International Scout Club. During his time as editor Bill sent copies of Woodsmoke internationally to such places as South Africa, Canada, Australia and Borneo and won International awards. By March 1959 Woodsmoke was being sent to 26 different countries.

In the March of 1960 500 copies were being printed and 280 of them were sent out in the post, 200 copies went to different points in the British Isle and the other 80 to 25 other countries. The United States had the most copies, 22 in all. The remainder of the copies were delivered around Abbots Langley village by Bill White and his willing helpers of the BP Guild.

Bill was presented with a plaque in 1960 with an accompanying letter reading:

“On behalf of the International Panther I am happy to announce that Woodsmoke has been selected for a Panther Journalism Award for 1960. we have observed your publication for quite some time and believe that it has maintained the highest principles of Scout Journalism and Scout Spirit. We hope that you and your staff will accept our plaque for your outstanding contributions to Scout Journalism.”

Mr Lyon and Mrs Ellis volunteered to help Bill with the typing in May 1961. During the year there were 6 issues of 500 copies. They used 3,000 covers, 27,500 sheets of paper, 6,000 staples, 1,500 wrappers, 1,500 stamps, 120 stencils and 7lbs of ink. This totalled £60 a year, £10 an issue and was sold for 6d a copy.

In March 1962 Woodsmoke celebrated it's 50th edition by publishing stories from scout groups around the world who had read the magazine.

Editors

Bill White	From March 1954	to July 1964	63 issues
Jack Ridgeway	From September 1964	to August 1974	56 issues
Derrick Flowers	From October 1974	to March 1980	23 issues
Brian “Biff” Pleasants	From March 1980	to September 1981	10 issues
Ken Harrison & Dave Weatherly	January 1982		1 issue
Kevin and Neil Handisyde	From Spring 1982	to May 1983	9 issues
Keith Moore	Summer 1995	to summer 2000	18 issues
Janet Sands	From October 2001	to February 2004	8 issues
Pauline Styles	From June 2004	to current	30 issues +

When Bill White passed away, the role of Editor was taken over by Jack Ridgeway from September 1964. It was agreed that every copy of Woodsmoke had carried Bill's name and to cherish his memory all future copies would bear his name at the top of the page. Jack's issues were deemed to be Volume 2 with Bill's becoming Volume 1. What it must have been like to follow in the shoes of the great, the respected, and revered, but Jack Ridgeway had to do just that! The committee felt that the magazine would be a constant reminder to all of what Bill believed in and would be the greatest way of showing their respect to his memory. Jack Ridgeway had no hesitation in taking on the Editors job, as he had been referred to as “Bill's right hand man.” He was assisted by Mr Owen and Mr Lloyd who dealt with funds and distribution.

In January 1965 Jack reported that he had received a copy of “Woodsmoke” from Australia which had been published by the 1st Croydon Scouts of Victoria, Australia. Apparently when Alan Rees, the Senior Scoutmaster at the time attended the 7th World Rover Moot in 1961/62 as a Rover he stayed with the Jackson family and they had been receiving a copy of our Woodsmoke ever since. Allan Jackson liked the magazine so much that he based his own magazine on the same lines. He wrote in a letter to Jack Ridgeway that he had used the name Woodsmoke because he considered our groups work in the production of the magazine to be “a most worthy effort” and he felt after the Rover Moot that Alan Rees had left some mark of the 44th North Watford (as the 1st Abbots Langley was called at the time),

“so what better mark of esteem would there be for our Woodsmoke to have a brother in Australia.”

The magazine was still published to the same high standard and reached its 100th Edition in October 1970 and the County Commissioner, Melville Balsillie wrote the following words:

One Hundred puffs of Woodsmoke is quite a record – hundreds of contributors, thousands of articles and millions of words, and all about you Abbots Langley lot!!

This is a journalistic feat of which you can be justifiably proud. My hearty congratulations to you all.

The next issue will start the second century. This will fit in very nicely with your new Headquarters. Just as a HQ is a place to plan from, so a magazine is a means by which you feel towards the outside world. The future success of the 44th will not necessarily be in Abbots Langley but much more likely in the contributions your members make in the community around you. May your magazine help your Group to look really wide.

Several

members of the Guild were in the printing industry and took over the printing of the magazine, along with collating and stapling each copy, gratefully relieving Heather Rees (nee White) of the arduous task.

The task of typing up articles for Woodsmoke was undertaken by several ladies over the years. Mrs Phyllis Seabrook typed stencils for nine years until August 1974 and when she couldn't continue Mrs Heather Butcher took over the job. Mrs Gillian Purvis was another lady who helped out over a period of several years, along with Miss Seabrook.

Jack produced 56 copies as editor until to August 1974. In his last issue the GSL Keith Moore wrote:

“In a history of some twenty years, ‘Woodsmoke’ has had only two Editors, a record which many national papers and magazines would have been proud of. I think that it is this continuity of production leadership that has made this magazine so good. There is no doubt about it that whoever follows Jack as Editor has an unenviable task in trying to maintain the same standard.”

It was in October 1974 that Derrick Flowers took on the job for 23 issues until March 1980. Followed by Brian “Biff” Pleasants until September 1981 during which time he produced a Christmas Special!

In July 1975 Audrey Gentle took on the role of Woodsmoke Distributor. She had to get the distribution list up to date and was at that time being produced bi-monthly, 6 times a year. In 1981, Sally Hearn took over the distribution from Audrey.

Just when Biff was in his stride, Roger Sands, the North Watford District Commissioner at the time, asked him to become the Group Scout Leader at the Langleybury Scouts, and so he had to relinquish his Editorial. For a few years after that the publication was a little sporadic. **Ken Harrison & Dave Weatherly produced an issue in January 1982, followed by a total of nine by Kevin Handisyde and Neil Handisyde to May 1983.**

Then the magazine really floundered through the next few years when it would appear no-one could be found to take the job on until the 164th edition in Summer 1995 when the GSL Keith Moore volunteered to relaunch it. He produced a quarterly newsletter covering 18 issues until the summer of 2000, but sadly died in April 2001.

In October 2001 Janet Sands came to the rescue for 8 editions and published once a term until February 2004 when she decided it would be best for someone nearer the ground to take over as she could not keep in touch with the group as easily.

In June 2004 Pauline Styles volunteered for the role of editor and Woodsmoke is still in production at the time of writing this history and in its 233rd edition (Oct 2018). During all this time not much has really changed from its inception to present day. Of course technology has allowed us greater ease of publishing and the introduction of colour, and in 2018 it went back into an A4 format to allow for easier editing as the group had got so large.

LINK UP - Liechtenstein

In **1954** the Rovers decided that they wanted a small country to visit, so one evening they got a table in the Rover den and put a map of Europe out, blindfolded Butch and gave him a dart. He was told to hold the dart up and drop it and the nearest smallest country to where the dart landed they would decide to visit. Obviously it landed almost in the middle of Europe, and they looked to see what small countries were around the area. They found one on the east side of Italy, the Principality of Monaco and The Vatican. They then found the smallest country near Switzerland and had never heard of Liechtenstein before.

Frank Hoadly was despatched to get some information through the Scout Association and he became corresponding with Prince Emanuel, Chief Scout of Liechtenstein, and brother of the reigning Prince, His Serene Highness Prince Franz-Josef II. It became apparent that Liechtenstein was very scouty indeed as in 1929 there was a terrible flood in the whole valley and the International Scout Association at the time sent hundreds of adult scouts to help the people of Liechtenstein in their flood. Half way across the bridge across the Rhine there is a plaque which says it is dedicated to the Scouts of Europe. At that time Liechtenstein boasted the largest number of Scouts per hundred of the population anywhere in the world.

Frank received a letter on 16th December 1954 forging a link with the St. Fridolin Scout Group, in the village of Ruggell. In short the Scout Group of Ruggell.

The picturesque Principality of Liechtenstein, a mountainous region, lying on the Upper Rhine, boasted the largest number of Scouts per 100 of population anywhere in the world at that time and Ruggell was a village of some 600 people. The Group had about 20 Cubs, three Patrols and 10 Rovers and Scouters and had just covered 20 years of existence. The GSM was about 20 and the former GSM who had built up the group over the previous 5 years was about the same, but had moved to Austria through work. The only boy who knew English was Toni Hoop who was an ASM of about 18. Franz Ochri was the Group Scoutmaster and he had to have letters translated for him whilst he started to learn English.

So plans were afoot in **1955** to visit Ruggell with 4 Rovers and three Seniors contemplating going, and a date for the first visit was set for **13th August 1955**. They had chosen a good time as 15th August was the birthday of Prince Franz Josef and the capital city of Vaduz would be holding a torchlight procession by the Scouts and music and folk songs in the square.

The members of the party were Butch, Chris Lavery, David Clarke, Eddie Koepl, Alan Rees, Paul Stains and Roger Wilkinson. The cost of the trip (excluding spending money) was £128, an average for the seven boys of £18 each.

Butch, (he's keen this boy) has decided to toughen up the Rovers and Seniors who are going to Liechtenstein with him. He recently took them on a 20 mile night hike. When he arrived back at my house on the Sunday at midday, he unloaded on my doorstep a number of bricks and horseshoes that the boys had slipped into his pack 8 miles from here. Butch says that this hike was only a beginning and that he has bigger and better hikes in store. Watch out!

Bits of the First Liechtenstein Trip - 13th August 1955

Sunday August 14th

After an adventurous and perilous journey to the Metropolis, we arrived at Charing Cross. At this point our original plan was to change trains, a simple operation, but a certain section of the party, ie Dave Clarke (Fred Jnr) with Paul Staines (Hathi) in tow, took the escalator to the street. The others waited (with much stamping of feet) and eventually decided to attempt the hazardous journey to Victoria without them; this we did only to find that they had already arrived.

Monday 15th 4.30 am

I was awakened at this unearthly hour by the mob singing camp fire songs!!

Tuesday Evening

The whole village welcomed us with a camp fire. The local brass band, choral society and mail voice choir each did a turn, with us doing one in between each of theirs. The evening finished with a visit to the "Gast Haus" lasting until 2 am.

Thursday

We were invited to Schaan by Dr Walser and his wife, and we slept in a barn. We also went swimming this day and found it surprisingly cold.

Saturday

Met the Baroness Val Fatz-Fein, who telephoned a restaurant and laid on a beautiful meal for us. The Baroness spoke perfect Oxford English.

Sunday

This day we were all invited to different houses for lunch. The host of the house at which I dined had spent three years at an English POW camp, and said the food served there was better than that issued to him in the German Army. The only English he could speak was typical army slang. Two of our party were to dine at the local pub and unfortunately for Butch and Chris, this honour was delegated to the youngest, Alan Rees and Roger Wilkinson. (Gunga and Rucca Roffi).

Monday

Retired at midnight but stayed awake until 3 am then roused them all with breakfast cooked. We wanted an early start for our mountain climbing expedition, but this was too much for Chris and he stayed in bed.

Tuesday

Was spent in Feldkirk (Austria) and the local schoolmaster gave us a very comprehensive conducted tour of the town.

Wednesday

We worked hard this day building the biggest camp fire we have ever seen. During the evening jollifications a German guitar club (all female) joined in, and a good time was had by

all. Half way through the camp fire we presented the Scoutmaster with our Troop scarf, with the progress badges sewn on.

Thursday

Woke up to a storm, the rain continuing until well into the afternoon. This day was spent on sundry indoor activities, and a pleasant evening with the local Girl Guides in Mrs Buchel Oehry's house.

Friday

Waiting on the station at Buches for our journey home, the train arrived with a party of English Girl Guides, who made excellent company for the rest of the way.

Saturday

Saw us back in Abbots Langley, safe and sound, puffing our new pipes and bursting to tell of our adventures.

In **1958** a summer camp visit was made to Liechtenstein for a fortnight's memorable stay. Upon arriving at Ruggel they discovered that rain was not confined just to England and so much had fallen that the campsite was considered unfit for use that evening. The difficulty was overcome by people in the village who accommodated them for the night. Thereafter the weather cleared up and turned out to be bloomin' 'ot!

One of the most exciting trips whilst there was two days spent climbing on the Liechtenstein, Swiss, Austrian borders. They took a bus from Baduz and arrived after a hair raising ride at



the Malbun valley. After about an hour and a half's very hard climb they reached a very pleasant ridge whereupon Skip left them to take those boys back to camp who were not staying the night, and the remaining 6 pressed on to the mountain hostel at Bettlerjoch. After further refreshment at the hostel where they left their kit they headed for Naafkof and the summit was reached in an hour, before leaving the 8400 ft peak and returning to Bettlerjoch.

The following day they rose early and undertook a rather dangerous climb around the head of the Augstenberg, with a drop of about a thousand feet on one side. On another day everyone was given the opportunity of tackling a climb of Hoher Kasten of 5,880 ft, which in fact was just a sheer slog up mountain paths, and some of

them found the going too hard, so they stayed where they fell and waited for the remainder to return! The upwards journey took 5½ hours and the return was accomplished in less than 2½. Here is a picture of the summit.

Apart from trudging up mountains there were various trips to art galleries and an unforgettable trip across Lake Constance into Germany.

1961

Another trip planned for August 1961 had these necessary qualifications:

1. be at least 13 years old by that date
2. have passed the second class badge and first class camping test
3. provide the £15-£20 for the trip

It had taken Skip 18 months of planning a visit to the St. Fridolin Group of Ruggel but with only a fortnight to go, he was taken to hospital it was obvious that he would be unable to travel. Jerry and Ada Poole, Barrie Gostick and John McBride stepped into the breach, along with Keith Moore. So in the **July of 1961** the group travelled to Gatwick and for many it was their first air trip. The flight to Basle was made interesting by the air crew as the pilot and navigator left their cockpit door open so that the passengers could see them at their work, and they exchanged cheery conversation with every one of the Scouts as they went up to have a look. They were also very glad that the paper bags issued were not really needed.

The fortnight held many new and exciting experiences for them all, including meeting Prince Emanuel of Liechtenstein personally. Whilst they were there it was the birthday of Prince Franz Josef II, crown prince of Liechtenstein, so they went to the capital of Vaduz to look around. They took part in the torchlight procession through the streets and during this the Prince took the salute. This was followed by a firework display from the castle and culminated in some Scouters being whisked off to a mountain village where they joined in an international Scout sing-song with some Luxembourg Scouts. Lots of photos and cine film were taken, and Mrs Dobson gave German lessons before they went which proved very useful. A trip to Arosa enabled them to get a cable car to the summit of Weisshorn at almost 9000ft where they played snowballs.



LtoR from the top

Top - Derek James, Wishy (NZ visitor), Keith Moore, ?, Gerry Poole

Middle - ? Edwards, ?, Tony Fenemore, Dave Charwood, ?, ?, ? Fancourt, ?, Alan Poole, Bryan Sharpe

Bottom - Roy Hoadly, Ian Turner, Richard Keene, Brian Poole

The senior scouts were accompanied by Butch, New Zealander Grant and Fred Dobson, and during the visit they led Barrie Gostick, Mac, Dave Evans, John Lytherby, and Derek James on a four day trek in the mountains covering some 90 miles. The first day they completed 15 miles of hard upward mountain climbing, and that night slept in an Alpine Hut with “very nice beds”! The next morning they were off again for some more hard going, sometimes through patches of snow. The day proved to be the hardest as they had to climb most of the Hornspitz which is quite a mountain. They were having dinner when Dave Evans’ rucksack fell a few thousand feet, so they had to turn round and go back down to look for it. They met some Swiss climbers who said “it would take two of the best to go down the way the rucksack went” and also said that they were only an hour off the summit of the glacier. Butch and Grant being “two of the best” went down the way indicated, whilst the others went the way they had come up and they met at the bottom. They never did discover the rucksack, but they found the alpine hut and spent the night there. Then it was off again at six the next morning by a different route than that planned because of the loss of the rucksack. That day they covered 29 miles in all, and the day after arrived back at the camp, footsore and very tired! This enabled Derek James to become the first member of that Rover’s Crew to hold the BP Award.

13th to 17th August 1964

The Rovers summer expedition saw Derek James, Bryan Sharpe, Dave Miller, Keith Penrose, Roger Haskett, Tony Fennemore and Mash travelling in a Volkswagen micro bus on a trip from Boulogne to Frankfurt to Yugoslavia and Zagreb, the Adriatic coast and north to join the rest of the group in Liechtenstein.

Volkswagon

In those days if you owned a Volkswagen you could hire a minibus from them at St. John's Wood very cheaply for about £12 a week. Keith Penrose had an old beaten up Volkswagen and he had to leave his car in exchange for the minibus. On returning the minibus back to St. John's Wood they asked if they'd had a good holiday. They admitted that they had lost one of the big rubber spiders that went over the roof rack, but the chap said not to worry. Also they had put in several pints of oil as they had done about 4,000 miles, whereupon they were asked if they had receipts for the oil and on reckoning up they were then duly paid for the oil!

For three different years they used this mode of transport to get to Liechtenstein, but as long as the vehicle came back Volkswagen were happy. One instance of a mishap in the mountains was when the bumper was tipped by the vehicle behind. Derek James was a very placid individual but wanted to get out "to sort the chap out" as they had had a bit of trouble with the car before on the mountain route and it had riled him. So Derek got up and in doing so, he caught his shorts on the edge of the seat and they ripped all down one side. As he reached the door they tried to stop him getting out as he couldn't be seen like it, and so the chap got away lightly!

Group charters plane

The rest of the Group boarded a coach to Luton airport, and then a chartered 36 seater Viking aircraft to Switzerland. With Skip in charge, the helpers consisted of Gerry and Ada Poole, Kitty Dobson, Bert Keene, Ron Brothers, Mrs and Mrs Ellis, Malcolm, Mrs Keene and Mrs Mac and Keith Moore who was in charge of senior Scouts.

In 1964

Alan MacDonald and Rod Haskins two scouts from Canada visited Abbots Langley and enjoyed the hospitality of the Poole and Turner families, as well as participating in the expedition to Liechtenstein.

Bryan Sharpe recalls meeting Prince Emanuel several times. One time it was in a car park. They had been in the restaurant just below the castle in the City, and when they came out onto the steep sloping pavement they looked down and they could see their Volkswagen microbus which had a big Union Jack across the front and "Rover Scouts" all around the side.

They noticed that there was someone there fiddling with the door trying to get into the lock. Derek, who was a big chap of 6ft 4ins said he would go round the outside, down the alleyway and catch him from the back end. The other three or four who were left planned to approach him dead on. They got down to the bus and went to grab the person when they saw he'd got a pen in his hand. He wasn't trying to break in, he was writing on the side where they had the big board saying Rover Scouts, "Greetings from Prince Emmanuel!"

1965

The group visits Liechtenstein again.

1967

It was hoped to charter a flight from Luton to Basle on 5th August, returning 19th August.

A typical picture of how the camp was laid out



On this trip to Liechtenstein a teenage Pete Lythaby was on camp when he fell over a guy rope and twisted his hand right the way round. It looked like it was going to be a hospital job, but there were no hospitals in Liechtenstein, the nearest was in Switzerland. The plan was to get a vehicle to take him to hospital where they would probably keep him in a day or two and so he would miss out on a camp. But there was one other alternative. Bryan Sharpe thought that he could put it right but that it was going to hurt quite a bit and didn't know if Pete was happy to take the risk. Pete decided that he would, which was very brave, but equally as brave for Bryan! He explained that he would shake Pete's hand like a heavy greeting which had two chances of working. Pete was to grit his teeth as it wasn't going to be nice. So on a count of three ... Bryan went One, Two and missing out the count of three, he shook Pete's hand with a force and the joint clicked back into position. After a few Paracetamol he was as right as rain the next day.



Left Pete Lythaby in white t-shirt at the front

Right Ada Poole with various Scouts at the railway station



August 1974

A summer camp was attended by 44 people on an expedition to Ruggell Liechtenstein. The party consisted of 25 Scouts, 9 Venture Scouts and 10 others and included Pete Linskey, Brian Linskey, Dave Ward, Dave Grieves, Michael and Howard Johnson, Pete Dennett, and Martin Watson. For the first time they went by coach and had a coach driver and it enabled them to get about and visit various places more freely.

The Group had a Bedford Dormobile which was about 10-12 seater which was getting old and causing a bit of trouble. The gearbox had gone and Keith Moore, the GSL at the time said it was costing too much money, and they didn't need a bus, so it was to be got rid of. The Rover Crew asked if they could buy it and the committee met and agreed that they could have it for nothing.

Keith Moore went to Liechtenstein with the Group in the coach and the wreck of the bus was left with the Rovers. The Rovers swiftly put in a new gear box, painted it bright orange and drove straight across the Contingent to Liechtenstein to turn up at his campsite. As they drove into the campsite, Keith had a look of amazement on his face but was absolutely fuming. The Group obviously DID need a bus! The Rover's, as ever liking their nicknames, called the microbus *The Clockwork Orange* because the film had not long come out.

The rest of the group had chartered a luxury coach from "Kirbys" and had full use of it over the sixteen days. This opened up many opportunities that had not previously been possible.

It was an extremely successful trip apart from the one casualty of **Howard Johnston** (aged 18) in an unfortunate climbing accident. Dave Willett, the Venture Scout Leader was taking the Ventures climbing and the Rovers were asked if they wanted to join them, so the Rovers took the microbus and meet the Ventures up on Hoher Kasten. With Keith Penrose driving The Clockwork Orange, they drove across the valley into Switzerland and there was a forest track up Hoher Kasten which was very steep. It was well known that Keith was a mad driver and he started driving up the mountain track with Bryan Sharpe and Bib Butcher, but some way up he suggested they better not go any further because they had to go back again and wasn't sure where they could turn round as the track was very narrow. Bryan kept urging him on saying "oh just go a bit further" as it meant less for him to walk up to where the climbing was! On they went, further and further, and up and up, until they saw a big Logging operation going on with lots of industry cutting trees out.

Some of the Ventures were at the top of the hill climbing from the road upwards and the rest of the group were going to go from the road and abseil down into a valley and then climb back up again. But before all that could happen, Howard had slipped and fell about 100 feet to the floor, which was ironic as he had been learning German, and above the tunnels in German was written "Dangerous loose rock"!

So meanwhile back at the Logging area, suddenly The Rovers saw a boy scout running down the mountain side, which turned out to be Pete Dennett, waving like mad. And then a second boy, Pete Linskey appeared. They reported that there had been a terrible accident and Howard Johnston had fallen off a rock cull and was unconscious and in a terrible state. They managed to turn the bus around where they were logging, go all the way back down the mountain that they had just come up, to a pub. They went into the pub, and with Bryan's little bit of German that he could speak, tried to explain to a woman that there had been an accident at the "tunnels". That a doctor was needed as it was an emergency, and she eventually believed him and said "come with me." They went down the road and banged on the doctor's door. In the meantime, she got hold of a trailer with a one wheel motorised cart which hooked onto the trailer with the back wheels and just one wheel driving it. She was rather a large Swiss lady and off she went on her wheels with the Bedford following her along.

There they found Howard, who was in a terrible state. He spent three weeks in a Swiss hospital before he even came around from a coma. They secretly feared that he would not survive, and neither did the doctor. They had to tell Howard's brother, Michael, who was also at camp and had been taken swimming by Keith Moore that his brother had been serious injured. They also tried to phone the family at home but had all sorts of problems and eventually got the codes from the coach driver as he used to regularly phone his wife.

Although this put a bit of a downer on the trip they did still take part in the march as part of the Prince's birthday celebrations. Another trip undertaken was to climb a mountain called the **Naakkopf**. Keith Moore had negotiated a gondola to take them part way up the mountainside before they had to start walking onto the top. There they could see little snow ravines and rivulets which for most of the party was the first time they had ever done any alpine climbing or walking.



On the next trip in **1976**, there were 21 of them; Dave Miller, Keith Moore, 8 Venture Scouts, 10 Scouts and Jonathan Cook of the 6th North Watford group who had relatives in Liechtenstein who he was paying a visit. They boarded a ferry for Belgium. They stayed at the HQ of the Ruggell Scouts and camped in their grounds and were able to use their building for a dining facility which was better than their usual facilities.

They did much the same sort of activities, swimming and mountain climbs, but the weather was atrocious.

One member of the party, Pete Linskey, was recently out of hospital and had problems with his feet so was unable to go mountaineering. He, together with Kevin Porter, who had trouble with one of his knees, were allowed to stay behind, and left in charge of themselves for two days whilst the rest of the party went out on an expedition.

It poured with rain but the boys had fun anyway. They had been given some money in case they needed it and so they went into town for an adventure. Of course, whilst they were there they spent all the money and didn't have any left to get back. So they had to walk home, and whilst doing so one of the locals kept shouting at them from across the road. "Witch table soup?" "Witch table soup?"

They could not understand what the chap wanted but as they had been quite happily singing a Status Quo song of the time called *Rain* as it had done nothing else but rain whilst they had been there, they thought the chap was obviously cursing them and trying to keep them quiet.

Eventually he beckoned and called them across and gave them a whole lot of vegetables, at which point they realised that he was trying to persuade them to take some vegetables to make *Vegetable Soup!* The boys took the vegetables and when Keith Moore and the rest of the boys came back that evening from their expedition, he found them messing about with a load of vegetables, trying to make some soup out of it.

Gang Shows

Gang Shows were put on annually and there was a dedicated band of people to undertake the various roles of makeup and costume etc, with Stanley Pratt producing in the early days. There were about 60-70 boys participating, and no girls, at that time.

Woodsmoke December 1974

There's no Business Like Show Business

At the beginning of the war, in 1940, I remember sitting in a pool of perspiration, watching an apparently naked, grey-haired and white-moustachioed colonel sitting in a hipbath in Trowley Rise, Abbots Langley. Outside, two magnificent elms graced the then un-made road – on tree on each site of the Rise – and inside the heat was generated by numerous boys and a packed audience of people who had squashed into the Men's Club to see a Scout Show. The concert was being held there because in those war days the Village Hall had been commandeered for a "British Restaurant", where hot meals were provided for the people of the village in order to help them eke out their meagre rations.

Needless to say, the Colonel in the bath was our own beloved Frank Hoadly – "Skip" – who was taking an active part in one of the sketches. "Active" is the operative word, for to at least one pair of eyes, Skip seemed to be doing everything – acting, singing, prompting, stage-managing, announcing, opening and closing the curtains, switching the lights on and off, taking the money and still finding time to have a word with everyone of the Scouts and Cubs whom he loved having around him.

Of course, Skip was not really doing everything because even then he had a band of willing helpers both on and off the stage – can you imagine any scout "do" without Duggie Read? – and he had persuaded me to sit at the piano. But I was certainly of the opinion that Frank himself was doing too much and, like a fool, I said to him "You need a Producer." "You're right" he replied, "when we can get you off the piano, the job is yours." Thus it was that in due course, commenced for me a most pleasurable and rewarding period of producing shows for the local section of the 44th S.W. Herts Group, later called the 1st Abbots Langley Scout Group. One thing that impressed me very strongly was the Skip always sought to include every scout and cub, not only in the show, but actually on the stage. There were many people of all ages who helped in the various productions over the years and of that number a large proportion preferred not to be seen. But many a boy has discovered undreamt-of talents and others achieved an unbelievable confidence because of Frank's insistence. It was no good me, or anyone else saying "He's too shy," or "He can't act for toffee" – if he was a cub or a scout, he was IN.



Gang show in about 1946



Dave Rees, Robin Wise, Colin Smith, Gus Smith (Cub leader), Bryan Sharpe (bottom row second from right)

An amusing side-issue of the annual concert money-raisers, was the choice of title for the show. By 1946 it was "Why-Not". In 1947 inspiration was lagging and we had "Another Why-not", but it got worse because, believe it or not, in 1948 the revue was entitled "Why-Not Here Again".



"Another

Why Not" 16th/17th April 1948

C J Botly as a Dutch Scoutmaster in the "Camp Fire" Finale of "Trip to Holland"

By 1949 we were “Stepping Out”; in 1950 “We’ll Live Forever” was the title of Ralph Reader’s musical play which was the show. In 1952, the Jubilee Year Revue marking the 25th year in the life of the Troop was “Wonderful Life” and we further marked the occasion by presenting the show for four performances. We had filled the Village Hall (now the Henderson Memorial Hall) to overflowing in 1951 when, as was then the practice, we had given three performances of “Great Game.” I missed “Red, White and Blue” in 1953, but the Building Fund for the extension of Group headquarters was increased in 1954 when the cast of over 100 encourage the populace to “S-M-I-L-E.” “Showtime” followed in 1955 and by the time the cast had grown to 140 we needed a “Spotlight” in 1956.



The cast of The Red, White and Blue Gang show March 1953

These reminiscences were prompted by our new Editor, Derrick Flowers, but our previous conductor of “Woodsmoke” figures largely in any review of Abbots Langley Scout Shows. For instance, although enthusiastic audiences of Gang Shows are not surprised at whatever costumes are worn, or discarded, on the stage, it must be hard for some people to realise that Jack Ridgeway appeared in “We’ll Live Forever” in 1950 clad in policeman’s helmet and costume but with no trousers. This was by no means his only spectacular appearance for on many other occasions he lent his saturnine features to add fright, merriment or charm. If we may be pardoned for mentioning it, Derrick, the present editor has also been not so shy as he would have us believe; even at the Working Men’s Club in 1940 he appeared in the same programme as Frank, the Colonel in the Bath.

It is impossible in much a sketchy description as this to pay proper tribute to the many consistently praiseworthy people who have given of their time and talents to project the Scout image on the stage, but few who saw him will forget Bill Johnson and the way he acted as compeer and linkman with his inexhaustible fund of stories. As we gained more experience in presenting shows, it was decided that production could be speeded up by the judicious use of lights – we could always rely on the efficient co-operation of electrician Bernie Funnell, even though he thought he was being asked for the impossible, when it was demanded that a sunset, night-light, dimmers, spots and black-outs were all required to an exact timetable and without sufficient equipment.

Curtains were also important as the programme was arranged with one scene being prepared behind, while a simpler item was going on in front. Leslie Seabrook is fixed in my mind as the “Curtain-Raiser-in-Chief”, although Basil Funnell who also acted in this capacity at times, was always popping up in some character or another. The chief bar to speed was the number of bodies and the noise that was made when they moved. This was overcome in part when some items were made to commence at the back of the hall and at no one time were all the boys on the stage together because it couldn’t hold them. As far as the noise was concerned, the moving bodies were required to sing while they marched so it didn’t seem so bad to the audiences who, in any event, had a hard job not to join in when they were not laughing.

Another feature which developed over the years was the presentation of a one-set play, generally at the commencement of the second half of the programme. This, of course, gave the behind –the-scenes staff time to prepare the scenery on the stage while it was empty of performers and, it was hoped, the play itself provided a contrast to the rest of the concert. “Banquo’s Chair,” “Anniversary,” “At the Coach and Horses,” “Sentence of Death,” “Crime by Persuasion,” “The Boy Who Came Too Late,” and “The Legend of Raikes Cross” are the titles of some of the plays which were performed and the hard core of the actors who gave such support to the senior scouts through the years reads like the membership of a first-class Amateur Dramatic Society –

Frank Hoadly
Basil Funnell
Geoffrey Funnell
Arthur Miles
Jack Gentle
Jack Ridgeway

On the artistic side of the Shows, Wilfred Ellis excelled with his scenic effects. Those who remember “Snow White in the Dwarf’s Cottage” in which diminutive cubs whistled their way happily to work carrying picks, shovels and lanterns could not fail to be moved by the sheer beauty of the scene with its lovely brick fireplace and the colourful well just outside the cottage door – a most fitting complement to the costumes of the dwarfs, all of whom enjoyed wearing beards almost down to their knees. Whilst in the realm of beauty, we cannot fail to mention the names of Phyllis Gorton, Hilda Price-Stephens and Heather Rees – ladies on whom the huge burden of make-up rested for so many hours. How on earth they managed to get colour and even beauty on hundreds of faces in time for their appearances as angels, fairies, pirates, animals, flowers or indeed as cubs and scouts, passes understanding.

As far as music is concerned we all know of the enthusiasm with which groups of boys sing at a Scout show. How Minnie Rye retained her sanity nobody knows, but she was a tower of strength on the piano for years. Can any reader of "Woodsmoke" remember the pure solo voice of the boy who sang "Keep Looking for a Bluebird"? Bernie Funnell changed into Father time, complete with lamp and scythe, to sing in "When we get to be Twenty-one," a song scene from Ralph Reader's play. Together with Jack Botwright he also supported Skip Hoadly in "Over the Garden Wall".

But perhaps the dawning of choral fame commenced for the B P Guild with "The Tibbs Hill Wanderers". "Gussie" Smith had discarded his Fairy Queen's costume, complete with fairy wand and wings – Dick Turpin and Basil Funnell were his sister fairy queens – in order to pose as a bewickered gentleman beneath the goal posts for a Victorian photograph set to music. Whether it was "The Tibbs Hill Wanderers" or not, Lou Pickering, in one of his B P Guild journeys, heard a male voice choir up north and promptly got his guilders together and said "We are going to have an Abbots Langley Male Voice Choir and the audition (ha, ha!) is next Tuesday". Well, we all sang "The Farmers Boy" until we collapsed with laughter and exhaustion, by which time we had sorted ourselves out. For posterity, the names of the choristers were:

1st Tenors – Tom (Bingo) Murray, Wilfred Ellis and Jack Botwright

2nd Tenors – Frank Hoadly, Fred Botwright and Ron Owen

Baritones – Douglas Read, Jim Hiney, Lou Pickering and Basil Funnell

Bases – Bert Keene, Jack Ridgeway, Ron Brothers and Bernie Funnell

It is no wonder that such an array of talent knocked their conductor off his podium but despite the musical and dramatic duets of Duggie and Jim – 'twas on a Saturday night – the life of the Male Voice Choir was not as long as some wished and we joined the ladies to go "Down by the Riverside."

The farewell of Ralph Reader to Gang Shows after such an illustrious career cannot fail to be tinged with sadness, but at Abbots Langley we have already had ample evidence of the skill and charm of Don Gransby in producing shows and we look forward with pleasure to his continuing success in this sphere of scouting.

Stanley J. Pratt

In 1965 a Group show was performed in the Henderon Hall in October. It was entitled Wave the Flag

"SHOW TIME"
REFLECTIONS BY THE PRODUCER

To anyone who has had the remotest connection with the production of a Scout Show, the everlasting wonder of Nature's rebirth each spring is as nothing compared to the miracle of a more-or-less respectable Revue after the chaos of rehearsal. Last month the annual miracle was duly performed in the Henderson Memorial Hall and it has been suggested that a few comments from me might not be inappropriate at this juncture.

What are the objects of giving a Scout Show and are these objects achieved by us in Abbots Langley? Firstly, of course, a show aims at promoting and maintaining interest in Scouting. The fact that nearly 120 boys of all ages "volunteered" to take part and that the hall was filled for four performances by people who actually bought tickets, demonstrates that this first object was attained. As will have been learned elsewhere, a record net profit of over £63 was realised for the Group Headquarters Extension Building Fund and this is certainly a means of promoting Scouting.

Secondly, I think the opportunity offered to the boys of being able to express themselves in public is a good thing. Only too frequently we have all had to suffer from the inability of after-dinner speakers etc whereas perhaps the confidence gained from public performances at a Scout Show in their youth might have been the means of changing nervous, boring speakers into entertaining raconteurs. The self-discipline imposed by performing, or even just speaking, in the glare of stage lights to a critical or, at any rate, expressive audience is invaluable.

The team spirit is encouraged in more senses than one in a show of this kind. When an actor is, perhaps, nervous or forgetful it is remarkable how his comrades appear to rally to his support and in giving the helping hand, increase their own activity ability and efficiency so strongly. For my own part I cannot fail to express my gratitude to the behind-the scene team without whose selfless co-operation it would be impossible to stage the Revenue. We managed to get most of them on the stage in some guise or another – even though the audience only saw parts of some of them – but I would like particularly to pay tribute to "Lights" Bernie Funnell and "Scenery" Bill Ellis, both of whom do such remarkably efficient jobs in an almost unbelievably short time. The ladies who preside at the make-up table preserve their figures by losing superfluous impediments in attending to the vociferous demands of the enormous cast whilst the refreshment department are similarly exercised in attending to the wants of the inner man. We have not the slightest worry as to house management, the stage properties are silently and expeditiously produced and removed at the appropriate times, whilst the curtains seldom fail to the magic touch.

As to the Revue itself – you the audience are in the best position to judge and many criticisms have been received and noted for future guidance. For my part I think happily of Minnie patiently pounding the piano at rehearsals, Bernie muttering "I'll give him Black-out," Bill telling me what to do with the scenery, Skip shouting at me louder than he does to his Scouts, Cubs looking as if butter wouldn't melt in their mouths, the remarkable natural stage presence of boys and the cheekiest Scout of the troop reduced to angelic quiescence.

Stanley J. Pratt, Woodsmoke May 1955



The Ladies Guild perform during the 1960s when they dressed up as Rover Scouts.



Boxing Day Walk

“One of the comforting things about a long established Group is the traditions it has built up over the years. Our Boxing Day Walk is just such a tradition, of which we are justly proud.”

Bill White, March 1959

It starts each year from Cecile Lodge at 10.30 am on Boxing Day where it wends its way across the fields, through the lanes and via muddy farm yards to “The Holly Bush”. There a game of Cricket used to be played on the dart board, accompanied by the usual gargling noises, but nowadays songs are sung with gusto. All members of the Group are welcome to attend.

YE BOXING DAY WALK

Following an ancient custom some of they who do Rove, including the Skip man and his dog and “Bill White” Editor of this parish, gathered in the forenoon of Sunday December the 26th at the Lodge of Cecil.

By highway and footpath they journeyed on foot until they came to the sign of “Ye Holly Bush” at the Crouch of the Potter.

Here they were hailed by others who had hied hither by ancient “motorbike” etc to a total of thirteen, not forgetting also some supporter folk.

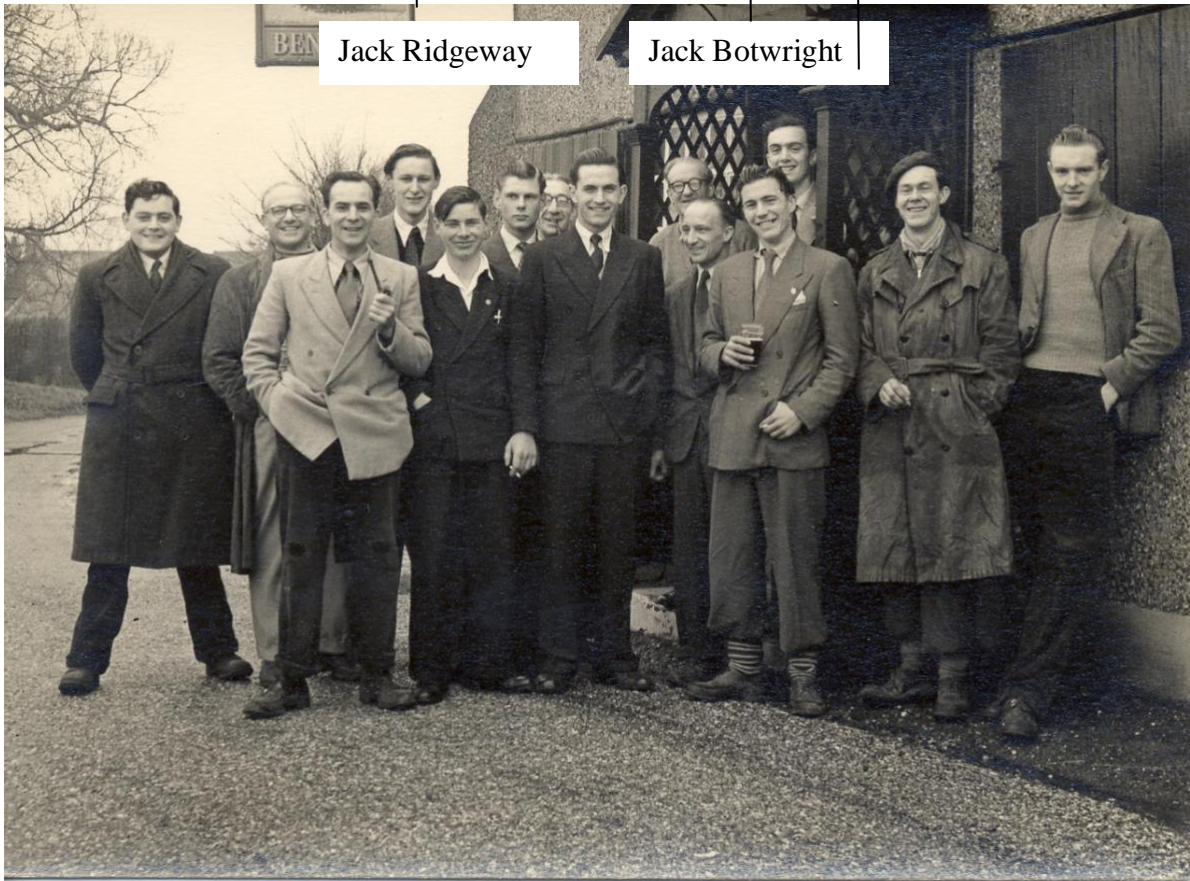
A photo including included “Mine Host” and his good wife was took outside and last year’s ditto was presented inside to the said “Mine Host”.

Drinks, some soft, some hard, some sweet, some bitter were quaffed the while a game of Cricket with the Dart was played.

Ye Roundheads led by “Jackridge” beat the “Jackgentle” Cavaliers by 7 wickets.

Their short sojourn ended, they did travel homeward through Bed-Mond where, before they left for their several homesteads all swore upon a secret sign to repeat again an happening of great content”

“Ancient Bot”



Boxing Day Walk, 1952

Fred Dobson

The Christmas of 1954 however, there was a technical hitch. As Boxing Day fell on a Sunday that year, the official Boxing Day was actually on the Monday and so there was some confusion by some, who got the wrong day. Also because of the Sunday opening times the pub didn't open until later, which delayed their return home (a likely story). There was then some discussion on changing the name from the Boxing Day Walk to "The December 26th walk" but it appears that that idea didn't catch on as its original name still applied today. An account went as follows:

The walk of December 1955 “As Endured by Bill White”

The Rovers’ annual Boxing Day cross country walk to the Holly Bush potters crouch was, as usual, well attended, and again I was an honour guest (they have to invite me to save them the job of writing about it).

Timed to start from Cecil Lodge, or shall we say the remains of it, at 10.30 am, we managed to get away by 10.50. Not bad for the morning after! “Wee” Jack Gentle was first on the scene, others arriving at odd intervals. This also corresponded with their appearance. ‘Clacker’ looked like a barrow boy from the Walworth Road, ‘Butch’ as if he had just finished muck spreading and ‘Skip’ quite forlorn without his dog.

Basil arrived on his bike, fell off completely breathless, and gratefully allowed Butch to park it down at Jack Ridgeway’s after dire warnings about ‘No Brakes’. Jack ‘Bot’ was equipped with a posh stick (more about this later), and ‘Seeds’ was in jovial mood (no bell-ringing to keep him away this time), and ‘Dobbie’ still wearing his party hat from the night before; I think he slept in it! Dave looked as if he hadn’t been to bed at all, and as for myself, well, Editors are supposed to be a bit dotty anyway. Come to think of it, they must be!

Well the motley crew moved off via Love Lane, the rain was now coming down very nicely, and the mud made a lovely squelching sound as we walked along lanes, paths and ploughed fields. Jack ‘Bot’s’ stick left him and stuck in the mud so many times, I think it must have had a desire to take root! On arrival at Tenements farmyard, he said he would go around the back way as the ground was higher and it would be firmer going, being the trusting soul that I am, I went with him and we both became marooned in a sea of mud, much to the delight of the remainder of the party, who gave us a rousing yell.

At last we arrived at The Holly Bush, where we were met by the elite “Bogg” on his motorbike and Bryan in his car, and later ‘Dick’ Turpin on his flying bedstead. I did hear one or two rude remarks about the editor being such a long way from his car, flippin’ cheek, anyone would think I never walked. They even ask ‘Skip’ if his car had broken down.

So we partook of suitable refreshment and played darts. Is that all? Huh! You should them! “Who’s go?” “Mine,” “No it isn’t you follow me! It must be Jack. No I’ve just been, its Fred, FRED come on, never mind the beer. Poor old Basil, he laid down the law for about five minutes, telling everyone that they should keep their minds on the game and watch their turn, only to discover that it was his turn anyway.

Midway through the proceedings Jack Gentle hauled us all outside, including the Landlord for the traditional photograph (Butch measured the beer in his glass before leaving it) Someone had the temerity to ask when it would be ready. Ha ha. We haven’t seen last year’s yet!

Ah well, all good things come to an end, and so we departed. Skip and Seeds had a lift on Dick’s boneshaker, Jack Bot, Basil and myself scrounged a lift in Bryan’s car with sundry remarks from the others who proceeded afoot. You remember my previous remarks about Jack Bot’s stick. Well it finally got away from him – he left it at the Holly Bush.

I will refrain from making the obvious comment.

Boxing Day 1956 - By Bill White

Bursting with the seasonal "Good Will towards Men" the Rovers had invited various other members of the Group to take part with the result that a grand total of 22 eventually turned up. The procedure is that RSL Dobbie has a 'whip round' to form a 'kitty' from which he purchases refreshments as and when required.

The main party totalling 17 gathered at Cecil Lodge at 10.30 and went off across the snow covered fields surrounded by real Christmas card scenery. The variety of dress suggested a bunch of marauding poachers, except for one promptly named 'The Abominable Snowman' with his white canvas snow boots that nearly reached his ears, and a hat with all the colours of the Gang Show, complete with bobble.

As you might guess it wasn't long before snow fights were in progress. Ambushes were laid and high points manned on dung heaps, but the marksmanship was shocking! Even the 'Three Wise Men' bringing up the rear were able to ignore the missiles intended to disturb their decorum! I recommend the Scouts to take this lot on any time.

On arrival at Ye Holly Bush, we found Dave Rees, Ivan Atkins and Eddie Miller one glass ahead of us. Having been too late to meet us at Cecil Lodge they took the quiet route by road. Perhaps this was just as well for Eddie, I don't think he could have made it through some of those narrow footpaths, and how should we have got him over the stiles?

Before entering, we posed for the annual photograph taken by Jack Gentle and his informal machine. By using a delay shutter device Jack usually manages to get into the group himself, but after a number of unsuccessful attempts he had to forego it this time. No doubt it was frozen up! However, we need not worry about that yet, Jack is going to print the 1953 one soon and he was in that!

Suitably provided with refreshment we commended the traditional dart match, and again the marksmanship was deplorable! After a while a hooded figure appeared at the door, which turned out to be Bryan Sharpe. 'Hello Bryan, did you over sleep?' "No, No" said Bryan indignantly, "I just didn't wake up until half past ten!" a little later an icicle staggered in, which after thawing out was found to be Chris Lavery. Being on guard duty at his barracks in Bedford, about 30 miles away, he left there at 11 o'clock with 2 hours off to attend 'church'. I wonder what story he told when he got back!

Again in accordance with tradition, Jack Ridgeway's team won the dart match. At one point during the last game things began to look a bit critical, so Jack took over the scoring himself, and thus tradition was maintained! However, even his opponents were glad his team won. To have lost this vital match after the catastrophe of having his name omitted from the Annual Show Programme would have been the last straw!

And so, saying goodbye to ye 'Holly Bush' for another year, we started our homeward track; pausing at the Dell at Bedmond we reverently raised our hats to the famous 'Crew Creeper' lying buried for ever at that hallowed spot, another of the glorious episodes in the life of the Abbots Langley Crew.

1957 Walk

Butch was missing as usual, and Knocker informed the party that he was still under the table from the night before. Eventually the party moved off through the usual footpath, and passing through Little Notley discovered a wooden cross at the foot of a tree bearing the words "Here lies the body of an unknown Old Scout, lost on the Boxing Day Walk 1956". The resultant gathering and discussion was just the job for the Seniors hiding up the tree, who

thorough enjoyed themselves emptying sackfuls of wet leaves onto the mob below, whilst the 'missing Butch' and other pelted them with clods of earth from surrounding bushes.

The party then reassembled and proceeded across country to the Holly Bush where the transport section was waiting, including Tom Murray minus a piece of knee, who had been obliged to de-bike hurriedly in avoiding a car!

Before entering the hostelry the usual photograph was taken by Jack Gentle at great risk, the whole party being nearly disposed of by a milk lorry. However, as the results of Jack's antics with the camera are merely part of the tradition and not for publication, we assembled again later for a 'real' photographer, the result of which was duly published in the Langley Times.

Many attempts were made to take an official count of the attendance, but the nearest they could say was 25-30. They wandered home in cheerful mood, adding another page to the history of this famous event. For the record it was stated that Eddie Miller and Matt Bryan were carried only *part* of the way home!

Boxing Day 1958 – 10th Boxing Day Walk

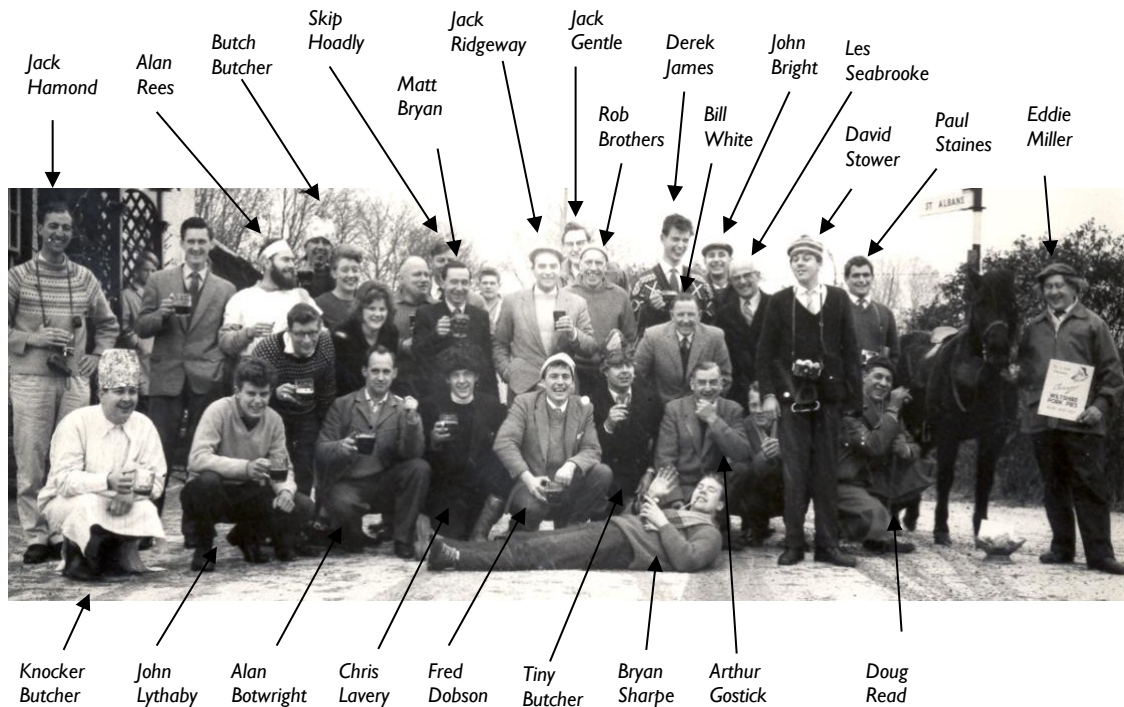
By Fred Dobson

The first of the eleven brave men and a dog to arrive at the traditional starting point was the dog. Attached to the dog, therefore a close second, was Jack Smith, soon followed by Arthur Gostick, Gerry Poole, Jack Ridgeway, Alan Rees, and myself. Jack Gentle strode in from Bedmond with the usual latticework of leather straps across his chest, all the paraphernalia that photographers carry, plus his latest acquisition, a cine camera with which he made a four minute colour film of the walk. 'Knocker' arrived looking like the village squire, and Eddie 'Bangers' Miller looked like the village idiot complete with ginger wig and tammy. 'Skip' and Jack Botwright completed the walking party and we were away.

With Jack's cine camera whirring we set off on the old familiar trail, down Love Lane, over the fields to Tenements Farm, which Jack Bot and a few others made the traditional detour. Past the old campsite, through Mill House Farm, with the rain coming down steadily, along Whitehouse Lane and over the new Potters Crouch bypass, known to some as the London – Birmingham Motorway. Coming up to 'kitty' corner my pockets began to fill with jingling silver to be exchanged for sparkling English ale.

On arrival at the 'Holly Bush' we found some dozen of our 'sorry got up late' types, pasty faced, bleary eyed and smelling like bed socks! With glasses charged the traditional game of 'cricket' on the dart board commenced. With twelve a side it was more like a rugby scrum. More late comers arrived, Chris from St Albans and our Group Chaplain 'Dick' Turpin.

Another glass all round and Jack Botwright proposed a toast 'To all past and present members'. Two quick songs, another beer and we all spilled out in the lane for five minutes of fun and frolic while the photographer types took their pictures. Twelve bob left in the 'kitty' went into the Blind box and we said farewell to Mrs Cox the landlady. I am ashamed to admit it but apart from 'Skip' who left early, everyone came home by car, except of course Knocker, Bryan and myself, who came home in Bryan's Morris Eight!



Boxing Day Walk, 1959

A record number of 31 turned up at the Holly Bush, but at least ten of them went by car, which was just as well as they all got a lift home, doffing their hats at the site in Bedmond where the Crew Creeper lay buried. Eddie Miller had started the fun by arriving at Cecil Lodge wearing a chef's hat and carrying a tray of Bowyers Best Pies to distribute amongst the group.

THE BOXING DAY WALK 1961

Having decided to accept repeated invitations to join this annual event and brushing aside the temptations of a comfortable bed, rival attractions such as 11 o'clock coffee or cocktails and home pursuits like model making, bed making and other chores, 10.30 am found me hurrying through an almost deserted village to the rendezvous at Cecile Lodge.

Here awaited a gathering of Guildsmen and Rovers, including the three Butchers, sporting a variety of dress and especially headgear, no doubt in an endeavour to disguise themselves from recognition by friends and neighbours. Others puffed cigars the largest of which although reputed to contain a banger, was nonchalantly being smoked by Eddie Miller who was wearing his Scottish disguise.

By 10.40 am hints were given about moving off but some said "we can't go without the Organiser," Bill White who had thoughtfully brought his car, set off to round up the stragglers, while passing motorists, bus passengers and pedestrians were entertained or alarmed at the sign of several of the Rovers attempting photographs from the prone.

The arrival of Jack Botwright, complete with enormous carrier bag labelled "collection", Skipper and a few others was the signal for more photographic antics, and then we were on the march at a brisk pace, so that soon only ears, noses and ungloved hands were tingling with cold from the biting wind. A welcome hedge provided a short respite then the flyover bridge to the M1 was reach and here the speeding motorists no doubt were astounded at the sign of Knocker, wearing a nightshirt and sailor hat, waving to them from above.

Fred Dobson created a diversion by skating on thin ice (not apparently unusual for him) but to the disappointment of the camera enthusiasts, the ice held.

The goal was now within distance and Knocker forged ahead to surprise the Host at the Holly Bush, also scare off any intending patrons, and some 25 walkers now joined by their old friend Les Seabrook were soon slaking an honest thirst and munching the traditional Pie once again provided by Eddie. A short rally outside for a group photograph including the Landlord, his wife and daughter, and we were ready for the serious business of the day, namely the Darts Match.

Some argument then arose owing to the absence of Jack Gentle his rival captain, Jack Ridgeway, asserting that there couldn't be a match without him. He was soon howled down and Bill White elected to deputise, this was a crafted move on someone's part as, no sooner had sides been drawn and the batting opened when Bill took 2 quick wickets and Jack's team liberally supplied with beer by Fred, the kitty-keeper, never recovered from this devastating attack and were soundly thrashed.

Leaving the Rovers in possession with wild cries of "Revenge next time" ringing in their ears the rest set off on the return walk, passing under the M1 on this occasion, and were soon afterwards overtaken by Bill whose car was bulging with Guildsmen, who couldn't stand the scorching pace set by Skip. Through Bedmond with only a longing glance at The Bell and a final wave from Les on his front step brought us back home with an appetite worthy of the Day.

Truly an experience I hope to repeat yearly as often as possible and one I recommend strongly to help the digestion after any Christmas dinner.

A Newcomer

Over 40 people turned out at the Holly Bush in 1961, some 25 of them who walked. Lots of fun, singing and meeting old friends made it a memorable day. After the traditional photograph, the party broke up leaving 14 to bring up the rear. These 14 mostly wearing tea cosies for hats had a whale of a time getting home. Stopping at the "Bell" for further refreshments and another round of singing which was so appreciated by the rest of the customers that the hat went round and nearly £3 was collected for charity. Carol singing at the "known" stops en route to home, we arrived for Boxing Day lunch at 4 o'clock.

Fred Dobson

January 1962
Major O'Leary-Yreval (Chris Lavery)

THE HOLLY BUSH, POTTERSCROUCH

I suppose most of you readers think that the pub derived its name from a nearby bush of holly. Well you are completely wrong for the name comes from the old Saxon word "holl e bushice" translate this word for word you have 'holl' meaning stop, 'e' is 'the' and 'bushice' is barrow, so the words mean stop the barrow.

It states in the history books that in Roman times there was a treacle mine over near Chipperfield, in fact, that name means field of treacle and once a week before market day at Verulamium the Romans would transport big blocks of treacle by barrow from the mine for sale at the market. When the barrow pushers reached the top of the long hill at Potters Crouch they would be all out of breath so the barrow master would sing out "Holl e Bushice" "Stop the Barrow" and everybody would have a drink and a rest before starting on the last stage of the journey to the market. It was really an early type of transport café like you get on the main roads today, but instead this place sold beer.

Interesting history isn't it? In fact last night I wrote to the National Trust asking if this building can be made an Ancient Monument.

Till next time.

1968

A group of nineteen departed and were met by three on the way bearing mince pies. On reaching the destination pub the facilities provided failed to meet the required standard (in other words, they only sold bitter and it was incredibly expensive!). So there was a break in tradition (some turned in their grave) and they left the pub after only one pint! Bryan couldn't believe it, and he was there. So for that year the Bell in Bedmond became the centre of activity with traditional singing, beer swilling and making merry. Having been thrown out of the Bell at closing time the remnants of the party gallantly struggled on by way of Marshalls, and then onto Jocks where Butch was discovered having already drunk most of the beer provided. The walk ended at 4.20 BST (Bryan Sharpe Time)

Next year being the twentieth year, a new venue and starting time would be agreed.

MASH

There was no record of 1969 the walk in the January 1970 edition of Woodsmoke, but the traditional walk has continued ever since, with the venue remaining the same.

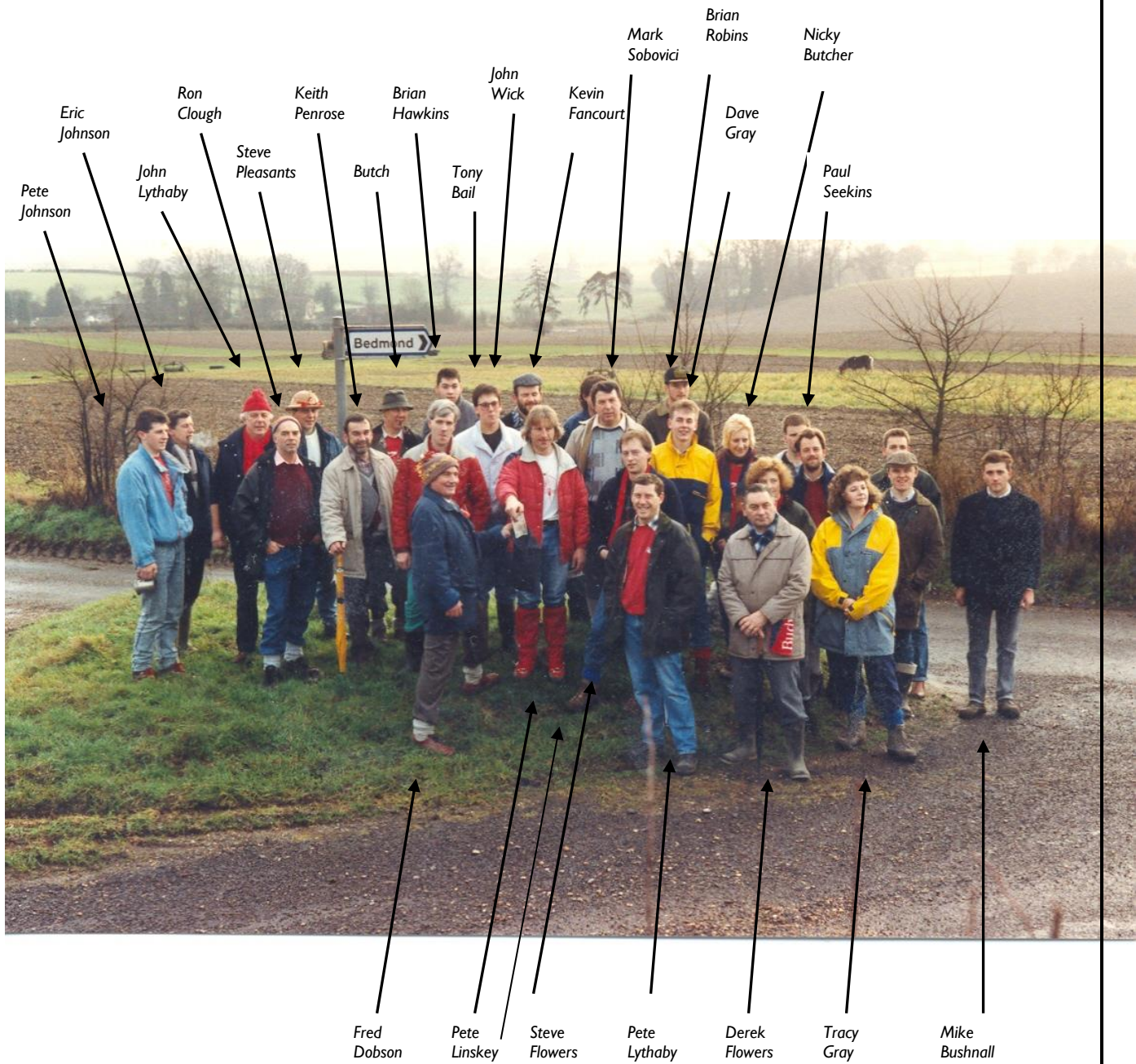
**Seventeen men and one dog
Took part in the Boxing Day walk 1973**

1975 saw over thirty **MALE** adult members, friends and supporters meeting for the Boxing Day walk. Many an old acquaintance was renewed and everyone “refreshed”. Rose Baldry commended the “Equality Act” and said that the Ladies were ready to join the Male party on the Annual boxing day event. But the Men were not too sure whether they were ready to be invaded...

In **1979** the 30th Boxing Day walk was attended by 30 with a signed plaque as commemoration.

In **1981** 21 walkers and 2 dogs took part in the walk, and despite various obstacles like a half built bridge across the M1, they all managed to complete the course.

Boxing Day Walk, 1993



Boxing Day Walk 2005

Front to back

Bib Butcher, Tony Bail, Derek Flowers,
Steve Flowers, Pete Flowers

Kevin Fancourt, John Harkin, Erica
Butcher, Nicola Trotman nee Butcher,
Eddie Chalk, Mike Trotman?, Pete
Linskey, Tracy Reeve nee Gray.



26th January 2005

Singing Pete Linskey's rendition of "The Music Man"
"I can play the Damn Busters"



L to R Hazel Butcher, Tracy Reeve, Nicky Butcher, Chris Frith
Pete Flowers, Tony Dabson, John Harkin (behind)

2003 there were 36 people at the 56th annual walk
2005 there were 30

So many stories have been told of the origin of this tradition and a couple of them read like this for the Boxing Day walk.

Article appearing in the Woodsmoke of Nov 1960

“As a result of a request in 1946 by the local Fieldpath Association who look after the public interests in the use of footpaths etc, the Rover Scout Leader at that time, C.J. Botwright (Jack) was asked to make a special survey and report of a path north-east of Bedmond, a nearby village.

On Friday December 27th 1946, the day following Boxing Day, the Jack was off duty following working a Christmas Day, and most other people having started work again, roped in Arthur ‘Gandhi’ Robinson and Bill Ellis, for many years the scenery artist for the Group shows, both Servicemen on leave, to join him on this walk.

After much persuasion and ‘softly, softly catchee monkey’ – yes it works on Rovers too – the first organised walk took place on Boxing Day 1950 when the GSM Frank Hoadly, the RSL Fred Dobson, Jack Gentle, Colin Flint and Jack Botwright took the first walk over the present route.

For the information of readers who do not know the district, this walk of 3 miles is by footpath and country lanes, through sweeping farmland, farmyards and over a bridge spanning the new M1 motorway to an old fashioned wayside inn at Potters Crouch appropriately named ‘The Holly Bush’ in keeping with the festive season. This wayside hostelry has brick floors, black beams, low ceilings, an inglenook fire and is admirably suitable for this seasonal visit.

Members taking part have gradually increased in number through the years, the 1959 contingent numbered 23, joined by others at ‘The Hollybush’ making a total of 31. As the coming walk is the 10th it I hoped that past and present members of Rover Crew and BP Guild will turn out to make a record number.”

Letter to Woodsmoke Editor, 5th February 1969 from Arthur Robinson

Dear Jack

It is naturally difficult to remember so far back with detailed accuracy but I will try to write down for you what brought this event about.

It was in 1940 that Stan Ellis and I were asked to be guides for the Home Guard under the late Mr Overy. Well, of course, this meant map reading, references etc, of which Stan and I knew a bit about.

One evening we were, along with possibly two other guides, given a map reference by Mr Overy to meet him at this point. As you can guess Jack, the old "Holly Bush Pub" was the map reference we had been given.

I believe Stan and I walked by road, anyway, we got there along with one other, to meet Mr Over.

With a pint of the best, we studied a map to define various routes from Abbots Langley to the Holly Bush. We left the Holly Bush at intervals. Each one to take what he thought to be the shortest route back. I believe some of us came back across the fields but Stan kept to the road and got back first.

After the War, 1946, we got back to Scouting and I think we were talking to Jack Bot about what I have just tried to explain to you, and him being interested in footpaths, mapping etc., perhaps suggested we should walk to the Holly Bush to survey the footpath and try and sort out the shortest route. Anyway, it was spoken about amongst the blokes and I think the most suitable time to talk it was Boxing day morning (1946) and I think a lot of chaps came along, but they didn't all walk. They came by car, motorbike and cycles and of course there was a lot of good humour and leg pulling and a few nice pints, a good time had by all.

Anyway, it was brought up when we all met again at the Scout HQ and everybody said they enjoyed it and so it was suggested that it be made an annual event every Boxing Day morning.

To sum up, the 1st Boxing Day Walk was Boxing day 1946 which would make it the 23rd this year. Apart from a few younger lads 16-17 years old, names I cannot recall, the probably attendees were Jack Bot, Bill Johnstone, Basil Funnel, Geoff Funnel, Arthur Miles, Bill Taylor, Wally Smith, Jack Gentle, Roger Gates, Stan Ellis and Arthur Robinson, and where was Jack Ridgeway. Freddie Dobson was in Germany I believe still on Services, so I think was Bill Ellis.

Well Jack, I hope this will help you a little as to settling the origin of the walk, at least I had a try!

The 21st Boxing Day Walk – or Not?

Jack Botwright, Woodsmoke Dec 1970

I request that I might be permitted to again (and I hope finally) raise the question of the correct dates regarding the Boxing Day Walk and reply to my good friend Arthur Robinson's reference to me in the earlier issue of Woodsmoke.

I quote from his letter – “it is naturally difficult to remember as far back ...”

With this I agree and I am fortunate to be able to obtain the following extracts of dates and facts from personal diaries still in my possession, as follows:

- 1940/45 No entries regarding Rover walks or any other activities on Boxing Day.
- 1946 Dec 27th. Arthur Robinson and Bill Ellis (on leave) – together with myself. Bedmond to Corner Hall via Tenements home. This was specifically by the request to me from the Secretary of the Watford Fieldpath Association.
- 1947 Dec 1st “B D Walk – discussed at Rover Council Meeting – no favourable reaction (!)
- 1948/49 No entries as above
- 1950 “Walk to Holly Bush – Dobby (F W Dobson, F R Hoadly, Jack Gentle, Colin Flint and Myself. This is the 1st mention of the Boxing Day walk.
- 1951 Boxing Day – 9 Rovers and 1 friend
- 1952 Boxing Day – 13 took part
- 1953 Boxing Day – Rover (14) walk to Holly Bush
- 1954 Boxing Day – Rover (15) walk to Holly Bush
- 1955 Boxing Day – Rover (13) walk to Holly Bush
- 1956 Boxing Day – Rover (21) walk to Holly Bush

And so on each year until 1969. I suggest that the above information is conclusive evidence for the coming (1970) walk will be the 21 and with the permission of the present “Scout” personnel, hope that many BP Guilders and ex Rovers will take part in what is always a happy and sociable occasion.

Boxing Day Walk 2007



A total 29½ people met and walked to the Holly Bush

Left group from the back ? Chalk, Clive Winder, Tony Dabson, Mike Trotman, Tony Bail, Kevin Fancourt, ? Chalk, Matthew Sharpe

Middle: Tristan, Erica Burcher, Hazel Butcher, John Harkin, Iain Stanley, Karl Wood, Pauline Styles, Jolene Sharpe, Steve Flowers, Alison Bramley, Mark Bramley and Joel

Right: Ed Chalk, Clive's BIL, Sara Chalk, ? Chalk, Nicola Butcher, Pete Linskey, Sue Jarman and Dave Gray.

As it was my first walk I was a bit apprehensive as to what to expect. The going was a bit wet in places and I distinctly remember thinking if I arrive in one piece without having fallen head first from the stile into a slippery patch I will have done well.

As we crossed the bridges over the motorway I was bemused to see the tradition of waving at the passing traffic, and feeling very satisfied when we got waves back!

World Aspidistra Show

The Rover's used to meet in the Saloon Bar of the Old Kings Head in Abbots Langley, which was at the bend in the High Street opposite the church. In the corner of the bar was a stand which had a large aspidistra on it and the conversation went something like:

"That's a big aspidistra, it ought to go in a show."

"What show would you put it in?"

"Well in an aspidistra show I suppose!"

"But there isn't such a thing ..."

Some time later this conversation was repeated to Fred Dobson, the Rover Leader at the time, and he thought, well if there isn't an aspidistra show, let's create one. And so the idea was formed to encourage Venture Scouts to do some night hiking as some of the younger scouts were frightened of hiking at night. The idea was to meet at Ivinghoe Beacon at midnight with your aspidistra, but you must have hiked the last five miles.

The show was held every year and each time more and more people turned up. The second year there was about 20-30 people and so it grew. The numbers were always counted as they took a register at the bottom of the trig point on top of Ivinghoe Beacon and recorded the name, how many were in the party and where they were from. They recorded people from New Zealand and Brazil as they were staying in London and had heard about the event and the record was 480 people one year.

The criterion was to bring an aspidistra, or something you thought looked like an aspidistra with you. These were judged in these two different classes and prizes were awarded for 1st, 2nd and 3rd places. The judge was always "OTB" – Open to Bribe!

Depending on the politics at the time and national press, the theme of what was happening at the time was often used. When the moon landing occurred someone built a rocket which was about 20 feet high coated in silver cooking foil and carried it up to the Beacon. The best one was possibly the people who came with the whole stage set of The Mousetrap as it has reached one of its significant birthdays, They carried the huge thing with a chaise long and dining table (with aspidistra strategically placed upon it) up the side of the hill. Then there was the year that the Pill came out and someone brought a tree with a multitude of "packets" dangling from the branches!

The County used to inform three different police forces of the event and once it was announced on Radio Luxemburg as Ivinghoe was in the middle of Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire which attracted Scouts from all those areas.

The following pages show some of the stories of the events over the years.

We cordially invite all members of the Movement to a Summit Conference on the top of Ivinghoe Beacon, Bucks, map reference 49612169 to be held on Sat/Sun October 22/23.

Commencing at 23.59 hours on Saturday and ending at 00.15.5 hrs on Sunday the programme contains the following:- Word of welcome, Flag up, Ceremony of Anointing the Aspidistra, Debate "Is night hiking really necessary," Guest Speaker, Free discussion on Night Hikes, Prayer, Flag down.

To qualify for the honour of being admitted to the Conference all Rovers, Seniors and other Scouts must obey the following rule:- Any means of transport other than your own two feet must be parked NOT NEARER than five miles from the summit.

Whilst Guildsmen will be made welcome, we are not expecting any. They have difficulty in climbing the stairs at midnight, let alone Ivinghoe

November 1960

"I feel a proper Charlie" said Macky as he carried the Aspidistra up the steep side of Coombe Hole. The time was just 11pm on 22nd October and we were on our night hike to the Summit Conference we were holding at midnight on Ivinghoe Beacon.

Five to twelve and all was ready. The lighted Tilley lamps were swinging on A poles, the flag mast up, the table cloth laid and even a chair for the speaker and ash trays to keep Britain tidy. All that was missing were the guests, not a soul there from SW Herts except ourselves. Knocker fired the signal rockets. Who said Rovers need an objective before going on a night hike?

As we were about to raise the flag a light was seen flashing on the road below. The 25th? Bricketwood? Somebody else from the District? Eight sweating bodies came into the circle of light on the Beacon top. What no invite? Only heard about it by chance? The 7th Wembley Rover Crew! Thanks chaps, you saved our face! Meeting held, prayers and flag down by 00.45 hrs and the long trudge back to transport.

RSL Fred Dobson

17th November 1962

"Knocker's got guts. Surrounded by competitors and their supporters some 250 of them at the World Aspidistra show which we had organised. He with his night shirt flapping round his legs bravely announced the Rougemont Rover Crew from Exeter as the winners for 1962. He has received a number of bribes but all were of the same value as the sealed bottle of whisky which proved to be cold tea. We did our best to make this show uncomfortable. We chose windy Ivinghoe Beacon at Midnight and made a rule that all must hike the last five miles and as predicted the 17th November was a filthy night, even the prizes awarded to the best size were tins of cow muck and yet 37 groups were

represented. We should like to record our condolences to the Harpenden crew whose aspidistra died on the way and arrived by coffin."

Fred Dobson

Which one washes whiter? Or has anybody got a bar of soap

Mashy, Woodsmoke January 1962

'We're lost,' I announced straightening my tail coat.

"We can't be" said Gos adjusting his top hat, Fred's leading! That was enough to send anybody up the pole or as it turn out "up the Beacon!"

Yes, it was the occasion of the Annual Tiddley Wink contest on top of Ivinghoe Beacon.

The evening really started at the small village of Eddlesborough where we played the locals at darts and Fred with Butch actually won a match. When the cheering dies down I will proceed.

Anyway when we were thrown out we set off behind that great explorer and guide – FRED.

We were all dressed for the occasion – Alan Rees in white coat and bowler, Barry Gostick even better in white coat and top hat, and to make the party complete we came across Knocker standing in the middle of a field in his nightshirt – chilly to say the least. Fred knew the way, we hoped, anyway halfway through one of the many bushes we went through instead of around, we came across an object of rare beauty – it was a tin bath complete with hole in it. We took it with us and sure enough it came in handy. You see Knocker had got dirty standing in the middle of the field so he had a bath on the first bit of flat ground we came to, unfortunately this happened to be a road. Consequently there could be seen at 11.45pm approx. this noble figure clad in top hat and night shirt – bathing. Suddenly a car comes round the corner and slows to a crawl. "I say you don't happen to have a packet of brand X?" Exit motorist, foot hard down. Now the hard work began, to carry to the top of the beacon – table, chairs, Tilley lamp 'A' poles, bath, table cloths, tiddley winks and of course the sacred aspidistra plant.

At the top we found that in fact some others had not had enough to stay away. There were Rovers and Seniors from Mill Hill, Bricket Wood, Harpenden, Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield, Rickmansworth and Croxley Green, 25th SW Herts and 4th St Albans, to join in with the 16 of us from Abbots. Oh I nearly forgot and small representative section of the BP Guild – Matt Bryan.

The aspidistra was placed on the "Trig" point and a rocket set off to start proceedings. First of all some of us from Abbots were invested and then the tiddley winks championship started. The champion Alan Rees was knocked out in the first round and in the end a member of the 4th St Albans was declared "CHAMPION TIDDLEY WINKER OF ALL HERTFORDSHIRE!"

After prayers the meeting broke up and we left the Beacon, but of course Bryan Sharpe had to be different so he turned the tables so to speak and tobogganed down the hill on the aforementioned table. This started a craze and soon people were hurtling down the hill on tables, baths and on other people.

When we got back to the road fog descended with us and off we set on the long tramp along the road. Again with Fred leading the way off. Of course we got lost – AND WE HAVEN'T BEEN SEEN SINCE!

The aspidistra show of **1963** saw 268 hardy souls braving the wind on top of Ivinghoe Beacon as midnight, and apparently by careful planning, everyone got a game of croquet!

Woodsmoke Nov-Dec 1964

In 1964 the show also included a caber tossing contest played according to the rules of the PCCTC – the Potters Crouch Caber Tossing Club and the BP Guild sold a staggering 288 hot pies. The Abbots Langley contingent left HQ at 8pm and walked from Tring Station to the Beacon arriving just before the opening at 11.59pm. They were dressed as Mexicans and carried the Aspidistra in a litter. The judge awarded them 1st prize for having the biggest aspidistra in the world. There were approximately 400 people on the beacon at midnight to attend this show and there were 18 aspidistras competing.

“As usual on November 14th the annual world aspidistra show was held. The venue was Ivinghoe Beacon, the time midnight. This year apart from the usual aspidistra show there was a caber tossing competition. When we arrived on the Beacon some competitors had already assembled. Soon the events were underway. Among the Groups that reported in were ones from Romford, Kensington, Finchley and all over North London plus a visitor from Tapa Te Rang (Wellington) New Zealand. Keith Moore having declared that he would be in bed at midnight – was, in the



only bed on top of the beacon – carried there by eight brave fellows. One group strode up the hill with bagpipes a wail. Strange contractions carrying Aspidistras appeared from all directions. The phantom pie floggers – lightly disguised as Abbots Langley Guildsmen – were doing a roaring trade. The judging of the numerous plants was undertaken by Mr B. Keane OTB (Open To Bribery) hindered by Mr M. Butcher. Presentation of the prizes was undertaken by Mr F. Dobson – lightly disguised as Fred. Through the howling gale Fred declared that the winners of Class 1 in the Aspidistra Show were – the 1st Abbots Langley Seniors – This was of course a very unpopular decision but very fair as it was the biggest. Other pieces of fine silverware suitably engraved were presented to the winners of Class II. The caber tossing was won by the 1st Hertford crew. Other wonderful prizes were awarded – tins of haggis and tins of Abbots Langley Air. There were between 350 – 400 people on the beacon, including representative of all the local press. And as you may have heard the proceedings were well reported on BBC SE England News. However, a great time was had by all and we look forward to even keener competition next year.

Michael Ash (MASH)



In 1965 there was a world conker contest at the show and acorns were not permitted! 400 bodies assembled on the beacon and the proceedings were judged by Bert Keene and Dave Chisholm, with hot, cold and burn pies supplied by the BP Guild.

On 12th November 1966 the Rover Crew ran the last World Aspidistra Show due to the fact that under the new rules, the Rover section was being disbanded. Quite a few of the aspidistras had spectacular entrances; one was piped in by the bagpipes with a full guard of honour.





Another was carried all the way from North West London in a full sized coffin with top hats, and long black suits for the coffin bearers of the 24th Hendon Rover Crew.



Some of the Aspidistras with members of the 3rd Harpenden Venture Scouts looking on.



The winning aspidistra from 3rd Harpenden Venture Unit, LtoR R. Cooper (Abbots Langley Rover Crew), J. Hammond (Judge). Judging of the aspidistras – J. Hammond and R. Cooper.



69th/73rd S W Herts Venture unit – 1st Class 2

All competitors received a certificate proving they had entered the last Aspidistra Show organised by the Rovers of the 44th S W Herts. Meanwhile a conker competition was in play and one of the Crew was detected using alloy conkers. Cheating was allowed as long as you weren't found out! As the shouts and laughter of the 1966 World Aspidistra show died away, the sad thought remained that this was the last Rover organised World Aspidistra Show.



Those Present:

20	5 th Hendon Rover Crew	1	45 th (2 nd Grp) S W Herts Seniors
1	1 st Croft (Leics) Rover Crew	5	3 rd Stanmore Seniors
1	Western Sea Rover Crew (Plymouth)	13	Hitchin District Seniors
6	Bishops Stortford District Rover Crew	13	5 th East Barnet Seniors
6	Linslade & District Rover Crew	12	1 st Bricket Wood Seniors & Rovers
11	SE & S Berks Rover Crew	10	24 th Hendon Seniors & Rovers
12	1 st Leighton Buzzard Rover Crew	18	3 rd Apsley Seniors & Rovers
8	2 nd Romford Rover Crew	3	1 st Apsley Seniors & Rovers
7	1 st Gadebridge Seniors	11	1 st Harrow Weald Seniors & Rovers
5	1 st Bletchley Seniors	14	5 th /13 th St. Albans Seniors & Scouts
8	11 th Rickmanswoth Seniors	7	16 th St Albans Scouts
6	1 st Gossoms End Seniors	1	2 nd Harpenden Venture Scout Unit
4	1 st Ware Seniors	12	3 rd Harpenden Venture Scout Unit
5	16 th St Albans Seniors	9	44/56 th S W Herts Venture Scout Unit
18	3 rd Harpenden Seniors	12	69/73 rd A Q Herts Venture Scout Unit
14	1 st Hemel Hempstead Seniors	11	56 th S W Herts BP Guild
12	28 th Wealdstone Seniors	6	1 st Abbots Langley Land Ranger Company
3	9 th S W Herts Seniors		

Apart from the 329 people listed there was also Mr R Wheel (ACC Rovers) and wife, Roman Catholic County Chaplain (O'Leary), 8 members of the 1st Abbots Langley Rover Crew who organised the event, assisted by 8 members of the Abbots Langley Branch of the BP Guild.

However, in September 1967 the County asked Alan Rees, (ADC Venture scouts) if the Venture unit would organise another event with the aid of the Guild. Of course, most of the Rover Crew had now joined the Guild and so on 11th November at very short notice, they still had 130 arrivals with a motley assortment of aspidistras. A dozen or so Guildmen officiated and sold pies and jubbies. Fred remarked what strange lads the Ventures were as "the jubbies sold out before the pies!" A special prize was awarded for a baby aspidistra as this wonderful entry came complete in its cot and had on a nappy with safety pins.

In the 1980s/1990s the Aspidistra Show was revived for local venture groups and the trophies from that time were kept in the venture den. Here is a photo of one of the booby prize from 1993 which bears the inscription:

What a god forsaken specimen – it was an insult to the citizens of Rome



Caving

On the first Friday before Whitsun in **1956** under the guidance of Len Edy, The Hemel Hempstead Rover Scout Leader, the first caving expedition was held to the Mendips. Len was a grocer and his writing was very much like a Doctors. When he gave the Rovers written instructions of how to get to the site they thought it read “Blagoon” rather than *Blagdon* and they stopped everyone to ask directions, taking them ages to get to there. Len only ever led one trip and then it was up to the Rovers to learn and practice themselves, as there were no books or information on caving at the time.

So a crowd of indescribably untidy people walked into a large black hole in the ground, which turned out to be a so-called Goatchurch and contained a 40ft drainpipe in which there was not even room to get up on elbows. Reaching the end of this they were surprised to see a large yellow police notice to the effect that there should be “no parking”. A second even larger notice read “caution – Temporary Surface Go Slow”.

They proceeded to ‘Rod’s Pot’ which appeared to be a slightly enlarged rabbit hole which they descended into feet first and found more reddish-brown mud and slime, tight squeezes and enjoyment. The holes were dark and awkward and it seemed natural to them to do just as the man in front said, with his ‘feet first and hands behind your head’. This led to some amusement when a certain ‘Fred’ was told to crawl through a puddle, which could easily have been avoided. The same ‘Fred’ was later seen kicking out, with his head stuck between two rocks. He was released and the fun continued when he slipped and kicked a matey in the eye.

It was the next day when they saw caving at its best. Where the first two holes had been classed as dry, the next was a wet one, Swildons by name, and took them five hours in all. The entrance was through a hole beside the point where a small stream disappeared into the ground. The first half hour or so was spent descending tricky but enjoyable passages. The rock here was whitish and much more pleasant than the rock in Goatchurch and Rod’s Pots. As they descended further the rocks became more colourful. After the first half hour they had to wait twenty minutes or so for parties to descend and ascend the 40ft ladder up the waterfall. Those going up were four Marines who assured them they had never known the pot to be so dry. Needless to say they were all saturated by the time they reached the surface again.

The rest of the descent was through beautiful caverns and passages and included a 20ft waterfall. It ended with a sump which is a water-filled hole which goes under the rock for about 10ft. they did not attempt that, but reached the top soaked to the skin and more untidy than ever. They returned home the next day after a most thrilling holiday thanks to a wonderful guide and three holes in the ground.

- * - * -

In **1958** three caving expeditions were held, all of which were successful. The last one during the weekend of 27-29 July was led by John Wood the new ARSL and nine hours were spent underground. They had passed the novice stage and were becoming quite experienced cavers. A consideration to form a Caving Club for Hertfordshire Rovers was not terribly

successful, due possibly to poor publicity efforts, but Fred Dobson reported that the first training weekend would go ahead anyway to the Mendips, taking three members of the 25th along.

They went into Longwood Swallett which splits into two and goes into August Hole. Which is a torrential column of water coming down it, which you had to go down with. When they got there there was no water as it had been a very dry summer. So they went down the August Hole and went into quite a big cave. This had a waterfall that cascaded down the ceiling from about 40 ft up and again it was dry. So Bryan thought it was a good idea to climb up to see where the water usually came from. He got right to the top and grabbed onto something which turned out to be a stalagmite. His foot gave way and he put both hands around the stalagmite but it just gave way and he fell down holding it. He landed on both feet and his injuries were serious but not fully known.

He was successfully brought out by John Wood, Alan Rees and Jim Parnell (a New Zealander from the London International Club). He was on a bedding plane with the roof and floor not very far apart so they dragged him a little bit at a time, taking about an hour and a half to get him out. The biggest pain was his leg as his back was numb by that time and he was feeling no pain with it.

Bryan recalls that it happened on the Saturday and he didn't want to mess their weekend of caving up. He went to a doctor who gave him a pain killer injection and some tablets in case the pain got any worse and he stayed overnight in the tent. He had hurt his back, broken his foot, cracked a knee and chopped his heel completely off. When they had finished caving on Sunday afternoon they left a bit earlier with Bryan lying in the back of a Ford Consul and drove up from Somerset. On the way back, with Alan Rees driving, they got done for speeding, but they told the officers that they had an injured man in the back and the policeman let him off.

When they got to Watford General Hospital the police were on the scene and asked what the accident had been as it had to be reported. Bryan explained that it was a caving accident and they said there are no caves around here for 130 miles. The police were very sceptical that the accident had happened in Somerset considering the injuries sustained. Just then the surgeon came along and asked "is that right you've been caving?" It turned out he had done a lot of caving himself in Derbyshire and asked where he'd been. Once Bryan told him it was in August Hole, he explained "oh yes I've been down there!" Finally the police were convinced that it WAS just a caving accident.

He spent the next twelve days in hospital and his only regret was that he would not be able to join the next trip!

"Knocker" eventually succeeded in getting through the 40ft 'drain', only bruising his ribs in the process.

November 1958

The team for this expedition was Fred Dobson, Alan Rees, Paul Staines, 'Knocker' Butcher, John White of the 25th, Peter Tyler of London, Peter Gerhart of Switzerland and Jim Parnell of New Zealand.

They pitched camp on Blagden Common, Somerset and early the next morning nipped down the couple of hundred feet to the bottom of Rods Pot and Sidcots Swallet, then made their way to Swildons Hole 400ft deep, 10,000 ft in length which was the planned project. They spent 8 hours underground and finally emerged at 7.30. A quick change to dry clothes, a hot rum in the nearest hostelry and off to bed by 10 pm tired and stiff. They decided to buy more equipment and ordered 3 ten metre ladders.

By March 1959 the caving ladders were soon to be arriving, and the Rovers asked that if anyone had a 110ft drop in their garden, could they come round and try them out.

July 1959 – 4 in 59

Bryan Sharpe, Knocker, Alan R and Pete went to Yorkshire to “do” Gaping Gill, the largest known pot hole in Britain. On the first day they went down the hard way via Bar Pot, which includes a 100ft ladder drop, and on the second day by the winch 368 ft in 17 seconds. Knocker probably broke the sound barrier!

September 1959

7 members of the Crew formed a caving expedition to the Mendips to attempt Stroke Lane Slocker, and was the first time they had attempted a sump, of which there were two in the cave.

Nov 1959

The pot holding expedition has been a great success. Three holes that the crew had not been down before were explored, Brons, Hole, Hilliers and Stoke Lane Slocker. In the latter Alan Rees came up on the other side of a sump, thought he was still under water because he had water in his eyes, so he gave an extra heave upwards and cracked his head on the roof! Fortunately still with his helmet on. The team were Bryan Sharpe, Alan Rees, Knocker, Paul and Pete.

July 1960 -2 in 1960

The Rovers took sixteen novices to Burrington Coombe, Somerset for their first taste of caving. 24 Seniors and Rovers piled into the lorry. The cooks rose at 4.45 am and after breakfast and prayers four novices were allocated to two leaders. The sixteen novices came up to the surface at about 3pm very muddy, very tired, a little bruised and battered, but all agreeing that it was a wonderful experience. When the photos and films had been developed Mr and Mrs Bert Keene invited everyone round to see the film projected onto a screen. To Bryan Sharpe, a budding film star, the cry of the evening was “what, Sharpe again!”

There were 4 trips in 1961, on of the being -

On 8th to 10th September 1961 the second Novice weekend was arranged in Somerset in the neighbourhood of Longwood Swallet and August Hole, under the leadership of Alan Rees. He took with him Barry Gostick, D. Horn, R. Butcher, J. Bayer, J...McBride, B. Sharpe, and Heather. As a safety precaution the party always kept the same order with Alan in the lead followed in order by those mentioned above, apart from Heather who was back at base preparing the next meal. This always meant that the four senior scouts were well covered by experienced men at the front, centre and rear.

The entrance to the cave is termed a chimney, being a vertical shaft some 30 ft deep and just wide enough to turn in. to negotiate you keep your back against the wall whilst keeping finger holds above and feeling for footholds below, and just to make things more difficult there is a continuous rivulet cascading over the climber.

Below the chimney lies an awkward T-junction followed by a tight squeeze and then a drop into a trench. You must leave the chimney backwards so that you slither down a 45 degree slope on your stomach, then reverse into the left hand turning at the same time keeping your chest above a jagged rock, otherwise you get wedged. Slithering out of the squeeze you must bridge the five foot trench with body and arms, then swing your leg out and drop into the trench. The next obstacle is a very narrow twisting passage at the extreme end of which is a tight right angle bend.



Fred Dobson comes out of Rods Pot – 1961

Week after Whitsun 1962

27 from the District went to Somerset on a novice caving course. They went to the top of the Coombe and looked at the Rock of Ages. From here the 4 parties proceeded in different directions to the holes of Rod's Port, Reed's Cavern, Sidcot Swallet and Goatchurch Cavern. These are four very easy dry holes, although most of them got went down Rod's Pot.

On Sunday they went down a more difficult wet hole Swildons Swallet.

7th/8th September 1962

A trip to the Forest of Dean was prompted by Mr and Mrs Leach who had located some pot holes which were unexplored. Permission was obtained to venture over private land and because the limestone in the area does not appear on the surface very much cavers had left the area alone and they were able to explore a relatively virgin underground system.

Bryan recalls the time when he burnt someone's forehead. They were crawling through a cave system in Yorkshire with quite a sandy bottom, which was unusual. Someone shouted something to Bryan and as he turned around, the acetylene lamp on Bryan's forehead (no torches in those days) caught him in the middle of the forehead as Bryan didn't realise he was so close. It burnt a big hole!

They became the biggest caving group in the South East of England. There was only one other club who did more caving and they were the Somerset Club, who were in the right area. They used to get invited to their annual dinners. The Abbots Langley group were the experts and gave talks to the International Club in London.

They used to have authority from the water boards who often owned the land, and indemnities to nullify them if there was an accident.

Swildons Hole is 7 miles of sump upon sump in the tracing paper bit of the log book and very exhausting and very often used to have to help people who were claustrophobic and very tired.

They gave talks to Youth Movements and Clubs as the phenomenon grew and people wanted to know more. They say you last 3 years in caving you've done very well but they last 10-12 years each. It does take a big toll on your hands and knees, in total darkness.

It held such a fascination to Bryan who always wanted to know what was round the next corner.

In 1964 Bryan Sharpe, Dave Miller, Keith Penrose and Tony Fenemore travelled to Yorkshire to explore Gaping Gill.

BUILDING THE CLIMBING WALL AT MANSION HOUSE FARM

Once Bryan Sharpe had given up caving he took up climbing. It was whilst he was on a Government training course at Slough learning carpentry that he attended Slough College and took part in a mountaineering and climbing course. As he couldn't afford the petrol to go out or go home very often, the course proved to be a relatively inexpensive cost for the term, so he put his name down for one night a week. When the three terms finished instead of ending altogether they formed the Slough College Mountaineering/Climbing Club. By this time he had moved back to Abbots Langley, but drove to Slough for the meetings and went away regularly to Wales, Stanidge Edge Derbyshire.

As there was no climbing wall in South West Hertfordshire in 1971, and as far as is known, maybe not even a climbing wall with proper handholds in the whole of Hertfordshire, it was the brainchild of Bryan Sharpe to build a wooden climbing wall to practice on at Mansion House farm. Bryan recalls that the fun of building it was immense. He was a carpenter and he put his ideas down on graph paper to work out where the hand holds should go, then made all of the hand rails out of wood because at that time you couldn't buy them already moulded as they didn't exist. They were made from scrap hardwood from a Watford timber company for longevity as a soft wood would have splinter away. Some of the hand holds were made with easy grips and some with hard. The climbs were worked out on the graph paper and labelled by colour coding to match snooker colours. Red was the easy climb, pink being the second hardest and black was the super severe climb. In addition to that you could mix the climb as you went and start on a red and finish on the black. What a fortune he would have made with such an original idea if he had patented it!

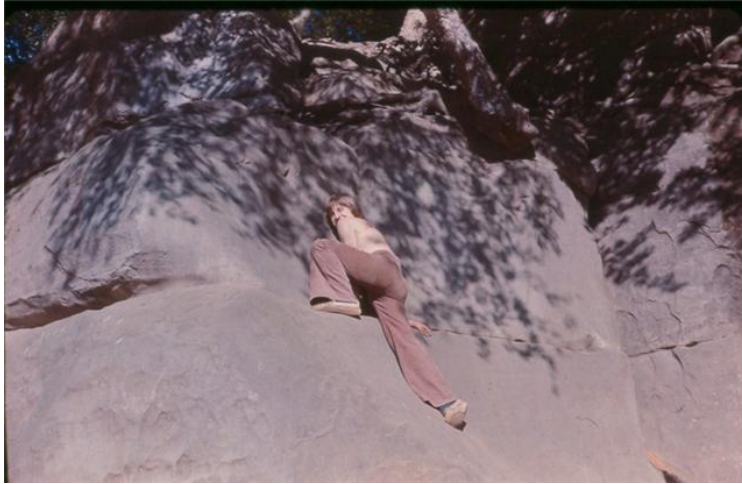
Bryan was in a good position working for Payne Brothers and he asked to borrow their large lorry. He had made contact with a company who did the building for Marks and Spencer and they had just finished building a store in London. They had a large amount of hording that went around the building made out of $\frac{3}{4}$ ply wood and so Bryan took the lorry down to collect the wood and other timber to use to build with.

The wall was built over the winter on the flat in a chalk quarry. It was made out of great big 32ft telegraph poles and on completion they found it was rather heavy. They put ropes on it with pulleys from the back and tried to hoist it up, but it wouldn't go. So they got a tractor from Jock Telfer and started to pull it up with that, but the wheels just spun round, and so they had to get another tractor and the two of them combined finally did the job.

It was a tremendous fete of engineering as it was "The Only" and therefore "The Best" climbing wall in the area and people came from all over to see and use the facilities. Jock Telfer was a little worried about letting people onto his farm. Not all of the people were Scouts but as they had heard about the wall they had travelled from places a little further afield such as Northampton. They would have to ask permission from Jock and only go to use the wall if there was supervision on a Sunday morning.

One of the Scouts at the time who helped on the wall was a young Peter Linskey who was 12 years of age. He had just the physique for the job so he was put to good use belaying from the bottom of the wall where he very soon learnt the cries of "take in" and other climbing terms. Then he had a change to belay from the top of the tower and heard "slack up" and "I'm climbing" and a new climber was born! As Bryan instructed from the bottom of the

tower with instructions such as “no put your weight on the left foot, don’t put weight on your arms, reach up to your right”, so in Bryan’s absence Pete at the tender age of 12 would be instructing in the same manner! Obviously with such a good start in climbing Pete went on to bigger and greater climbs. Here he is at Harrison rocks in Tunbridge Wells at the age of 14 and taught climbing for 20 years in his own business before his untimely death on 9th November 2011



One day when Jock was out checking on his cattle he found that one of the big main staves that was staked into the chalk cliff at the back and supporting the telegraph poles had been smashed to pieces. He was worried that vandals would then come over and damage his cattle. After Bryan had examined the area carefully he reported back to Jock that it wasn’t vandals at all

that had done the damage, but one of the cows, which had gone over the edge of the cliff and landed on the strut with its $\frac{3}{4}$ tonne of weight, which had split it in half.

Sadly, however, when the M25 was built between 1985-87 it went straight through the middle of the quarry and so the wall had to be decommissioned.

BUILDING THE CLIMBING WALL AT LEES WOOD

In about 1983, the crew at Lees Wood had obtained a metal stacking tower from Odhams Press that had been used to store large rolls of paper on. This had been erected on a site in Lees Wood and was taking up far too much of their time, and as it was known that "Sharpie" had built a climbing wall in Abbots Langley, they decided to get him involved in another construction.

The Fellowship at the time then spent weekends at Lees Wood cladding the framework which was not an easy job. They had to be dangled by a piece of rope as the ladders wouldn't reach the top of the tower. This photograph is taken near the completion as all the handrails were in place at the top.



At the top left to right - Bryan Sharpe and Keith Penrose

They used Bryan's method of fixing all the hardwood handholds as they the resin ones still could not be bought in the 1980s.

With the knowledge gained in the Slough Climbing club, Bryan took the people who had been practicing on the Abbots Langley climbing wall to East Grinstead, Tonbridge Wells (on sandstone) and to Stanage Edge, Derbyshire, as it could be done in a day, there and back. Ada and Gerry Poole used to go along to help and provide soup and cocoa for the day.

CLIMBING

Woodsmoke, August 1975 by

by John Denton

We left Abbots Langley at 9.10 am on Saturday 23rd August – 40 minutes later than the intended. There were ten of us going and transport consisted of private cars, namely Bryan Sharpe's, Bib's and Mr Telfer's which was loaned to us for this expedition.

We arrived at the camp site at about 1pm. This was situated about a mile away from Stanage Edge, a well known area for rock climbing. On the way up, we stopped at a motorway café and as we were leaving, David Grieves found himself being frisked by a guard.

After lunch we walked up to the "edge" where we managed to climb a number of "climbs" ranging in standard from "very difficult" to "very severe". The highlight of the afternoon was whilst Peter Linskey was climbing a "very severe", he jammed his hand into a crack for a hold and then found he could not get it out, and he had to rely on the rope to hold him while he pulled his hand out.

We left the "edge" at about 7.30 pm and went back to camp for dinner, after which we went down into the village of Hathersage for the rest of the evening.

The next day we awoke fairly late, but for what was left of the morning and the rest of the afternoon, we split into two parties, one for rock climbing and the other for a walk.

I went on the walk and I think it was a good one, although it didn't go exactly where Bryan intended. It ended back at the "edge" where we met the others and did a bit of rock climbing until dinner.

The next morning we struck camp as we had decided to go to Proggatt Edge for the rest of the day. Most of us went by car but Dave Tolhurst, Tony Bail and Peter Linskey decided to walk.

We climbed till about 3 pm when we left and started out journey home. We arrived at HQ at about 8pm. It had been an enjoyable weekend and our thanks to Bib and Heather for the good food and Mr Telfer for the use of his car.

With the Mountaineering Club, they had trips to Wales several times, conquering Snowden amongst others. Also to Scotland and Ben Nevis, with Dave Willett (the Venture Scout Leader) climbing, but mostly mountaineering.

The Dean Hole

“It was a lovely summer’s evening in July of 2010 when members of the Fellowship made a visit to **The Dean Hole**. It was an event waited for with much excitement as stories had been told over the years of its existence in a secret location on the outskirts of the Parish of Abbots Langley. They met in a car park and were escorted down a country lane by none other than the Intrepid Explorer, Chairman Bryan S. Sharpe and his trusty sidekick Fellow Excavator Bib Butcher. It was only by Luck and Health and Safety that they were not blindfolded to stop them from divulging where the ancient site could be found in the future.

The discovery of this dean hole all started back in 1967 when the Caving Section of Abbots Langley Scouts was asked by the British Cave Research Group based at Berkhamsted to find the existence of a freshwater underground shrimp called the “*Niphargus Fontanus*” in the wells of the local vicinity. It was Brigadier E A Glennie who explained to Bryan how to trap the shrimps by lowering a jam jar down the well with a funnel in the end and a piece of English cheese at the bottom. Yes, they laughed too as it sounded so ridiculous, but true enough it worked and they soon discovered some. Soon after they discovered some more in the bottom of Eddie Miller’s well at the back of his sweet shop at No 32 Abbots Langley High Street.

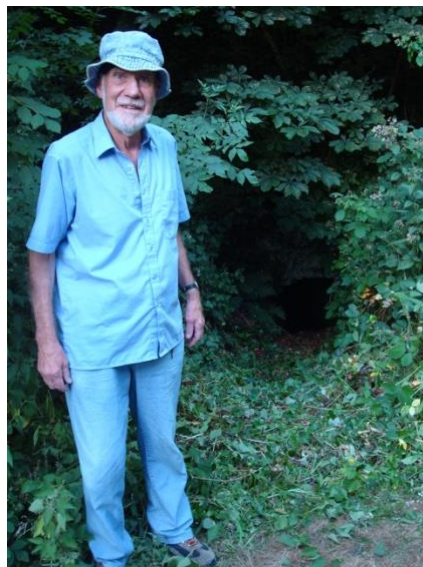
The shrimps were rushed to Brigadier E A Glennie at Berkhamsted to analyse, by someone holding the jam jar on the back of Alan Rees’ motorbike! The Brigadier took one look and phoned Fred Dobson claiming that they were trying to fool him by bringing shrimps back from Somerset. You see, it appeared that this specimen was not just *Niphargus Fontanus*, but none other than *Niphargus Fontanus Acqualarum Shoti* and had never been discovered north of the River Thames before. The next day he arrived at Eddie Miller’s well and pumped them out and sure enough he confirmed it for himself.

With renewed enthusiasm they advertised for more wells to explore and a gardener at Hazewood House, now Hunton Park, said there was a very deep well of about 120ft attached to the house. After exploration it proved completely dry, but they did thoroughly enjoy themselves abseiling down through the chalk.

Then a hole in a nearby garden was discovered but when they started digging they got absolutely nowhere. Bryan had an idea that they might have discovered a dean hole, so a visit was arranged to the London museum in the grounds of Clarence house for research. Later on they surveyed it from above the ground as they wanted to see if was in a spider shape.

They dug an exploratory hole at the side under a tree root and excavated to about 10 feet until Bryan’s supply of shoring material (as he was in the building trade) ran out, and they were getting nowhere, so they decided to dig a trench (like they do on Time Team). Of course, this was in 1968 and the TV programme had not been aired, so we must credit them with another innovation! They dug straight down 22 ft and finally it opened up into a very small hole that was probably made by a fox using it as a winter home.

Bryan was so excited with the discovery as his powerful torch shone onto pure blackness in the cavity that he must have felt like Howard Carter on entering the tomb of Tutankhamen and couldn’t sleep that night. The next morning Bryan, Bib and Fred dug their way through and discovered it was definitely a Dean hole.



Now, the question, dear reader on which you have been puzzling on this many a long page: “*what is a dean hole*” is that basically it is a chalk and flint mine dating back to between about 1500 to 1800. The centre was like a large wine bottle, narrow at the top, wide at the bottom, and it had 4 tunnels running off from the centre. So they worked out roughly where the cork of the bottle would be and Bryan got a 2” diameter scaffold pole and poked around and finally it went through. That was where the original entrance would have been with a winch and large bucket, with two or three men down the bottom shovelling in the chalk and flint and taking it out of the top on a jenny wheel.

And so, on that summer’s evening in July members of the Fellowship ventured through the undergrowth and with torches poised, descended into the dark cavern.



There was a big tunnel of about 13 ft high that would have been mined on two levels, one person up high on the shelf shovelling it down and one person undermining him slightly as they went along to produce quicker output. What a job!

You could see little candle burn marks on the chalk where the men had worked. Candles or any sort of lighting was a very expensive item whether it was oil or wax, so they cut a little hole in the wall between one tunnel and another so that they could put a candle in between to light two tunnels at once and economise on candles.

Of course it was pitch black in there the night of the Fellowship visit with only our torches showing the way and when this photo was taken all they could see was an eerie face.





One of the most famous stories on the origin of the hole was the one that Fred Dobson had made up, that it lead to St. Albans Abbey!

MORE FUN IN THE FRONT GARDEN

Woodsmoke article July 1961

The Editor of Woodsmoke issues a challenge, foolish man he makes the prize of old and mild. And sure enough, sooner or later the Rovers thirst would drive them into accepting his challenge and even more sure would be the result. We would win! Only thing we are not so sure about is whether the editor will pay up or not! The night was cold but dry as they drove round inspecting front gardens of members of the 25th SW Herts group for the suitability as a one night campsite. At 61 Longspring the home of Arthur Mill a Rover and now a 25th Guildsman, they found everything in favour for the team (Butch, Moose and Scottie) – small lawn, no gate and darkness.

With two holding their hike tent complete with poles and the third with pegs ready to push into the ground they stealthily crept along the road and into the garden, pitched, unrolled their sleeping bags, and were soon fast asleep. Next morning Arthur rode past on the garden path on his way to work without seeing them but his brother a few minutes later saw them from his bedroom window. Typical of a scouting family he calmly took them a cup of tea before asking them who they were.

Finally Mrs Mills gave them a further cup of tea and offered them breakfast. Later that day she kindly signed a paper to the effect that they had slept in her garden undetected for one night.

How I Usefully Spent My Summer Holiday

Giles Hunt

Woodsmoke Sept 1981

For six days before I went to France and for three days after I returned, I helped to excavate a 100AD roman villa near Kings Langley station. While I was helping I found a set of human teeth, five pieces of pottery, lots of snail shells, a rib bone and a roman nail.

I was working with Dennis who is head of excavating in Kings Langley and Tony who is head of excavating in Watford. We excavated a third of the villa. The villa had two bath houses and two courtyards. Neither of them had mosaics on the floor. In between the courtyards there was a ditch which was used for sewerage and a room.

The site is just next to the Ovaltine Factory. The kind of floor they did find was covered in red stones and also there was a clay floor. Most of the time I was either uncovering floors or down a ditch using a special kind of trowel.

This article was printed for the best article on the subject and won him a blanket badge. The place in question was later developed into a small housing estate and is in Roman Gardens.

The Wood Badge

On the morning of September 8, 1919, nineteen men dressed in short pants and knee socks, their shirt-sleeves rolled up, assembled for the first Scoutmasters training camp at Gilwell Park. The camp was designed and guided by Baden-Powell. When finished, Baden-Powell gave each man a simple wooden bead from a necklace he had found in a Zulu chieftains deserted hut when on campaign in South Africa in 1888. The Scoutmasters training course was a great success and continued to be held year-after-year.

Wood Badge recipients now number more than 100,000 and can be found in all corners of the world.

The Wood Badge is a Scouting program and Award for adults in the Scout associations around the world. The Wood Badge course is designed so that adult Scouters can learn; in as practical a way possible, the skills and methods of Scouting. On completion, participants are still awarded the beads to recognize the significant achievement in leadership and direct service to young people, and to welcome them to membership of 1st Gilwell Park Scout Group.

Although the program has changed over the years, the essence of the original Wood Badge still remains. Adults use their new, and old, knowledge and skills to complete training which is designed to strengthen the individual and the Scouting they are providing to young people.

The Hand Shake

Baden-Powell in his early life heard a story about Africa which intrigued him. Two tribes had been at each others throats for centuries. Even when they tills the crops in the fields they carried spears and shields in a case of an ambush. But it was a nuisance to carry weapons whilst working and so finally the Chiefs got together and called an amnesty. However, any many years of fighting both sides were very wary and so they still carried their shield, just in case of an attack. Gradually they relinquished their shields and would always hold their left hand in the air when they had returned safely.

When an Ashanti Chief who had fought against him, surrendered to Baden-Powell. BP extended his right hand in a token of friendship. The Ashanti Chief however, insisted on shaking hand with his left hand, explaining, "the bravest of the brave shake hands with the left hand as in order to do so they must throw away their greatest protection, their shield."

This is why, when he founded the Boy Scout Movement, dedicated to fair play and tolerance, BP decided that the greeting of its members would be the clasp of the left hand, rather than the traditional right. To BP the right handshake symbolised a gesture of friendship. The clasp of the left hand seemed to be nobler still – for it signified the willingness of men to trust each other.

JOBS DONE

Rover's

In March 1960 the Rover's were asked to do a couple of jobs. One for Mr Telfer the farmer who was so good to the Group. They had to lop an old tree that was overhanging the farm's outside toilet. A tricky job but the Rovers liked tricky or unusual jobs.

Like the Parish Clerk who asked them If they would make a survey to find the number of thatched buildings in the parish.

Then a bank asked if they would like to earn a few bob for funds by laying some lino behind the bank counter. With the thought of "finders keepers" they took the job on. It was quite quiet in the village on the Sunday morning until they set the bank's burglar alarm off and then couldn't stop it. Within five minutes they had five policemen, 2 squad cars, and half the population outside the bank.

Rover Crew project making a Gate at Well End in the 1980s



L to R Tony Fenemore, Mrs Butcher, Butch, Derek James, Alan Rees, Bryan Sharpe, Alan Poole, Alan Botwright, Kitty Dobson and Michael Ash

The BP Guild, Ladies Guild and Fellowship

The BP Guild

In 1954 "Skip" Frank Hoadly formed a branch of the B.P. Guild of Old Scouts. This part of the Movement was set up for those members who wanted to participate in Scouting over the age of 20, but did not want to necessarily commit themselves to a leadership role. This has been a tower of strength to the group ever since. At the inaugural meeting there were 13 persons present who became the nucleus of the Guild, as it became known in Abbots Langley.

In the January 1960 issue of the Woodsmoke the Scout Guild had a lively discussion on the subject of retaining the valuable people in the movement (mainly ladies) after having served on Group Committees etc. it was decided to attempt the formation of a ladies section of the Guild Branch and any ladies connected with the Group who were interested were invited to attend Headquarters on January 30th at 8pm where the committee would explain the aims and objectives of the Guild.

At the County AGM of 1961 Bill White was appointed County Organiser for Hertfordshire BP Scout Guild, which was another addition to his many other Scouting jobs.

On 30th October 1970 there was a celebration of 21 years of Guiding in Abbots Langley which was held in the Henderson Hall.

The BP Guild (Ladies) – later known as The LADIES GUILD

In about 1954 the all male committee and helpers of the 1st Abbots Langley Scout group decided to form the Abbots Langley BP Scout Guild. Some ladies went along to join and were told it was for men only. So not to be out done, Rose Baldry and about 30 others, including Ada formed the Ladies Scout Guild.

The group had a Baden –Powell Scout Guild composed of mainly former Rovers and Scouts, and supporters. Times were changing and gradually ladies were being admitted into Guilds in many Groups. Abbots Langley BP Guild was not very keen on the idea of women intruding in their "boys" night out. However, some of the leaders (namely Bill White and Doug Read) foresaw the shape of things to come and thought ladies would be a great asset. They prevail upon Rose Baldry to test the waters and see if she could muster some recruits and form a twig from the main branch and hold their own meetings. This she did with no trouble and on the third Tuesday in April 1963 they held their first meeting with about 20 members, and Rose became the Chairman. They were enrolled and given BP Scout Badges in due course and so that ladies branch was formed. By November 1964 they had 30 members and Mr Groome had started a keep fit class for them.

At an early stage the Ladies Guild decided to adopt District Commissioner Roger Sands as their unofficial mascot, and the title still sits on his shoulders.

They flourished and went from strength to strength enrolling new members and planning future programmes. They helped and supported the scout group in every way possible. Jumble sales, concerts, fetes, social, providing and serving refreshments at various functions.

They entertained and visited other BP Scout Guilds. They joined the men in some of their activities such as guild dinners and conferences and car rallies.

They did not neglect their own entertainment going to theatres, ideal home exhibitions, fashion shows, make-up demonstrations, Tupperware and jewellery parties. They helped in every way possible building the new HQ, keeping the men supplied with tea etc and in all the fund raising necessary for the building that is shared today.

When the BP Guild was disbanded nationally in 1977 and the new Fellowship was formed, the ladies decided to carry on their meetings as before and became known as the Ladies Guild.

The ladies and men's guilds worked side by side and often held joint events like bowling matches, which the ladies seemed to excel in !

The Scout Fellowship

Renamed in 1977 the group continued with a supporters group which consisted of both men and women. This group of people, backed up by the Ladies Guild and the Executive committee, with all supporters working together are such a tremendous asset to Abbots Langley Scouts.

A rebranding exercise in 2010 has resulted in the Fellowship nationally being known as Scout Active Support. Current members of the Fellowship were invited to transfer their membership before 31 December 2010, but the members of the Abbots Langley Fellowship felt that they still wished to be known as such, and not members of the SAS and duly declined.

THE VENTURE SCOUTS

On 1st November 1966 the 44th and the 56th (Langleybury) South West Herts Senior Scout Troops combined to form the 44/56th South West Herts Venture Unit. This Unit was the first to be formed in S W Herts.

A venture unit was self programming and the age ranges were 16-20. To organise the unit on democratic lines they formed an executive committee consisting of Brian Goodchild, Tony Cobb, Dave Pearce, Brian Poole, Steve Munday, Mike Allsop and Alan Rees.

In 1967 when the Advanced Party report was put into effect, because of a

- a) shortage of Venture Scout Leaders and
- b) the new minimum standards made 9 boys the required minimum number of boys in a unit
- c) the known fact that in larger number of 20 or more, better training and projects could be undertaken,

Alan Rees, Assistant District Commissioner (Venture Scouts) and Venture Scout Leader of the 44th, split the District into areas and allocated the existing senior scout troops into amalgamated Venture Scout units.

As far as Abbots Langley were concerned, this meant that they became a separately registered unit known as the Abbots Langley Venture Scout Unit and divorced them from

both the 44th and 56th groups, and were responsible for their own finances. They took boys from the 77th Garston, 54th Bricket Wood, 56th Langleybury and 44th Abbots Langley, and met in the HQ.

Between 1967 and 1970 the unit functioned well with fluctuating membership and started to take members from another District, namely Hemel Hempstead. Some members left to go back to their own groups as officers, other left for University and teacher training colleague. They even had two female instructors belonging to the unit at one time.

One year they won the District night exercise and the County Peak Assault Competition, which had never been done before by any one unit. They had many expeditions, and at one point climbed the Matterhorn and other peaks in the area.

In 1971, not having a continuous source of membership and because it was good to have the tradition of a group behind them, Alan asked the 44th if they would take them back into the Group. At that time there were 3 cub packs and 2 scout troops which would surely guarantee a continuous membership.

The aims of the Venture Scout Unit were – to continue and complete the progressive training of Cub Scouts and scout sections and to ensure that its members are given every opportunity and encouragement to take their place in society as young men of standing and worth. The method of the section is based on the mainly self programming and largely self governing unit combined with a progressive training programme linked to an Award Scheme.

By the end of 1971 however, Alan Rees had been offered the post he had sought for so long, that of climbing instructor at Eskdale in the Lake District, and with numbers dwindling, those that were left were transferred to the North Watford Unit to carry on this important stage in their Scouting. Several younger Guildsmen took on the task of training the older boys so that when they reached the right age, they would be ready to form the next Venture unit.

A leader of the right sort was needed to continue the Venture Scouts in Abbots Langley, and this came in the guise of Michael Butler who agreed to pilot a small venture unit through its early days, and started the unit after the summer camp in 1972.

By the end of that year Dave Willett had come forward to take the position of Venture Scout Leader, and the unit was rebuilt from there. However, in the July of 1975 he moved abroad and left the unit in the hands of Dave Miller.

Dave Willett and Alan Pateman took over leadership of Venture Unit from Dave Miller, and the Venture Scouts began training for the **Peak Assault** with a dump high locally, but unfortunately got lost! Next was a weekend hike/camp from Princess Risborough via Wendover to HQ, camping on what was reputed to be the coldest night of the winter. Then a hike/camp weekend c/o Butch's aunt's cottage in Sussex, and saw the Ventures hiking some 26 miles in difficult conditions across the South Downs. The final session was an afternoon of orienteering in Whippendell Woods. The team comprised Tony Bail, Chris Collier, Gary Griffin, Pete Linskey, Chris Middleton and Dave Tolhurst, and sadly came 13th out of 55-60 teams of which 15 teams withdrew.

Yet another **canoeing day out** by this section was to Bedford. A small tributary called the "New Cut" gave them the opportunity to practise on a slalom course for a few hours. Then Pete Linskey started his systematic destruction of the section's equipment by breaking a set of paddles. He was given a spare and set off to join the main river. However, whilst paddling back, Pete struck again, breaking the spare set of paddles. He was given another set and warned he would have to use his hands if it happened again.

The Guides had joined the Canoe section by July of 1979 and Suzanne Way, Sally Moore, Linda Brown took part in various trips.

CAMPS

1928	Totternhoe, Beds	1973	Isle of Man (Cubs)
1929	St Lawrence, IOW	1974	
1930	Bossington, Somerset	1975	Hailsham, Eastbourne
1931	Brightstone, IOW	1976	Brynfoil, N Wales
		1977	Broadstone Warren
1936	Selsey, Sussex	1978	No camp
1937	Shackleford Heath, Surrey	1979	Broadstone Warren (Panthers) Guernsey (Pathfinders)
1938	Itchenor, Sussex	1980	New Forest (joint Scouts)
1939	Hindhead, Surrey	1981	Coetmor Mill, N Wales Derbyshire National Park (
1940	Hyde Farm, Bedmond	1982	Hawkwell, Southend
1945	Phasels Wood, Kings Langley	1983	
1946	Warden Point, Sheppey	1984	
1947	Laag-Keppel, Holland	1985	
1948	Bedmond (with Hessengroep)	1986	
1949	Bryanston, Dorset	1987	
1950	Beverwyck, Holland	1988	
1951	Angmering, Sussex	1989	
1952	Seasalter, Kent	1990	
1953		1991	
1954	Milford on Sea, Hants	1992	
1955	Pett Marshes, Kent	1993	
1956	Southwold, Suffolk	1994	
1957	Sweden (Rovers and S Scouts)	1995	Forest of Dean
1958	Weymouth, Dorset	1996	Derbyshire
1959	Milford on Sea, Hants	1997	Huntshaw, North Devon
1960	Felixstowe, Suffolk	1998	Forest of Dean
1961	Blandford, Dorset	1999	
1962	Pett, Hastings	2000	Beaver Lodge, Forest of Dean
1963	Pont Fadeg, Talybont	2001	
1964		2002	Tansley Wood, Matlock
1965	Snettisham Beach, Norfolk	2003	Bishops Lydeard, Somerset
1966	Wonaston, near Monmouth	2004	Ystradgynlais, Brecon Beacons
1967		2005	Beaver Lodge, Forest of Dean
1968	3 rd August Buckmore Park, Chatham	2006	Tansley Wood, Matlock
1969	Bushey Woods, Hailsham, Sussex	2007	Bishops Lydeard, Somerset
1970	Guernsey	2008	Beaver Lodge, Forest of Dean
1971	Hathersage, Derbyshire	2009	Ystradgynlais, Brecon Beacons
1972	Holland	2010	Slindon, Nr Arundel



Carving the duff, Whitsun Camp in Bedmond, 1948

1954

The Easter Camp in 1954 was to Potters Crouch. All the party attended Holy Communion at the Church of the Ascension, Bedmond on Easter morning, and the District Commissioner of St Albans made an inspection of the camp later in

the day.

5th – 7th June 1954 was the Whitsun County Camp at Gorhambury, St. Albans. All sections except Cubs attended and the Chief Scout was present on the morning of Whit-Monday.

11-12th September 1954 Phasels Wood District Camp

8 May 1955

Four of us, Butch, Chris, Bryan and I had an enjoyable afternoon and evening at the PLs and Seniors Easter Camp. So much so that three of them returned home at 10pm, collected sleeping bags and a bit of grub, and went back and stayed the night. Butch had to be back at Aldershot by 8 am next day and thanks to Bryan's alarm clock, everything was OK and Butch was transported to Aldershot on Chris' motorbike, on time too! Skip

23rd July to 2nd August 1955 the Summer camp was held at Lunaford Farm, Pett, near Hastings, Sussex at a cost of £3-10-0.

A Crazy Weekend Camp - A Senior Scouts story

The weekend camp started on Friday night with a 15 mile hike, leaving Bedmond at 10.30pm. Whilst on the hike we had a contest consisting of who could carry a brick on their head the longest. "Clacker" one of the Rovers, won it - he carried it for about 5 miles (he has a head that fits the brick). After the hike we slept at headquarters.

We arrived at the camp site on Saturday to find that we had brought the gramophone and dartboard but not the trenching tools. Then "Butch" started telling the boys off for not wearing their hats, and a quarter of an hour later he lost his own. "Butch" and "Clacker" went for water and had an argument about who was carrying the most water. That night we all walked to the "Holly Bush" where we had a darts competition.

The next afternoon we had to follow a trail through the woods. After tea we had a game of darts and while we were playing, the hut caught alight and so everybody was set on to put it out.

That night it was the greatest pleasure of my life to crawl between the bed sheets.

'One of the Gang'
Woodsmoke Nov 1955

The Scouts went to Osmington Mills near Weymouth for their summer camp which was in a field 250 yards from the sea. There were 13 boys and a staff of 5. 5 Scouts were able to pass their swimming test in the sea – the proper place to do it! And three boys were fortunate to have the opportunity to fell a tree each.

Adjacent to the site was a radar pylon of some 240 feet altitude. Fred Dobson, or 'Mad Fred' as he became known, though it looked a little 'bald' so he decided to give it a top piece. Setting off one evening with 'Barmy Bryan Sharpe' he scaled this monstrosity and tied a piece of cloth to the uppermost point of the lightning conductor. The locals think even to this day that it was sabotage by the Russians!

Bryanston, Dorset August 1960

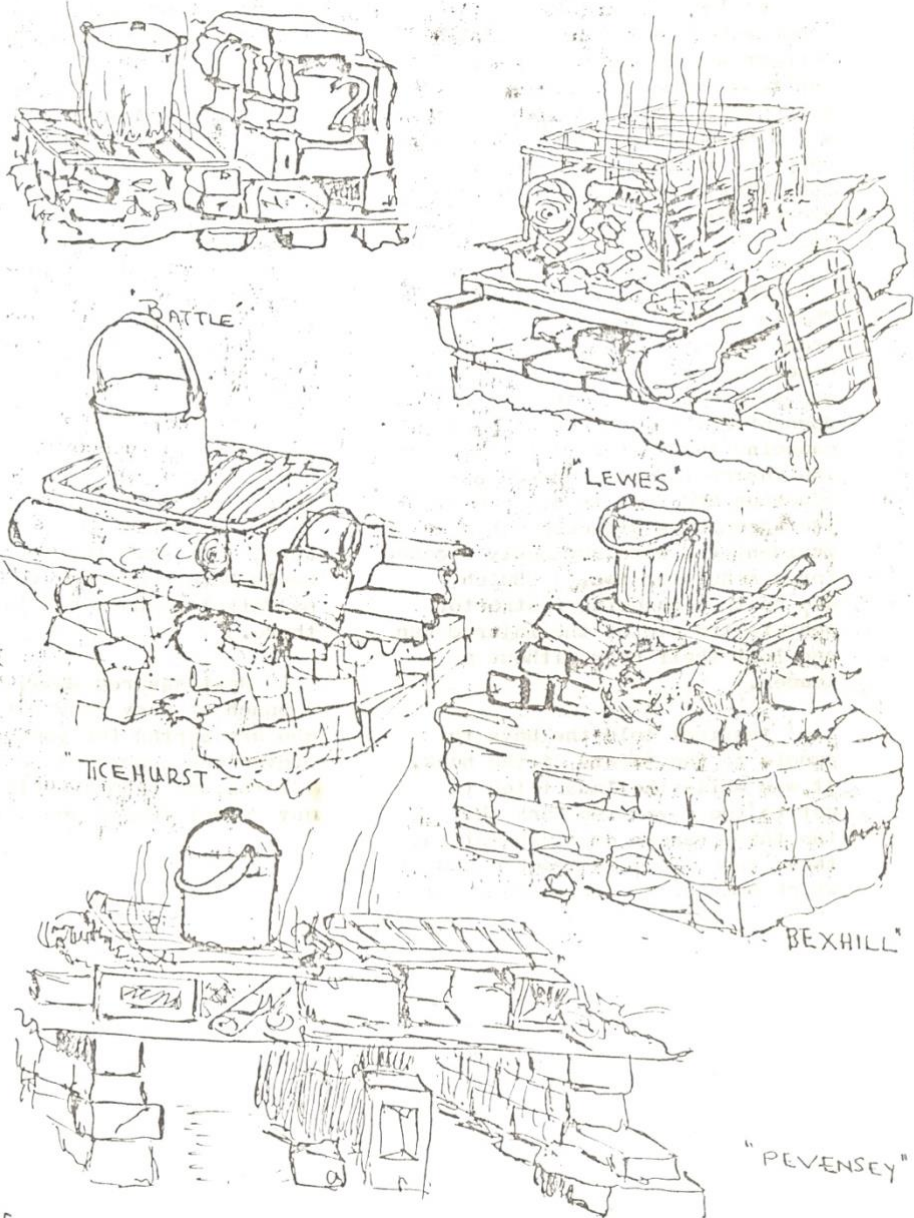
Thanks were due to Bert Keene, Knocker and Bryan Sharpe who went with the troop and to Skip who spent the weekend, and Eddie Miller who helped all week, with Jimmy Reid and Arthur Edwards.

Frank Hoadly with his blanket at a camp fire



The Venture Scouts Summer camp in 1975 was at Bushey Wood near Hailsham. The drawing on the next page depicts the variety of alter fires the boys built.

Everything that was cooked during the week was prepared on them. The boys had to cook for themselves and the “piece de resistance” came on Wednesday. Each patrol was issued with a frozen chicken in the morning and instructed to use their imagination in preparing a meal with it. Their talent produced: Coq au Vin, Chicken Fricasse, Chicken Kentucky style and Peter Linskey’s supreme Chicken a la Spit. In the absence of a mechanical method of rotating the spit (a scout staff covered in foil) the bird had to be rotated manually by smokey faced boys with streaming eyes patiently turning the spit at a steady 10 revs/min to ensure the bird was cooked all through. It was a tribute to the enterprise that Pete showed and the team spirit that made the meal possible.



Biff

Biff's comment was "Thanks to everyone and most of all the boys. Without them we would have looked a bit silly surrounded by nine tents, thirty assorted billies, seven frying pans, six kettles, 400 yards of rope and a Union Jack!"

One of the competitions resulted in this entry below:

HAPPY HERBERT'S HORRIBLE HORSE

By Pete Linskey and the Ticehurst Patrol

Happy Herbert had hurt himself hunting hens. Herbert had hurt his hip. He hollered hopefully, he hoped he hadn't haemorrhaged himself. Happily he hadn't.

Henry, his hamster, had heard Herbert had hurt himself. Henry hated Humphrey Horse. Humphrey had hurt him. Humphrey hit Herbert hard. Hopping Herbert hollered:

"Help, Help!!"

Humphrey Horse had had horrible hot headaches. He had hurt his honourable Herbert. Humphrey's hoof had hurt Herbert. Happy Herbert had had Humphrey Horse hauled home. Humphrey Horse had horsetitoesis. Humphrey Horse had healed himself. Henry had helped him. Herbert had helped Henrietta Hen. Herbert had helped himself. Henrietta Hen had helped happily.

And the following edition of Woodsmoke printed the next article:

De-bunked!!

The fears expressed in the camp report in the last issue about the ego of the perpetrator of the "Horrible Hallucinations" have prompted me to recount a try happening in **May 1975** at Coetmor Mill Activity Centre, where human "sleepers" are stacked in three tiers.

Odd ode coming up – with apologies to "The Animal Fair"

"I went to Cymru Fair
The B P Guild were there,
And Mary and Win
By the River Ogwen
Were combing their "golden" hair (poetic licence!)

The Linskey fell out of his bunk,
Slid down on to Sharpie's trunk,
And Sharpie wheezed
And turned on his knees,
And what became of the Lins-key – Links-key etc"

"Piksxe"

(A welsh "Banshee")

No harm was done – except to pride – also that the subsequent ribbing and the "special cot" constructed the next night were all taken in very good part by the victim!!

Pathfinder Troop Summer Camp 1979 to Guernsey

The Leader Ken Harrison should have lead the camp as it was his original plan. However, after arrangement for travel and campsite were confirmed Ken's employers would not allow his holiday dates, even though they had given verbal agreement beforehand. And so the GSL Keith Moore, took the "brave" decision to single-handedly run the camp with 15 boys, rather than cancel it.

They travelled to Weymouth via the minibus and boarded a ferry. During the crossing Lee Kirby was allowed to visit the bridge of the ship as he was writing the log for the day. The pitched camp at the site of the 5th Guernsey Scout Group and the marquee, three patrol tents, one Scouter's tent and a toilet tent were erected with the remainder being done the following day.

One of the days, as driving out of the camp, Keith clipped the left hand side of the bus against a concealed branch of a tree. The result was that two windows were sprung into the laps of the boys, thankfully not broken, but Keith spent the next 5½ hours repairing the windows.

The managed a trip to Hern and Sark, played tennis and fished. They even managed to go to the cinema to see the latest James Bond movie, Moonraker. An experience that Keith had not had since a lady played a piano during performances!

The whole experience left Keith feeling privileged to have had the opportunity to accompany such a mature troop to camp:

"I cannot remember having enjoyed a camp of this type as much as I did this one. I was, at all times, immensely proud of the boys. I thank Ken Harrison and his staff for entrusting me with such a wonderful bunch of Scouts. Most importantly I thank the scouts, all fifteen of them, for combining to enable us all to have a superb camp."

1981 – Snowdonia Camp for Pathfinders

"On the Sunday we set off after lunch for the Ogwen Cottage and then headed towards the Glyders, passing en-route the Idwal Slabs. We went to the top of Devils Kitchen and then called it a day.

To go to Snowdonia and not make an attempt to climb Snowdon is like going to Paris and not seeing the Eifel Tower. So on Monday, with provisions and gear packed, we set off from the Peny-Pas Hotel, via the Miners Track towards the mountain. The weather was absolutely superb.

The climb to the top took four hours. We enjoyed the magnificent views and included plenty of rest periods. Everybody made it to the top. After the customary photographs had been taken we enjoyed some refreshments to prepare for the return."

The Tryfan Assault

“Wednesday was set aside for an assault on Tryfan. This is claimed to be the only mountain in North Wales which is impossible to climb without the use of the hands. It has the reputation for being a bit more challenging than the average Welsh peak; in fact there have been discussion as to whether it should be attempted bearing in mind the low average age of the scouts. The decision to go ahead was made and off we went once more from the Ogwen Cottage. Two of the adults and one scout were blessed with enough sense to return to the Mill via the peace and tranquillity of the river bank.

The climbing party made excellent progress until they stopped for lunch at one o'clock. The going then became distinctly more exciting. It was not long before we considered it prudent to use the climbing rope on one of the more severe sections. Eventually we abandoned our attempt some 400 ft from the summit. It was not defeatism, just plain common sense. We returned to the Mill once more ravenous.”



Group Family Camp – 18th to 20th June 2004

The organisers were there till the bitter end clearing up and Dave and Alison Sturgess did a brilliant job taking on the organisation of a camp that ‘Butch’ had originally booked. They put such a tremendous amount of effort into the whole thing and it was such a success that they are sure to be called upon in the future. Likewise Paul Hanson and Tony Dabson and Pauline Marett who cooked for the whole weekend. Clive of course, was there with his usual commitment over the weekend and single-handedly packed away all of the scout tents. The Fellowship members devised and supervised the activities and helped with all the background tasks and last but not least to Bib Butcher, organised the pig roast.



Thursday night saw us pitching tents on a deserted site in Phasels Wood. The scouts were over enthusiastically putting up tents for the weekend camp and you could hear the cry of “has anyone got a mallet?” all over the field as tent pegs were battered into the hard ground. With 150 people expected for the family camp it was difficult to envisage just where the tents were going to go. Most importantly, where were the cubs and scouts tents to be situated!

The rest of the tents were pitched on the Friday in a wonderful summer evening setting. However, the site very rapidly turned itself into something reminiscent of an Isle of Wight festival and the summer evening to a very cold wintry night. As people mingled and introduced themselves, the first game of the evening was collecting autographs from famous England football players who were situated in the woods, and as the evening took on an ever wintry feel it was saved by the wonderful chilli, nachos and sausages eaten round the camp fire to keep warm. I think everyone concerned would say it was probably the coldest evening they had spent out of doors under canvass, particularly those who were camping for the first time.

So very little sleep was had that night because of the Scouts (of course), the Cubs (of course), and the snoring (!) that probably none of us would have heard if it wasn't so perishingly cold that we were all kept awake with it, frantically trying to find things to put on. Still it wouldn't be a camp if you didn't feel weary and tired on the first morning. Bounding back the next day saw us throw ourselves into a whole day's activities. Many people conquered their fear of heights by abseiling for the first time. Some people refused at the last hurdle. Some climbed for the first time in many years, which are major achievements when you're pushing 50 and challenged!

The afternoon team games were an assortment of skills and one of the things to be valued from these family camps is that young and old, or should I say Beavers to Parents can all combine in teamwork and get the same amount of fun out of an activity. Yes it's great fun lifting the kids through a tyre that is suspended six feet in the air, but what great teamwork and a sense of determination to achieve the task, not to mention the physical ability, to be able to put four grown adults through it as well.

The weather had been good to us all day with just spits of rain and as we regrouped in the evening and talked about our day we sat high on our hillside surveying the countryside around us feeling that we were in the middle of Devon, not two miles from Abbots Langley. We'd left all the cares of the world behind us to spend the weekend socialising with friends, family and children without the trapping of modern day life.

The sacrificial pig was duly carved, barbecued chicken, sausages, burgers and delicious salads served up to a very hungry audience, all followed by hearty singing around the campfire. Sleep was easy that night, and for those who still had the strength and not too many bruises there were treasure hunts and orienteering the next day. Although the camp was not due to finish until Sunday afternoon it was unfortunate that it clashed with School fetes and so most people broke camp during the morning.

Pauline Styles,
Woodsmoke Editor

Family Camp 2006



Left Barry and Janet Marsh, Kath and Ian Turner, Jim and Jean Johnson

Right Jim and Jean Johnson, with Clive Winder in the background



Gerry Poole, Kath Turner and Janet Marsh



LtoR Janet Mayston, Lyn Lythaby, Carol Borrowdale, Ann Clough



LtoR Bryan Sharpe, Hazel Harkin, Mick Borrowdale, his grandson, Janet Mayston, Lyn Lythaby, Carol Borrowdale, Ann Clough, Ron Clough, Gerry Poole, Janet Marsh

Jamboree

1920 Olympia, England, 1924 Copenhagen, Denmark, 1929 Arrowe Park, England, 1933 Godollo Hungary, 1937 Vogelensang, Holland, 1947 Moisson, France, 1951 Miagara Canada, 1957 Sutton Coldfield, England, 1959 Laguna, Philippines, 1963 Marathon Greece.

The 1957 Scout Jamboree was held at Sutton Park. Here is an account by Bill White, Woodsmoke Editor who had the opportunity to attend, along with Scout Francis Ridgley.

“Nearly 35,000 people arrived at a small country town to live together for a couple of weeks in a beautiful park, erecting tents of every size, shape, colour and design, and gadgets galore including the last word in camp shelters and gateways.

Then there was that grand army known collectively as ‘working party’ and consisting of Camp Police, Fire Brigade, Gate Stewards, Arena Stewards, Catering Staff, Interpreters and many others, all having given their time and paid the full camp fee for the pleasure of really working hard to make the camp a success. Their cheerfulness, patience, and courtesy, usually under extremely difficult conditions was a wonderful example of the Scout Spirit in Service.

The ‘swapping’ groups were to me a most moving sight. They were to be found everywhere, even squatting in the middle of a road, boys of varying colours and languages, finding ways of understanding each other, and all so obviously determined to make friends.

Then there were the autograph hunters. Those consisted not only of Scouts but also the visits, and not unnaturally their quest was mainly the chaps from overseas, the value of their autograph being in proportion to the distance they had travelled! Here again patience and good humour were much in evidence. I happened one day to be in the Japanese camp, when a Japanese Scout emerged from his tent and walked towards another tent, obviously to obtain something he needed for whatever he was doing, but before he could reach it he was pounced upon by a Girl Guide with an autograph book.

It was great fun visiting the camps of many different countries which I did whenever I had the opportunity, especially to join them for a cup of tea, sometimes without milk or sugar, and hunk of bread and jam often without butter, and to inspect their camp gadgets. Many of these were made from their own materials which they brought with them. Some brought huge quantities of bamboo varying in size from thin sticks to poles of 4 or 5 inches in diameter. The Finnish contingent had some large trunks of spruce and told me that they had brought over eighty tons of timber with them. There we stood under a canvass sheet tied to a few poles with a violent thunderstorm overhead drinking tea and eating smoked reindeer sandwiches.

Pete Smith and Chris Lavery completed their duty at the Jamboree, Chris brought back a fireman’s helmet as a souvenir for the Den. Fred Dobson visited the Jamboree with Bryan Sharpe in his car and reported that his nerves were almost back to normal.

Alan Poole attended the 11th World Jamboree which was held in Marathon Greece in 1963

12th World Jamboree – 1st to 9th August 1967 was in Farrugut State Park, Idaho USA and commemorated the 60th anniversary of the first experimental scout camp on Brownsea island.

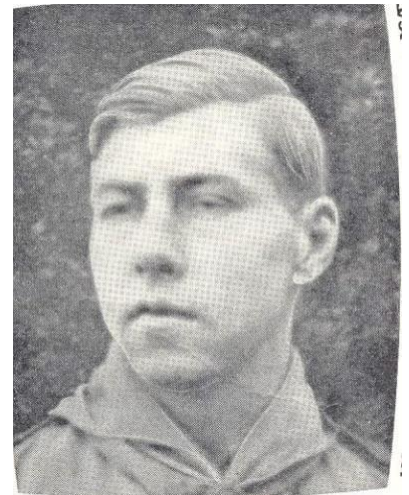
Dave Weatherly attended World Jamboree in Japan as ASL.

The 1983 Jamboree was in Alberta Canada.

People past and present

Frank "skip" Hoadly

When Skip moved to this district in July 1935 he was transferred from the 29th Camberwell to the 1st S.W. Herts Crew at Watford, and in January 1936 at the invitation of Mr Alan Emery (the late DC) he joined the 1st Abbots Langley to assist Fred Cole, who had to give up the Troop in April 1936 owing to ill health. Skipper was then warranted as Scoutmaster and later as Group Scoutmaster.



He gained his Wood Badge and Gilwell Scarf in September 1937 and was awarded his Long Service Decoration in 1947. During the war, whilst serving with the RAF on Malta, he assisted with the Pembroke Troop. He was also a member of the 23rd Cairo Crew, the 1st Naples Crew and also the International Rover Crew at Alexandria (These were all Service Crews).

In 1952 he was awarded the Medal of Merit in recognition of his fine Scouting record in Abbots Langley and he has been a member of the County Scout council.

He was also awarded the "Bar to the Silver Acorn" for special distinguished services, one of the highest awards in Scouting. He received this medal from Air Vice Marshall Sir Bernard Chacksfield (Chief Commissioner for England) at the County AGM which was held on July 12th 1954.

In August 1961 Skip celebrated 25 years with the 44th with a party in the Henderson hall, which after some hectic games settled down to campfire songs. He was given a TV for his service.

Living next door to the scout headquarters, Frank officially retired from Scouting in 1967 when he sent in his warrant after 38 years of service. There were 11 boys in his original troop and when he retired he left two scout groups of 25 boys each, and three packs of cub scouts numbering 90.

But retiring didn't mean Frank rested on his laurels, instead he became Treasurer of the Six Counties Liaison Committee for handicapped scouts. This meant attending and helping on annual scout holidays and weekends. He was also Treasurer of the S W Herts Scout shop and member of the Abbots Langley Group Council.

Molly Hoadly
Wife of G.S.M. Frank Hoadly

Born in Watford, her parents moved to Abbots Langley when she was only 1 month old.. When of age she joined the Rangers, with whom she spent ten years, and in 1935 was asked by Miss Muriel Sadler, as part of Ranger Service, to help with the Cubs because Miss Janes the C.M. could no longer attend regularly, and there were no other helpers. After only a few weeks Miss Janes moved away and Mrs Hoadly took over the Pack, assisted by Miss Marjorie Ridgeway.

She continued as Akela until 1947 assisted in turn by Phyllis Ridgeway, Dorothy Kesner, and Walter Smith who eventually took over at the latter end of 1947, but Molly maintained her official link with Cubbing as the Cub section Treasurer, and unofficially as helper in almost everything else connected with the Group.

During the war she coped with extra evacuee boys in the Pack, as well as being a working member of the Red Cross (.ARP) which was then held in the village hall. .At one time she was employed at the Ovaltine Factory, but during the war worked at the Kings Langley Eng. Co.

Molly was a member of St. Lawrence Church, where she at one time assisted with the Sunday School and she a member of the Mothers Union.

During the absence of the Scouters on war service, Molly assisted with the general administration of the Group, and on the return of the GSM in February 1946 they were married at St. Lawrence Church.

Molly's father Mr Beaumont, was a founder member of the Group Committee from which he retired in April 1955 after 28 years of unbroken service. During the early years her mother was a member of the separate ladies committee.

As the GSM's wife, and living next door to the headquarters, Molly was truly a pillar of the Group, and there's no doubt that her home was almost a headquarters annexe!

Keith Moore
1934 to 2001



Keith was born in Abbots Langley, educated at the village school and Watford Technical School where he studied sheet metal work and became a planning engineer at Leavesden Aerodrome. His friend, David Rees, persuaded him at great length to join the Troop on November 11th 1947 when he was in his 13th year and he quickly went on to become a Second and then the Patrol Leader of the Squirrel patrol.

Early in 1950 he went up into the Senior Scouts when Arthur Miles was leader. Later that year he made his first continental trip with the Group when a party visited the Hessengroep in Holland for a fortnight.

He was invested as a Rover Scout in October 1952 and has joined in with Crew activities whenever his other duties have allowed. As a motorcyclist he has gained credit for the Crew in the County Motor Rally. He was also a keen footballer and due to his efforts a Cub football team was formed and his encouragement provided it with much of its subsequent success.

It was in 1952 Skipper, bearing in mind Keith's experience in helping with the Youth Fellowship, approached him with a view to taking out an Assistant Cubmaster's Warrant, to assist Dick Bewsey and Miss Gladys Staines in running the Wolf Cub Pack. He held this warrant for about 4 ½ years with great success, so it was natural that in 1956 when it became necessary to form a second Pack. Keith should take over the leadership of Pack "A" which he continued to do until he accepted the Group Scout Leaders Warrant in 1967. During his Cub Leaders 11 years many boys enjoyed hours of cubbing as he was always in the thick of it – the Cracknell Shield, football, sports, to say nothing of Whitsun and Summer camps.

Keith had more than 30 years' connection with the Abbots Langley Group. Apart from the Cubs, Keith had been in every section of the group in succession – Scout, Senior Scout, Rover, Assistant Cub Master, Cub Master and the on to GSL which he took over from Frank Hoadly. He also served on District and County Executives.

Keith always involved himself in many leisure activities, being a Sunday School teacher for more than 30 years. He also had a strong connection with the RNLI as well as with many local groups such as the British Legion. Nevertheless, his main focus of attention was Scouting.

Keith helped with the running of the Troop summer camps for several years and at a Liechtenstein camp he was jointly responsible for keeping the log of all that went on.

"One thing that I have very strong and sincere feelings about and which I will never lose sight of, is that Scouting is for the boys and we are instrumental in providing for his needs, worldly and spiritual." (an exert from Woodsmoke)

In 1975 became the Assistant District Commissioner for Leader Training

During his leadership many changes took place within the Movement and these had to be taken aboard by the Group. Many seemed strange and inexplicable to those hankering for the “good old days” but Keith worked with the Executive Committee and Scouters to make them work.

Keith’s stint as GSL ended in 1987 when he stepped down to undertake another task that was important to him. Then, when Pete Lythaby was finding it difficult to combine the demands of being GSL with his job, he was recalled to the position.

In 1997 he was very proud of the fact that he had completed 50 years in the movement and held a party at the HQ. He was fortunate enough to also attend a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace.

Sadly, Keith passed away in April 2001 after living with cancer for the previous few years. He did a very good job for Scouting in Abbots Langley and he shall long be remembered.

Jack Ridgeway

192? to 1978

Jack was born in Abbots Langley, attended the old village school and lived his youth in the old cottages adjoining Kitters Green. He started Cubs in 1930 when Miss Moore was Akela. He and his twin brother Ted went right through the Scout Troop together from recruit to Patrol Leader and enjoyed many camps until the war intervened. As Scouts they both enrolled as local ARP messengers. In 1941 Jack was invested as a Rover scout, in due course being elected as a Rover Mate, and finally Assistant Rover Leader where he stayed until he reluctantly relinquished his warrant. He was a member of the BP Guild and their committee for several years and also found time to play an active roll on group committees. Whenever there was a job to be done, he was there in the thick of it and woe betide the slackers, for he had a very forthright manner. Not lost for conversation, he had no time for idle gossip and was ready to see the good in all people.

During the war Jack served with the Royal Navy and married in 1948 to Phyllis. She encouraged and helped in every way possible on his scouting activities and was an able member of the Ladies Guild. Their son Stephen followed Jack into Abbots Langley Scouts.

He was the automatic choice for Editor of the Woodsmoke after Bill White died. He was a jovial chatterbox and spent many hours working on the publication since it’s very early days and was dedicated to the aims of international friendship through scouting. He originally helped Bill White in the production and in writing under the nom de plume of Probascis as well as his own. He carried on as Editor for 10 years until July 1974.

Michael “Butch” Butcher
1935 – 2004

Butch as he was so well known, started scouting with the 25th S W Herts in 1943, was Senior Sixer in the Cubs and nearly a First Class Scout when he joined the 44th in 1948 at the age of 13. It was not long before he was First Class and Patrol Leader of the Otter Patrol. In 1950 when he joined the Senior Scouts his roaming began. That year he camped in Holland, the Cairngorms, and Switzerland. In 1952 he organised and took the Senior Scouts on a cycle tour of North France and Belgium and when the Army claimed him for this National Service in 1953, they took him all over the near Eastern countries. He served in the famous Parachute Regiment and had numerous drops.



In Egypt he ran the Senior Scouts attached to the MOASCA Garrison (5th Cairo) and in 1954 when they attended the Canal Zone Jamboree they built a bridge which promptly collapsed when the Chief Scout crossed!

In 1955 he was demobbed and rejoined the 44th in the Rover Crew, and organised the first trip to Liechtenstein. Promoted to Rover Mate in 1956 he was also helping with the Senior Scouts and camped in Sweden with the Seniors and Rovers. He was one of the original Crew members who started caving with the 44th under the leadership of Len Edy of Amersham.

In 1957 he assisted at the World Jamboree at Sutton Park and later in the Cairngorms, this time as Assistant Party Leader of an International Senior Scout activity organised by Melville Balsillie and at Christmas that year was Party Leader of the first Winter Senior Scout Expedition to the Lake District which lasted eight days.

For all those activities he must have felt his style was cramped, for in June 1958 he left for Auckland, New Zealand where he soon took up Scouting again helping with the local Troop and when the Pan Pacific Jamboree came along, he was on the Security Staff. He was on the Northern Island Rover Council and later through Bill White, he met Bill Shadwell and they teamed up and drove down to Dunedin, South Island and joined the Leith Rover Crew and during this time he met the five Rovers who returned to England with him in 1961 and stayed and worked in Abbots for some considerable time.

In 1959 he was made Assistant Provincial Commissioner Special Duties and at Christmas of that year he was one of the three who attempted to climb Mount Pembroke, this peak had never been climbed but nevertheless they got higher than anyone else.

He ran the 1st Senior Scout Weekend gathering ever to be held in New Zealand at Otago, and organised and ran the first Senior Patrol Leader’s training course. He claimed that it was the wonderful training he had got in Hertfordshire that made these events successful.

On November 25th 1960 Butch and his pals left New Zealand for Australia and attended the Australian National Jamboree, helping in the Scout shop. They stayed for over 3 months working to help funds. Whilst there he completed his Wood Badge. He arrived home on 17th April 1961 via 10 different countries with Grant, Wishy, Peter Scotty and Clive and assisted in running the Scout Troop.

At the close down of the Venture Scout Unit in Abbots in the 1970's, and with the help of two others, he started up a Sunday morning Adventure group for Scouts of age fifteen and above. This turned into a new Venture Unit for Abbots Langley.

Although never taking out a leader warrant, but being a member of the Rovers, and later the Scout Fellowship, he introduced caving to Abbots Langley. As a result the then Rover Crew became experts in this field and had some sway in instigating the cavers badge into Scouting. Later in 1976, Butch took over the canoe section, and with a lot of training and coursework, he became a British Canoe Union senior instructor. This fared well and was very useful not only for Abbots Langley, but also for the District.

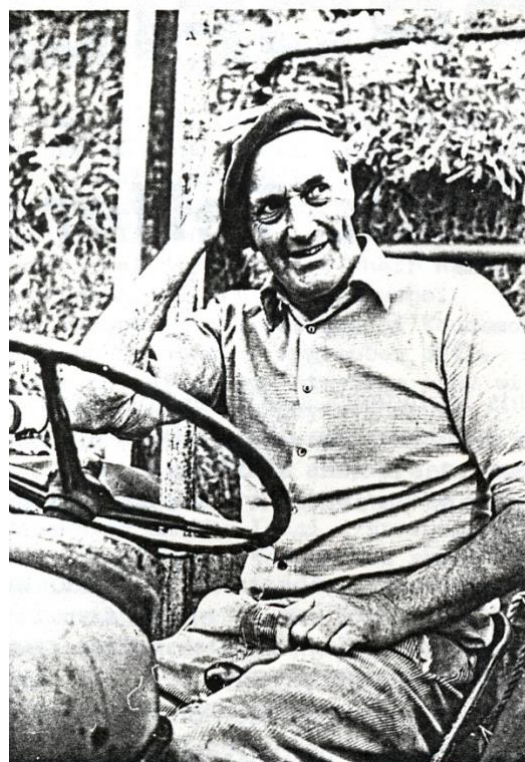
Mike Butcher supported the Abbots Langley Scout Group for many years. Fetes, jumble sales, markets etc, and was a member of the Group Executive Committee for about fifteen years. He organised two very successful Group Family Camps in the late 1990s, but most of all Butch managed to hold together the younger element in Scouting, who became the main support team of the Abbots Langley Scout Group.

In December 2003 he was awarded the Medal of Merit for 30 years service and dedication to the Scout Movement, particularly the Abbots Langley Group

Bill "Jock" Telfer 19?? – 2003

"I expect you'll be approached by the grass track riders and the scouts" was the advice offered by the previous tenant to Jock Telfer when he took over Mansion House Farm in 1956. Indeed he was approached and later he was to learn that those scouts included Fred Dobson, Bryan Sharpe and Michael Butcher. None of them, of course, had any idea that they were addressing the man who would one day be the Chairman of the Abbots Langley Scout Group.

It is just reward that Jock should be elected into this honoured post because his service to the group since he first became involved had been immeasurable. He retired in 1981 to the new house next to his farm on Love Lane.



The Mansion House Farm had been used for camping, wide games, pioneering, backwoods cooking, woodmanship and a whole range of other scouting activities. It housed the marquee that served at the HQ while the new building was erected. Jock was a key individual when it came to fundraising and for his continuous support he was awarded a 'Thanks Badge.' The Group tried to pay him back in a small way by helping to lift and sort his potatoes every year, but no way could they ever make up for his generosity.

Frederick William Dobson

1926 – 2004



Fred was one of the best known members of the Group in the District. This was because of his long association with the Group and of course, his business as a hairdresser. He joined the Group in July 1936 just before his 11th birthday and was assigned to the Woodpecker Patrol. Clem Sharp was his first patrol leader and Billy Crush another. He soon became the Patrol Second, a rank he held for a long time.

It was in December 1941 that Fred became a First Class Scout, and it was recorded in the November 1958 Woodsmoke that he was the only Second that had ever done so in the Group. His first summer camp was at Shackleford in 1937 and after that he attended summer camps whenever possible.

Invested as a Rover in 1942, Fred helped to run the Troop during the absence of 'Skip' in the RAF until he was called up himself in 1943 to service in the army. He was injured in France and sent home, only to return to form part of a new battalion of the Gordon Highlanders. Fred often recalled to us that most of the Highlanders came from London.

At the end of hostilities he was given a base job at Bielefeld, Germany and it was during this time that he met and married his wife Kitty, bringing her back to Abbots Langley on his demob in 1947 where she soon became an assistant Cub Scout Leader. Chosen as ARSL he was presented with his warrant in January 1952 by ADV (Rovers) 'Nobby' Masters. As assistant to Jack Botwright, Fred worked very hard and when in 1955 Jack was elevated to District leadership, it was natural that agreed to become Rover Scout Leader of the 18 - 25 year olds, and during this time he instigated the building fund for the new Headquarters. He was also curator of the World Aspidistra Show. He had always been very keen on the outdoor side of Scouting and was responsible for arranging many hikes and wide games, not only for the Crew, but also for the Seniors and the Troop.

In the late 1960's Fred and Bryan Sharpe decided to build a slide collection which they called "Abbots Langley Then and Now". Old photos and postcards were found and made into slide form, whereupon they would go out and take a "now" shot of the old photo. They soon found out that the "now" does not exist and that some were out of date before they were even processed. And so the well seen collection of Fred's slide show began. He was our local historian. When, the Langleybury Scout HQ was destroyed by fire, Fred was early on the scene, the fire brigade were still cooling the embers when Fred handed over monies and thereby started a rebuilding fund.

He would fondly recall the time when he and Bryan climbed to the top of the Pimlico TV tower, 285 feet high (Fred's idea). And of the time they both descended the well at

Hazelwood Hunton Bridge 120 feet deep (also Fred's idea), therefore claiming to have been to the highest and lowest points in the Parish. Fred was always immensely proud of these achievements!

Fred was a terrible prankster. Bryan recalls walking into Fred's antique shop one day and Fred said "that's right isn't it Bryan?" "What" he replied. There were two Canadian's in the shop who had picked up a vase. "This is local pottery, from Potters Crouch" Bryan had a good look and replied "well I'm pretty certain it could be". Obviously it was just a piece of pottery from the jumble sale, and Potters Crouch was the area locally where the Boxing Day walk finished.

On another occasion Fred was visiting Jeff Jackson a Rover member from the 2nd Watford, who collected different types of mugs such as from the coronation etc. As he looked them all over he pocketed one as he walked out and took it home. The next day it appeared in the shop window on a big black velvet cloth with the mug in the middle with a notice saying "this mug was stolen from Jeff Jackson's front room". It took a week before someone phoned Jeff to tell him that Fred had one of his mugs in his window.

Bit more

JUSTICE DONE AT LAST

Reproduced from Woodsmoke 1995

When an 18 year old private, Fred Dobson lost his clasp knife in France a few days after D-Day, the Army docked one shilling and six pence out of his pay of 15 shillings.

Fred was a bit miffed about this, so when a friend visiting Normandy found a rusty old knife on the battlefields near to Caen, Fred, now a mature 69 year old antique dealer, and member of the Abbots Langley Scout Group since boyhood, immediately recognised it as the one he had lost, firstly because like his own knife, it had no War Department mark, and secondly by a broken blade which he says happened when opening an ammunition box (more probably a crown bottle top_.

All this happened around the time of the VE-Day euphoria, so, as a joke, Fred decided to ask for his money back; and lo and behold he got it.

A cheque for £1.20 duly arrived from the Headquarters of Land Command, that is to day 7½p (one shilling and six pence in old money) for the knife and the rest as postage.

As Fred said "I was just an ordinary soldier doing by bit – but I wanted by money back."

The knife and letter have been passed to the curator of the Gordon Highlanders own Museum in Aberdeen, the regiment with whom Fred served, where they will be put on display.

Incidentally, there is no truth in the rumour that Fred has written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer asking for the return of all the Tax he has paid Yet.



Fred Young

1930 – 2004

Yet another sad moment for Abbots Langley Scout Group – Fred Young has died . I have had the pleasure of knowing Fred for most of my life – 40 years at least.

Fred was an energetic, enthusiastic and long term supporter of our Group. Having been born and bred in the village, he has always been a local lad. In 1962 he was asked by a childhood friend, who ran our 2nd cub pack, to ‘come along and help’. Due to the popularity of Scouting in the village Fred soon agreed to start a third cub pack. ‘C’ pack was born and it thrived, I had the pleasure of helping him as part of my ‘leadership training’.

After 10 years as a leader Fred suffered his first heart attack causing him to retreat, for a time. The strength of the man saw an amazing recovery and he returned to the Group as Treasurer, progressing to Chairman – at which he excelled. I became Group Scout Leader knowing I would have the total commitment and support of Fred.

Financially and more importantly Scouting in Abbots Langley became stronger, even though this was a difficult time – youngsters had far more opportunities to distract them from the strengths Scouting offered – we survived.

Fred, not just as Chairman, added hours to his dedication. Fund Raising was vital, the Group needed to add canoes, tents, all sorts of activities, to encourage and keep the youngsters we worked for, interested and regular members of the Group. Jumble sales, Christmas markets and village carnivals all provided the opportunity to raise money. Fred was there in the thick of it – supported by his family throughout his life. Grace his loving wife, Gary his son, Leslie his daughter and their families together with Fred’s sisters and many other relatives all supported the Group – thank you.

As you can see and read Fred had a magnetic personality that had the skill of attracting help from all age groups.

Another setback, more heart problems led him back to hospital and major surgery. Not a long-term problem! – back and active he was with us again, if not more enthusiastic.

Fred was awarded the ‘Thanks Badge’ the highest award given to a non-uniformed member of the Scout Association, for his total and committed dedication to the Group.

Sadly his biggest quality – his heart, let him down yet again, this time on the golf course – which he loved. Thank you Fred, we will all remember and miss you.

Reproduced from Woodsmoke 2004

Written By Pete Lythaby



Grace Young

1930 – 2004

Grace's scouting started with running a Brownie pack in Bedmond. She then became involved with Abbots Langley Scouts when her husband Fred became a Cub Leader well over 40 years ago, supporting him and taking boys on pack holidays.

Grace joined the Ladies Guild in the early days and later when Fred was Chairman of the Group and Grace was on the Executive Committee she became involved with the fundraising.

When you called into Grace and Fred's home their sitting room would be covered with half completed jigsaw puzzles and games all being checked for the next fund raising event, and as they lived at the top of Tibbs Hill they were always happy to be an extra call for the Boxing Day walkers.

In the 1980s when Scout funds were in the red, fundraising had to be stepped up with extra "Good as new Mornings", Sunday Car boots, Double Jumble and Christmas Market, mall with Grace in Charge. She even managed to talk many of her and Fred's family to help at events.

Grace loved collecting things for Scout events and could always be relied on to have box of crackers and a raffle prize tucked away in a cupboard. When Grace became less mobile she was still keen to come to the jumble sales and would sit in her chair by the door taking the money and laughing with the many friends made over the years. Some of the last conversations I had with Grace were that she missed her jumbles, and Abbots Langley Scouts will miss Grace Young.

Written for Woodsmoke Nov 2010 by Lin Lythaby



Derek James
19?? To 1965

Tragically killed in a road accident at Weston Supermare, Somerset on 5th October 1965. He was only 25 and had a scouting record second to none in S W Herts. He joined the 56th in 1950 and became Patrol Leader of the Kingfisher Patrol and Troop leader in 1953.

As a Senior Scout he was the only one that the 56th had and Derek not to be deterred came along to see Fred Dobson and asked to join the Rover Crew. From that day in 1957 he was one of the Abbos. He gained the coveted BP Award and the first to be gained in S W Herts and the 2nd in the whole County of Hertfordshire. He went on many pot holing expeditions and was responsible for four overseas expeditions by the Rover Crew visiting some twelve different continental countries. During this time he was Assistant Scoutmaster and then Assistant Senior Scoutmaster and finally Rover Crew Leader with the 56th SW Herts. For a time on the service Crew of Phasels Wood and then onto the Lees Wood Committee, then he became Deputy Director of Lees Wood. In 1965 he was appointed District Rover Leader.

He was remembered not only for his outstanding contribution to Scouting but for the many little happenings the crew enjoyed with him.

Lord Arran Wrote the following tribute:

It is cruel news about Derek James. Of ever there was a young man to who life beckoned it was Derek. He had many things; courage, laughter – how he could laugh! Kindness, and above all a simple inborn decency which showed as much in the way he looked as in the things he did.

It will of course, be for this scouting that he will be most remembers. It was his art, his life and his mission, and he gave himself of it. But for those who knew him a little there are the more personal things to recall – his unassailable cheerfulness, his joy in his impending marriage, and crowing everything, his deep love for his family.

Those of us who saw him on Friday night at Phasels Wood striding gaily into the future from which he was not to return, will be deeply sad. It seems such a wanton waste. And yet, perhaps it is not quite so sad, for when a job has been well and completely done, who shall say that all has been in vain?

Gerald Poole

It was through their son Alan, a member of the group that Gerry and Ada became interested in Scouting, some time after the couple had made their home in Parsonage Close, Abbots Langley in 1946 after Gerry was de-mobbed. It started when Ada was proposed on the Group Committee in 1957 and when the concern for that year came along, she roped in Gerry for help, and they became active from there. Although it appeared that Gerry was a member of the Cubs for a few months in the early 1930's but then had a break until his son Alan was enrolled.

In 1957 Gerry helped with the Cubs and was presented with his Assistant Cubmasters warrant in March 1961. In 1958 he joined the BP Guild and in 1959 with Ada and their two sons attended the family camp held at Balls Park.



**Ada Poole
1924 to**

In about 1954 the all male committee and helpers of the 1st Abbots Langley Scout group decided to form the Abbots Langley BP Scout Guild. Some ladies went along to join and were told it was for men only. So not to be out done, Rose Baldry and about 30 others, including Ada formed the Ladies Scout Guild. A year later she joined the Scout Group committee. Also at that time her two sons Alan and Brian were joining the Cub Scouts and Ada went along to help.

Camping was not strange to Ada as she had camped several times before when she was a member of the Camp Fire Girls and when she became an unwarranted officer (Rikki) of the Cub Pack in 1960 she camped with them often. In 1961 the whole family including their sons Alan and Brian, camped with the group in Liechtenstein. She took over the leadership of A pack when Ian Turner left in 1973 and she had three warranted Scouters to help her – Jack Green, John Hewlett and David Edwards, and held the position for 10 years. At the end of this time she did not give it all up, she then became Assistant Cub Leader all over again. All through these years her two sons went into the Scouts and moved up and Ada helped to run and then ran many Whitson Cub Camps on Mansion House farm. She was also involved with taking the Cubs on pack holidays, first at Lees Wood, then at Phasels Wood, and still further to the Isle of Man, then Guernsey and Dorset.

In her spare time she went on Scout Camps at Talybont in Monmouth, and the Lake District. Ada attended the Scout Jamboree in Holland and numerous Scouts visits to Liechtenstein. She also worked with the District Scouts assisting on camps for special needs children. Bryan Sharpe remembers one time in Liechtenstein when the group went on a coach trip and he was left as duty cook. As they were leaving he shouted to Ada “how much rice should I cook”. She shouted back “a medium size mug each”. She was talking cooked rice and he of course scooped out 40 mugs of dry rice. When Ada returned there were 6 or 7 gallons in all the pots Bryan could find and she never let him live it down.

Ada tried to give the boys independence, self sufficiency and individuality and was especially concerned about the shy ones whom she encouraged to be more outward going.

Bill White

Scouting had been one of Bill’s main interests for the most of his life. As soon as he was old enough he joined the 25th Hammersmith (London) Group as a Wolf Cub. Among his special memories is the enthusiasm shown at the rally for the Prince of Wales held at Alexandra Palace, and early impressions of International Scouting gained from a visit to the Empire Jamboree at Wembley in 1924.

When he was 17 he had to give up active Scouting and did not re-establish a close relationship with the movement until he was roped in as Group Treasurer to the Group after the 2nd world war, during which he had been a member of the local Home Guard Unit. When

a branch of the BP Guild was formed in Abbots Langley, Bill was one of the first to join and he never tires of urging members to 'wear their badge' as he himself does on all occasions, and tells them many pleasant contacts he had made through so doing.

He pursued the group to give their backing to the production of a group magazine and the immense amount of work which he as editor and printer put into this project, made Woodsmoke a very live publication with connections all over the world. He received the Thanks badge in 1957.

Bob Fenemore

Bob moved to Abbots Langley in 1953 and his son Tony joined the Cubs working his way through the group and becoming a Queen's Scout. When Bob went to see his son receive his Queen's Scout Award and heard Skip appealing for more help to run the troop he decided to lend a hand. *"In appreciation for all scouting and the 44th had done for Tony"* were the words he used when asked why he had taken out a warrant as ASM.



In 1966 the numbers of scouts had grown so much that the troop had to be split and Bob became Scout Master of Panther Troop. He also took charge of the football team. Brian (Biff) Pleasants took over the troop in 1976 to allow Bob to take up the position of Assistant GSL, and give Keith Moore a hand.

He was given the Chief Scouts Commendation in 1981 in a presentation made by the County Commissioner Freddie De Butts. It was a complete surprise to him and he was a very modest, dedicated and hard working Scouter.

John Lythaby

1945 to 1998

John was born in King Street, Watford and came to live in Prior Close when he was 2 years old. In 1953 he joined the Abbots Langley Cubs and went through Scouts, Senior Scouts and Rovers, gaining his Queens Scout badge in 1963. He became a printer at Odhams, and later a painter and decorator, and married Lin in 1967. His life was his family and Scouting and the effect he had on people was extraordinary. Having gone through the ranks of the group he then went onto the Rovers where Fred Dobson was his Rover Leader. He had supported the furtherance of Scouting in Abbots Langley, and at district level, in a multitude of ways up to the time of his tragically early death at the age of 52.

He helped to build the present headquarters and had had been on the committee of the Group for many years, was a leading figure in all fundraising events, none more so than the jumble sales which have become legendary in the area, and was the person who organised and supervised all matters relating to the Group's minibus.

He became a member of the Scout Guild (later the Fellowship) and in 1980 became Baloo in the Cubs with Akelas Jack Green and Ron Clough for 14 years. He didn't put in for a warrant – couldn't be doing with all the paperwork and red tape. John was a practical man.

He worked with disabled people on the Kytes Estate for 15 years and he was the handyman at the Surgery, he helped put up Peter Tomson's polythene tunnel. He'd always

have a spanner that fitted. He'd move things no one else could. He'd do it or he'd sort it, whatever it was. He was always there fore people. You knew where you stood with John. He was always up front and didn't beat about the bush.

As a committee member he was involved in all fundraising events and organised the Groups many scout vehicles.

He was awarded a Thanks Badge for service to the group.

Viv Lythaby

5 June 1919 to 16 November 2000

Vic was a lifelong member of the BP Guild. He founded the Tote which was the forerunner of the lotto which raised hundreds of pounds for the Group over a considerable time. He also founded a Christmas Club collection scheme which also raised money for the Group. He was a regular at all of the jumble sales, especially making the tea and counting the money and was awarded a Thanks Badge for service to the Group.

Mary Lythaby

21 July 1921 to 12 September 1995

Mary was a lifelong member of the Ladies Guild and dedicated her time to helping the Group through all aspects of fundraising, especially jumble sales and refreshments. She was well known for her bread pudding and apple pies. Vic and Mary married in and were parents to John and Pete Lythaby, both of whom came up through Cubs to become leaders and supporters in their own right.

She was awarded the Thanks Badge for Service to the Group.

Gerald Wilson

25 May 1950 — 16 January 2006

Gerry was Cub Scout Leader for nearly 8 years when he decided to step down due to his deteriorating health. He joined the Scout Association at the age of 23 when he took on the role of Assistant Cub Scout Leader at the 5th North Watford (1st Langleybury) in 1973, a role he filled for 10 years.

He came out of retirement to join the Abbots Langley Group in 1998, and proved to be a great asset, putting in a lot of time and effort for the benefit of the Cubs.





Rose Baldry
14 December 1919 to 2010

Rose was born in Brentford on 14th December 1919. The family moved to Queens Road Watford and then to Harebreaks Watford. She started her schooling at Alexandra school, but then the family moved to Abbots Langley in the High Street and then to the new houses, at that time, in the Crescent. Rose then started at the village school in Abbots in 1932. On leaving school she got a job with Gravestock's the Butchers, then a better job at the Ovaltine factory. After a short break in work she became a cashier for Simon's the Butchers and finally she almost ran the Kings Langley Post Office. Rose married Arthur in September 1939. Her father had said that there would have to be a war before he would let her marry him. Four weeks later war broke out. Arthur joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and served in Italy for most of his time.

Rose and Arthur had a boy Michael in 1943 and moved to the top of Tibbs Hill in 1954. Michael had joined the Cub Scouts and so Rose began to support the Group with gusto! She became devoted to Scouting. In 1954 the supporters of the group had a meeting to form a Guild, Rose turned up and was told that this is for Men only. But a year later Rose had a meeting and formed a Guild for Ladies only, and it still meets to this day. Fund raising cake making, tea making and helping with the construction of our present HQ, Arthur and Michael laid and fixed 19 tons of tiles to the roof.

At the stone laying of the new HQ Ralph Read of the Gang Show fame was asked to do the honour and Rose had him home to lunch. She was very proud to have been asked. On one of the Guild weekends away she met the Chief Scout Sir Charles Maclean and shook his hand and swore that she would never wash that hand again, but I think that she did.

Rose finally fell victim to dementia. I visited her occasionally, in a very nice and comfortable nursing home in Rickmansworth. Rose the great organizer, fundraiser and supporter, but most of all, you could be sure that she was always full to the brim with FUN.

Reproduced from Woodsmoke November 2010
Written by Bryan S. Sharpe, Chairman

Pete 'The Legend' Linskey

22nd September 1959 to
8th November 2012

Reproduction of an Article in The
Villager January 2012

It is with regret that I write about the untimely passing of the legend that was Pete Linskey, who, always full of life, collapsed on 9th November at the top of



Egg Farm Lane whilst riding his bike but died later in Watford General. It is particularly poignant that in his hour of need a young lad of 18, Lewis Scott of Summerhouse Way, also out riding with his friend Jack Backoke, came to his aid. Lewis called the emergency services when he saw Pete fall from his bike and gave him CPR to keep him conscious until the ambulance arrived. A commendable action that gave Pete a fighting chance of survival.

Pete's family moved to Abbots Langley when he was very young, and he attended Divine Saviour and St Michael's School and was a choir boy at St Saviours Church. He had various spells in hospital in his earlier life and whilst recovering from operations on his feet and he was allowed to watch the Abbots Langley Scout group climbing on the wall they had built on Mansion House Farm. They taught him how to belay from the ground and within weeks he was shouting commands and instructions

On joining the Venture Scouts, Pete and five others successfully climbed Kinder Scout in about 6 inches of snow and later completed the Lyke Wake Walk of 39.5 miles in 15 hours 50 minutes. Soon after his 21st birthday Pete took over running the Venture Scout Unit and later became its Leader for many years, although not taking out a leader's warrant. His trained team came 5th in the Peak Assault competition which was a very big achievement. More recently Pete has been a very live member of the Scout Fellowship, never missing a Boxing Day walk where his rendering of the Music Man and Oh Sir Jasper will be greatly missed.

His philosophy in life was that work should fit around his weekend activities. His love of the outdoors took him climbing, although he fell at one point and broke his back. Undeterred after doctors told him he shouldn't climb, he took up canoeing instead!

In 1991 he decided to turn the hobbies he enjoyed so much into a business teaching others the things he loved most. He successfully built up "Out of Town Action Sports" (OTAS) over the last 20 years based at Phasels Wood and the watersports section at the Rickmansworth Aquadrome teaching and instructing schools, clubs, scouts and corporate companies in climbing, abseiling, orienteering and canoeing amongst others. Thousands of children have benefitted from his teaching and expertise and he always tried to help those who struggled to achieve their full potential.

The funeral was held on 22nd November and attended by well over 200 people. Representatives from each group of the District Scouts lined the road as the funeral procession left the church for the graveyard. An old scout friend flew in from Australia

particularly to attend and hundreds of well wishes were received. His parents Mary and Alf were extremely proud of Peter and his many achievements. Pete and his partner Pauline were in the process of buying a house in Greenways to start a new chapter in their lives and she would particularly like to thank everyone for their love and support in dealing with the sudden loss. A facebook page, petelinskey1tribute was set up in his memory for people to share stories and here are some of the comments posted.

“Pete you were one of the good guys. I learnt so much from him about being tolerant and seeing the good in everyone. I hope to pass some of the things you taught me on to my children and others.”

Pete was an inspiration to me. Such a great person, always friendly, always laughing. You made the children laugh and they looked up to you, as I did.”

“Peter has been a friend for the last 20 years. He has always been a rock, a mate, someone special. Someone I only managed to see a couple of times a year, but the times were always memorable, unforgettable times. He has left a big hole in lots of lives, far too early. Truly loved and missed by all your ski mates.”

“Pete has been a true friend for 34 years, he seemed to like, love and know everyone. His culinary skills were also unique. He showed me that you could make Duck a L’Orange using a chicken and half a jar of marmalade. But if you needed help Pete would always somehow be there.”

“Pete was a lovely guy and helped to teach me lots in the short time I knew him. He really knew how truly lovely a simple walk in a beautiful place could be.”

“If you spent just a couple of hours with Pete you would come away with a lasting memory.”

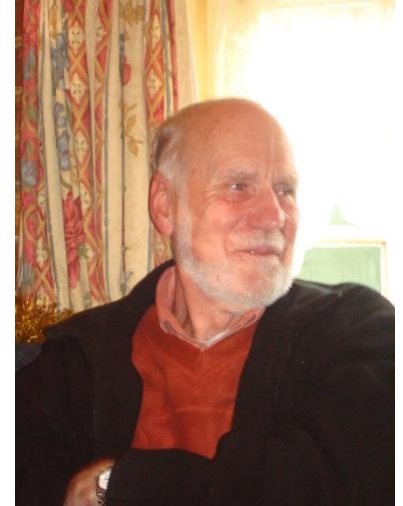
Pete was a strong man with a heart of gold. He always had time for people and was always keen to learn. He did a lot of work that people didn’t notice he was doing. He will be missed by not only his family, friends and partner, but the community as a whole.

Pauline Styles

Bryan Sharpe

Not quite a native of Abbots Langley, Bryan was born in Hatfield in 1937. His parents were then licensees of the Bull at Stanborough. On Independence Day in 1939, they took over the Compasses at Trowley Bottom and Bryan was here to stay, apart from a couple of year National Service in the RAF.

After attending the Convent School on Kitters Green from four year old, Bryan moved to Garston School when he was eight. His great friend at that time, Douglas, was a London evacuee whose mother worked for Lady Motion at Serge Hill and both the boys spent a lot of time roaming around her estate. One day they came across a camp of Cubs from the 9th South West Herts Group (now the 1st North Watford). They were invited to join in the fun, and then to stay the night in the camp.



When Bryan got back home after the weekend and told his mother he wanted to join the Cubs. Whilst in the Cubs, Bryan recalls that the Cub Leader, Wally Smith, who was recently demobbed and an amateur boxer, had one game for the boys to play which might be frowned on these days. The pack owned a box of assorted boxing gloves, which was put at one end of the room. Each Cub then had to run round, grab a glove, put it on, run past the kneeling Wally and punch him on the chin; getting a telling –off if you didn't hit him hard enough.

On reaching eleven, Bryan moved on to Leggatts Way School, then the nearest Secondary School, with boys upstairs and girls on the ground floor. As there were two Sharpe's in the class, one with an 'e' and one without, his nickname at this time became *Sharpe E*, hence *Sharpee*. He also had to leave the Cubs, of course, and joined the Abbots Langley Scout Troop, becoming a member of the Lions Patrol, with Roger Flint as Patrol Leader and Keith Moore as Second. Although never a badge-seeker and obtaining no awards, Bryan gained much pleasure from the Scouts as well as acquiring a lot of useful skills. He succeeded Roger as Patrol Leader.

After moving into the Senior Scouts at fifteen he had his first experience of caving, when a keen caving friend of Butch's led an expedition to Somerset. Although he was told that most people give up caving after three years, Bryan persisted for about fifteen. Butch was then doing a lot of the organising for the Seniors, in the absence of the Leader due to his wife's illness. During the next few years, the Abbots Langley Group became acknowledged experts in caving in the South East. Bryan still has his log book of their many expeditions dating from 1955. A rock climbing club in Slough also gained him as a member.

After leaving school in 1952 at the age of 15, Bryan worked for two years as a commercial traveller for a company which imported china, pottery and glass. This took him all round the country, extending his map reading and navigational skills and he was often away for four or five week stretches, staying in hotels – a new and useful experience.

At eighteen in those days, Scouts became Rovers until they reached twenty five. But young men were also conscripted into the Services at eighteen. After initial training in the RAF,

Bryan was stationed at Bassingbourn in Cambridgeshire, concerned with aeroplane refuelling, and rising to the rank of Senior Aircraftsman. During the weekly sports afternoon on Wednesdays, keen motorcyclists like him (AJS 500) would take off ostensibly for a rally – which often seemed to bring him through Abbots Langley – returning to base very early Thursday morning. When he had found sufficient potential passengers to help cover petrol and some maintenance costs, a car replaced the motorbike.

On demob, Bryan had a succession of jobs in various local factories before deciding – at twenty six – to go for a trade, and becoming an apprentice carpenter, whereupon he was appointed foreman before completing his apprenticeship.

To return to the Scout Group, Bryan gained much more from being in the Rovers, and especially valued having known Jack Botwright, the Leader. At that time the Movement was much more allied to the Church and the Rovers had to do a vigil but Bryan told Jack that he could not participate in this as he was an atheist. Jack said that Bryan could be dispensed of this duty but they still wanted him in the Rovers – that he was NEEDED. He became the custodial of Jack Botwright's collection of photos and other Scouting memorabilia, later joined by that of Frank Hoadly and Fred Dobson.

He helped launch the canoe section by building its first canoe from a kit, and also helped when needed in the running of the various Scout and Cub units, known in the Cubs at that time as Baloo. Becoming involved with both the District and County Scouting, Bryan promoted caving and was one of the instigators of the Annual Peak Assault as well as the District Green Beret Scout Competitions. In the 1960s as a member of the International Scout Club which met monthly, he was able on one memorable occasion to chat informally with Lady Olave Baden-Powell and kiss her hand. Although he helped run many sections, Bryan never became warranted as he was an Atheist, but he would have liked to have been a Scout Leader. In those days there was a prayer said before and after each scout meeting.

Fred Dobson recorded in the Woodsmoke
31st March 1966 will undoubtedly be a sad and memorable day for the Crew as Bryan Sharpe, one of the County's most active Rover Scouts, leaves the Crew (perhaps a few years overdue officially). But not, thank God, leaving the Group. Bryan has been a tower of strength to the Rover Crew and myself. His service has been immeasurable. For many years now most of the more adventurous activities undertaken by the Crew, potholing especially, have had an ensured success because Bryan was going. It's become a sort of password "Is Bryan going?" if he was and he nearly always was going, then others would join in immediately, and furthermore Skip and I would rest contented knowing the expedition was in good hands.

Thank you Bryan for your years of help.

By the 1970's Bryan had been teaching rock climbing in Derbyshire and East Grinstead and on the climbing wall they had built themselves at Lees Wood as he was a member of the Slough Climbing Club.

As he was then a skilled carpenter Bryan was involved in the building of the HQ in 1970 which took up a year and a half of his life.

Having worked for a number of builders, in 1976 he set up his own company. And In 1977 he was married, bought a house in Marlin Square and within a year had three children. All of this took up quite a bit of his time. Eight Sharpe's have been through the Scouts altogether, his four children, two grandchildren, Bryan himself of course, and now his daughter in law, Lisa who is a Beaver leader. Is this a record?

In the 1980s the Executive Committee was a very closed affair and only people who were invited could join the inner circle. Three people were offered up for election to the committee and as there were only 16 allowed on the committee and they had received 18 nominations there had to be a vote on the matter. Bryan's wife was voted onto the Executive along with Jane Dunstan and from there on, things slowly started to change.

Fred Young was the Chairman and Bryan was asked to become the Vice-chairman. In 1999 when Fred stepped down, naturally Bryan took over. Since this time Bryan has been involved in all aspects of the Groups activities from supporting camps, Green Beret, fundraising, Fellowship activities and maintenance of the headquarters. He proposed putting solar panels on the roof of the HQ to bring it into the environmentally friend 21st century, and worked on the microgeneration project with Clive Winder and Pete Linskey, which went live in July 2011.

He received a Medal of Merit from Roger Sands in 2003 and a 40 year Long Service Award.



Photograph taken at the centenary dinner dance 2009 showing some of the Groups memorabilia.

As he was getting older Bryan felt he should pass the Chair onto a younger man in the guise of Michael Benson who spent a year shadowing him in his duties. Bryan retired as Chairman at the AGM in 2012 but could not attend the meeting as he was convalescing at the Hospice of St. Frances in Berkhamsted.

He died two years later on Friday 4th April 2014. That evening the Fellowship had planned a history talk on Bedmond to be given by John Noonan, and as this seemed dear to Bryan's heart they felt it was only fitting that it should still go ahead.

PRESENT DAY PEOPLE

Clive Winder

It was in 1997 after an appeal by the Scout Master, Paul Seekings for more parental support, that Clive volunteered to referee an evening of Troop football held at the Watford Leisure Centre in which his son Jamie was taking part. Showing a keen interest, he began assisting with other scouting activities and the rest is history. He became Assistant Scout Leader and Nicola Butcher began assisting him on the Thursday evening sessions. Typically Clive threw himself into the role and kicked the Troop into shape with programme planning, greatly assisting Russell in his role as Acting Scout Leader.

In 2000 Clive Winder took on the role as Scout Leader, later becoming also the Group Scout Leader as there was no one else to fill the position.



Aisling and Michael Benson



The “dynamic duo” of Aisling and Michael began their involvement with the group when their son Dominic joined as a Cub. Their second son Jonathan joined shortly after with the third, Gregg bringing up the rear. They were always there to support their sons in events and assist on the scout evenings, but this did not seem enough for the pair.

Michael, a self employed carpenter was really useful to the group for making all manner of camp gadgets, gateways and paraphania.

Structures would appear out of nowhere, and the most memorable were the gates for the Centenary camp of 2007 and the Batman and Robin from the Herts 100 of 2009, which were later used for the centenary dinner and seemed to pop up at every event. He helps with the maintenance of the HQ, on the canal barge trips and summer camps.

Both became members of the Scout Executive Committee in 2002 and have helped run camps and organise events.

Aisling took on the role of Assistant Cub Leader between where she kick started the badge system enabling more Cubs to achieve awards. There were no Silver Scout Awards before Aisling arrived.

After the Fellowship Christmas meal in 2010 Michael foolishly agreed to take over as Chairman from Bryan Sharpe when he decided to retire. And so as Vice-Chair for a year, learning the ropes, Michael took over as Chairman at the May AGM in 2012. Bryan could not be at the AGM as he was unwell but gave Mike these words of wisdom.

“Before I hand over I feel I should advise Mike on some of the happenings one sometimes has to deal with. These happenings always seem to occur after 9 pm at night.

For instance:-

Q. Door was not locked on arrival we have now locked it and gone home?

A. There is a district meeting on upstairs I will now have to go and let them out.

Q. Can't turn off the lights in the gents toilet?

A. Yes they turn off automatically just shut the door and go home.

Q. There is a lady at the front door who would like to join the cubs?

A. Well if she is over 10 years old she has left it a bit too late.

Q. We have fluorescents flashing in the front hall?

A. I don't care where they're from we don't allow any flashing in the HQ.

Q. Bryan there is no toilet paper in the lady's loo?

A. Tell me are you actually in the lady's loo at the moment do you need urgent help?

Q. Bryan I should tell you the tap in the kitchen is whistling?

A. What tune..... no answer.

Are you certain it not a cub stuck under the sink, as there was a scout law that once said a scout should smile and whistle under all difficulties.

These are all genuine happenings and I could go on, but feel these are enough minor warnings for now. So it may be a good idea to turn your phone off after 9 o'clock at night."

Mike Trotman

Group Treasurer for 15 years relinquishing his duties at the AGM in May 2016 to hand over to Peter Serlin. Before that he was District Treasurer for 9 years.

Tony Dabson



ony first joined the Group in 1982 as part of the Fellowship assisting with various scouting activities and with group fundraising events. Tony has been a Section Assistant with the Scout Troop for 33 years, having joined in May 1985 and has attended virtually every week without exception, including helping to plan and organise the meetings. We have an extremely large Scout Troop with 41 Scouts next term. We are one of the few Scout Troops that run a Scout Camp for a week every year and have done so for certainly the last 20 years during my tenure as Scout Leader, and for many years before that. He's supported countless Green Beret's over the years either in his capacity as a section assistant, when he was somewhat younger, but more recently in Fellowship / Active Support, supporting the running of the event with the aerial assault course. Maths tells me that just the 4 hours a week preparing and helping to run a Scout Troop for 38 weeks pa for 35 years is over 15,000 hours. Not to mention 30 years of scout camps for 8 days each time and numerous scouting competitions at weekends.

The scout group run 2 jumble sales, a Christmas Market and a stall at the village carnival every year which raises over £6k pa. Tony has supported virtually every one of those events over the last 30 years again putting in countless voluntary hours for the benefit of scouting. Each jumble sale takes up every evening for a whole week, twice a year.

As a member of Active Support (he was the AS Manager for a number of years) he has supported and continues to support various Group events over the years. The 8 Group Family Camps held since 2000 which have had between 140 and 220 attendees each time and Tony has been the main driver behind all the catering for the event. He has also attended and supported the various County and District events over the last few years such as the Lees Wood and District anniversary camps and the Herts 100.

Tony was awarded the Silver Acorn for his tireless dedication which was presented to him at the AGM by Roger Sands.



Eddie Chalk

Pauline Styles and Rachel Drake



IAN TURNER

When the Turner's moved to Abbots Langley in 1957 Ian was put on the Cub waiting list, but due to the long list, he never became a cub, instead he went into the Scout troop at 10½ and very soon caught up with the rest. When he moved onto Seniors he took a year out but Keith Moore persuaded him to return as a Cub Instructor with A Pack and back into Seniors again and then the Rover Crew. He became Assistant Cub Master with A Pack and when C Pack was formed he joined forces with Fred Young but returned to A Pack as Akela when Keith became GSL in October 1967.



Ian persuaded his father to become involved and he was Group Quartermaster for a while. And both Mr and Mrs Turner were members of the Guild.

Reminiscences in his own words (written in 1996)

"What seems like a life time ago (at the tender age of 18) I was asked to take over as Akela of 'A' pack from Keith Moore who had just become Group Scout Leader for the first time. I had had many happy years before as a Scout and then a Venture Scout and had been helping run the Cub Pack. I think the most memorable times up to then were the trips to Liechtenstein and visiting the other Countries in the Swiss Alps, the Shows the Group held in the Henderson hall and being part of a host family for the two Canadian Scouts who visited England. At this time Scouting was flourishing in Abbots Langley and there were three packs with up to 36 boys in each one.

Although I found the running of the Section a challenge it was very enjoyable and I learnt a lot about organising and running events which helped in later life. I was very fortunate in having a very strong and helpful team of 5 assistants. Gerry and Ada Poole, Kitty Dobson, Janet Ward and Lesley Young (who later became my wife). Their enthusiasm and wonderful ideas for Pack programmes made it so easy. It was around about this time that we first arranged Pack holiday which were a bit different from the local camps, first we went to Guernsey then two trips to the Isle of Man. On all the trips we flew from Heathrow airport.

On the first Pack holiday to Guernsey we stayed in a Tomato packing station about a mile from a glorious beach at L'Angresse Bay. A place I have visited a few times with my family later on. It was here that I first realised how careful you must be in influencing people. One lad said he did not like fish and as this was on the menu this day and we were also having fruit cake for this meal, we suggested he put his fish between two slices of fruit cake and eat the fish as a fish cake. He did this and enjoyed the fish so much that he started a trend on that holiday and others followed him.

The other pack holidays to the isle of man were also great fun, we were fortunate in having a holiday house on the sea front which house the 50 people in our party and the operations for cooking, swimming trips, competitions and walks were run with military precision. Again we were fortunate tin having a large group of helpers and leaders who helped to make the holidays enjoyable for everyone.

The opening of the present brick built HQ for the Abbots Langley Scout Group took place during this period and when you consider that we really roughed it while the built was being

built, with the meeting being held in a marquee at Mansion House Farm. It was such a nice return – to a purpose built building with ample space in the warm, this allowed more scope and ideas for the meetings.

After running the Pack for about 10 years my other interest of football started taking up more of my time and I had to decide between the Cubs or football. Although I was running the Cub Football league in Watford I had also become involved in Sunday Youth Football.

Unfortunately for the cubs, football won, but I did help with one or the Scout Troops for a couple of years before handing my woggle up to rest. Whilst helping with the Scouts I was lucky enough to go on another holiday abroad, this being a mini-jamboree to Holland.

Even though I am still heavily involved in Football, I still have ties with the Abbots Langley Scout Group. Both my mum and mother-in-law are members of the Ladies Guild who provide a lot of fund-raising for the Abbots Langley Scouts and my Father-in-law is the Chairman of the Group.

Writing this report takes me back to the days when Jack Ridgeway used to be the Editor of “Woodsmoke” and he was always chasing me for my copy of the Cub Report for the magazine. I found it very difficult to have my report in on time and I know Keith still has the same problem with other section reports today. Some things never change.

ALAN BOTWRIGHT

It was early in 1943 when Alan Joined the Cubs at 8 years of age and three years later moved up into the Scouts and went on to be the Patrol leader of the Stag patrol and then Kestrel patrol.

15 years of age saw him in the Senior troop and in mid 1952 he was accepted as a Rover Squire and at 18 was invested into the Crew. After being discharged from the RAF in April 1956 he re-joined the activities of the Crew and 5 months later he took out his ACM warrant. It was on 7th September 1957 he became fully fledged and received his Cubmasters warrant and took over running the Cubs ‘B’ pack from Gladys Staines, and was assisted by newly warranted Assistant Cubmasters Heather White and Evelyn Dawson.

Alan married Cynthia Killminster on 28th March 1959 at Christchurch in Hampshire. It was reported in the Woodsmoke of July 1959 that the Group belatedly presented them with a barometer and half a dozen tumblers as a wedding present.

Mrs Cynthia Mary Botwright nee Killminster

Cynthia moved to Bushey in 1956 from Bournemouth, Hampshire and was introduced into Cubs by a friend, where she held a warrant as ACM of 48th S W Herts pack for two years and it was at the Cracknell Shield competition in 1957 that cupid shot his first arrow.

Alan was the Cub Leader of the ‘B’ Pack of the 44th South West Herts Group, as we were called at the time. As in many a “Scouting” marriage, Cynthia was true to form and took out a warrant as the Assistant Cub Leader three months after their wedding at the 44th. In the latter 1960s she moved to the 1st Apsley Scout Group as Cub and then Assistant Cub Leader.



Cynthia attended 3 PTCs in the county and passed part 2 of the Wood Badge. She died in 2017.

Jack “Bot” Botwright

Born over the border in Bucks, Jack was an animal lover and tee-totaler. His earliest memory of scouting was when he saw Baden-Powell, the Chief Scout reviewing a District Scout Parade in Ashridge Park in 1912. In 1914 he came to Abbots Langley and on 20th July 1927 he spoke at a meeting of boys to consider the starting of a Scout Troop locally. It was at this meeting that he met Mr Macdonald, the founder of the Abbots Langley Troop.

Elected to the headquarters committee in November 1932 he was present at the opening of the Group Headquarters in May 1933. Invested as a Rover Scout in January 1941 he also held the office of Troop Treasurer until 1956. He helped run the Troop in the absence of Skip during war service with Bill Ellis and Leslie Seabrook.

Warranted as Assistant Rover Scout Leader in June 1948 and then Rover Scout leader in February 1951 he held that office until November 1955 when he became Assistant District Commissioner for Rovers of S. W. Herts.

Jack Gentle

It was on 1st June 1944 that Jack joined the Troop at the age of 14. By the end of 1946 he was a patrol leader, and then became a Senior Scout. He was active in this section until he was called up for National Service in 1948 when he was also Invested in the Rover Crew. Whilst in the RAF's he was a member of the Yatesbury RAF Crew.

In 1950 he was back with Abbots, and went with the Group to Holland for summer camp (it was a summer camp 3 years previous, also in Holland, that the members of the Crew took this young PL out for a treat for passing some important exam or suchlike).

In 1953 he was promoted to the rank of Rover Mate. For many years he served the local parish Church, first as a choir boy and then as a Server. His hobbies were Astronomy, Photography and radio. He built many radio sets, and was official Crew photographer. He also built a “whacking great telescope to see the stars *a bit better*”

Audrey Gentle nee Stone

Audrey was Akela of the Abbots Langley Cub Pack B but started Cubbing in 1951 in Nottingham. She came to Abbots Langley in February 1954 in time to be roped into the annual show and during the rehearsals met Jack Gentle. They were engaged on January 22nd 1955 and they were married on 11th February 1956. The Cubs formed a guard of honour outside St. Lawrence's Church for the couple. Audrey was Akela until June 1956.

In 1957 the Troop suffered a blow when Jack took up a new post at Bracknell, Berks after receiving a BSc and they moved away. Jack had been a member of the group since first becoming a scout and an especial pillar of strength to the Rover Crew, and Audrey had been a keen Cubber.

The Rovers organised a farewell evening for Jack at the traditional Boxing Day venue of the Holly Bush. A party of 20 Rovers and old scouts arrived by various means. Dobbie (Fred Dobson) had set a sickening pace of 14 ½ knots, negotiating the narrow winding lanes with superb skill. Bryan Sharpe's old jalopy not content on dipping its headlights to the approaching traffic, dipped its wings also! However, as he had finished his time in the RAF

presumably this phenomenon would not continue in the future. At the end of the evening Fred Dobson placed a chain of office around Jacks' neck, proclaimed him the Mayor of Potters Crouch and handed him an illustrated, framed citation. The press were there in the guise of Bill White whose badge of office consisted of a slice of stale bread upon which was engraved the word PRESS.

Doug Read

When Doug. joined the Troop in 1930 he didn't have far to go to Troop meetings as they were held in his father's loft, under the leadership of Scoutmaster MacDonald, and later on at the HQ opposite his house with Monty (S.M. Montague).

He held the office of Hon. Secretary of the Group Committee and Secretary of the Abbots Langley branch of the B.P. Guild., and Chairman of the Hertfordshire B.P. Guild. The war years saw him in the uniform of the Beds and Herts Regiment as a Quartermaster and he saw service in the Middle East, India and Burma.

These facts are of course only the bare bones. Doug did a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes with socials and other functions. He was stage manager at the annual shows, a very energetic job, and he was also responsible for the issue and sale of the tickets.

KEN HARRISON

took over as Scout Leader in October 1975

Mr E. Beaumont, Lay Member

It was in 1927 that a group of people connected with the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Abbots Langley gathered together and decided to assist in the formation of a Troop of Boy Scouts under the leadership of Mr Alan Macdonald. Mr Beaumont was among these good folk (who also included Mr F. Usher, Mr F.E. Hince and several members of the Flint family) and the 25 years he served on the Group Committee form which he only retired in 1956 leaving room for younger blood.

He reminisced about the first days of the committee, how many different functions were organised and of the continuous effort to raise money. He said that the biggest thrill he had was when instructions were given to Mr Flint to start the building the Scout HQ. Mr Beaumont did his bit quietly behind the scenes keeping the HQ clean, repairing chairs and tables, putting washers on the taps and any similar jobs that came his way. It was not a proper Jumbler Sale without his cheery personality at the door collecting the two pences, and later calling for offers for the 'white elephants' which remained..

Mr Beaumont was born in Watford and was educated at Beechen Grove and Watford Fields schools, afterward being on the maintenance staff at Leavesden Hospital for 40 years, after which he retired.

During the Great War he served in France with the Essex Regiment. Mr and Mrs Beaumont were married at Oxhey Parish Church and continued to live in Watford for a time, moving to Abbots Langley in 1910. Mrs Beaumont was always interested in the welfare of the Scout Group and in the early days she served on the separate Ladies' Committee which existed. They had one married son who lived in Watford and one daughter Molly, who was a very popular Akela for many years before marrying Frank Hoadly and becoming Mrs Skipper.

In recognition of this good services to Scouting Mr Beaumont was presented with the Thanks Badge at a Parents Party as he was a founder member which a record to be proud of.

Mr B. Flint

As a layman to the movement, Mr Flint had a record to be proud of. For a quarter of century before 1955 (all but 2 years) he served on the Group Committee and in 1938 was made a Trustee. He was elected Vice Chairman in 1948 and in 1952 elected to be Chairman of the Group Committee. A "Thanks Badge" was presented to him as a small gesture in recognition of his work for the Troop.

His two sons Roger and David had both passed through the Troop, Roger being chosen to attend the first post-war Jamboree held in Austria, and both camped with the Troop in Holland.

Mr Flint's association with the Group is really a family one. His mother very kindly lent the money with which the original headquarters was built, and the erection was carried out by his father's firm. His uncle Mr George Flint served on the Committee until April 1951 and his cousin Mr Harold Flint was the Group's first Secretary.

Geoff Funnell ?? TO 31ST JULY 2002

Geoff Funnell and Fred Dobson Taken in about 1938 or 1939

Basil Funnell

Basil's two older brothers, Roland and Bernard were already members of the Troop when Basil started attending meetings. He was enrolled on December 7th 1927, four days after his 11th birthday by Alan MacDonald, the founder of the Troop. He joined five months after the beginning of the Troop and his earliest memory of Max was a pile of blokes on the floor with Mac underneath!



His first camp was at Potten End, where they slept in barns and lofts as the Troop then had very little equipment. The following summer he attended his first proper camp, held at Tottenhoe Beds, with the 5th City of London Troop.

In those days Troop meetings were held in the Wesleyan Chapel schoolroom and Basil's first appearance in a Scout entertainment was as a baby with Les Ridgeway in 'Babes in the wood'. They were actually wheeled on in a pram!

In January 1936 when GSM Frank Hoadly took over the Troop he asked Basil and Bill Johnson to take out warrants as ASMs which they did, and enjoyed many years of Scouting in all its aspects. In 1956 he relinquished his warrant and joined the BP Guild.

HENRY (DICK) TURPIN, GROUP CHAPLAIN

Dick moved to Bedmond in 1951 and became Assistant Scoutmaster of the Abbots Langley Troop and in 1954 fulfilled a long standing ambition, when he gained the Wood Badge. In 1956 owing to increased church duties he relinquished his Warrant and took over the job of Group Chaplain.

BILL GOODE, GROUP CHAPLAIN

“There can’t be too many Scout Groups who can claim to have their own Group Chaplain, especially one who has held the position for some 25 years, and furthermore, the current incumbent to the post only succeeded to it due to the resignation of his predecessor, so the Spiritual needs of the Abbots Langley Group have always been paramount, and always in the best possible hands. One should bear in mind that we are an open Group with allegiance to no denomination in particular and the foregoing facts appear all the more remarkable.”

It was around 1973 that Henry (Dick) Turpin, a Rover Scout in the Group and also the Group Chaplain, retired from the post and an approach was made to Bill who graciously filled the position.

Leslie “Seeds” Seabrook

Mr Seabrook entered the movement in 1921 and became an Assistant Scoutmaster in the 1st Linslade Group, and then Scoutmaster two years later. He took his Wood Badge in 1924. In 1937 he took over the position of local Association Secretary for the NE area of Buckinghamshire and in 1938 became Assistant District Commissioner, and then District Commissioner.

During this time he found that Skip was a fellow traveller on the early train and so the connection with the 44th started, and when at Christmas 1943 circumstances caused him to move into the locality, it was arranged that he team up with Jack Botwright and Bill Ellis to carry on the Group during Skip’s absence on RAF duties.

When Skip returned Mr Seabrook stayed on to assist in various ways, such as Instructor and Badge Examiner or as quartermaster at the annual summer camps.

He possessed the wood badge and for many years has attended the annual reunion at Gilwell Park. Both his daughters are interested in the sister movement – the Girl Guides, the oldest being in charge of the Brownies.

He died in on April 20th 1965 having worked for the Movement for over 20 years

Alan Rees

Alan joined the group as a Cub in 1947 and when he went up to Scouts in 1950 he was a Sixer and had his Leafing Wolf award. On his journey through the Scout Troop he was PL of the Squirrels and Otters and finished up as Troop Leader with his 1st Class and Scout Cords.

In 1953 he went up to Seniors and was soon Leader of the Wingate Patrol, and was awarded the Queen’s Scout Badge in November 1955. Only the second in the Troop to have achieved the award. He brought further honours to the Seniors by leading the Patrol that won the Senior Scout Nigh Expedition.

He camped in Liechtenstein in the summer of 1955, Sweden in 1956 and spent summer camp 1957 (as a Rover Squire) in the Cairngorms with those Melville Basillie and Jim Westwood. On one expedition during this camp they all caught Asian flue and Jim had to do a round trip of 80 miles to bring him back to base.

As s Senior he helped the Service Crew as Phasels Wood campsite for several months with maintenance of the buildings, and with John Wood spent many weekends at Well End, doctoring damaged trees.

Alan was one of the first of the Group to go caving. We went with a party of Seniors to the Mendips under the leadership of Len Edy of Boxmoor Rover Crewe.

Heather White (Akela)

It was through her father Bill White, Group Treasurer and Editor of Woodsmoke that Heather became interested in the Group and started helping with the Cubs in 1954, obtaining her ACMs warrant in 1957. During this time she found that the training she had had in the Brownies and Guides a great advantage and when B pack wanted a new leader in 1960 Heather took over the leadership

Alan Rees and Heather White were married on 13th August 1960 in St Lawrence's Church with the Cubs providing a guard of honour. Alan was a Rover Scout and Heather Akela in the Cubs. The reception was held in the Scout HQ and the Group gave them half a dinner service as a wedding present.

Eileen White

Eileen was born in Abbots Langley and scouting was part of her family life as her father was Bill White, Group Treasurer and Woodsmoke editor. She recalls collating the early issues after her father had cranked the handle of the old duplicator in the front room. She joined the Ladies Guild and helped at the grass track meetings and then became Assistant Cub Leader of C Pack.

Gladys Staines

Miss Staines moved to Abbots Langley in 1928 and having been associated with the Hampstead Girl Guides joined the local Ranger Company. In 1932 in Co-operation with Miss N. Flint (later Mrs G. Dunn) started a Brownie Pack and a Guide company at the Methodist Church.

After becoming a child care worker in 1936 she was later ordained in 1939 as a Sister and in 1941 at an approved school in Cheshire started Cubbing. She gained her Wood badge in 1945 and later moved back to Abbots Langley in 1949 where she assisted Dick Bowsey until his departure to Canada when she was warranted as Akela. Miss Staines spent a long time Cubbing in Abbots Langley and very many members had reason to be grateful for her training when he resigned through pressure of other duties in September 1957.

Alan Dazeley Trustee

Alan was the first Treasurer and 2nd Secretary to the Group Committee. He was elected Treasurer at a meeting in late 1927 and secretary at another in early 1928, succeeding Mr Flint. He held these combined posts for 13 years until 1941 when he was called to the colours. He was one of the original Trustees being elected when the headquarters were opened in 1933 and was presented with a Thanks Badge by the former District Commissioner Mr Alan Emery in appreciation of services given.

When he first took over the Treasurership he was handed the grand sum of 10s 2d by the first Scoutmaster Alan Macdonald and after the first big bazaar in 1928 which raised about £42, he considered the group funds to be very well off.

He took part in the many difficult and prolonged negotiations which the committee had at that time for the purchase of a suitable site for the erection of the HQ and was present when

it was finally decided to purchase the site in Langley Road, for the considerable sum of £90 in those days.

Alan was proud to take part in the hard work of the Group Committee in those days in helping to build up goodwill for Scouts in Abbots Langley and which is flourishing so prosperously today. At one time it was thought that the committee would crack up, especially at about the time that the first scoutmaster met his tragic death, but it was only the courage and grand teamwork of the committee that kept the Group going.

Owing to the pressure of business after the war, he was unable to take up his committee duties again, but remained a Trustee and was proud to do all that he could for the Scout Movement in the limited time he had available.

F.E Hince Trustee

He came to Abbots Langley from Kent in December 1910 and took an appointment as plumber at Leavesden Mental Hospital and retired in 1950 after 40 years of service.

He was the third Chairman of the Group Committee being elected to that position after the death of Mr Frederick Harris in 1933, having been Vice-Chairman since 1939. he retired from this position in 1950 owing to the failing health of his wife.

He held a Thanks badge in recognition of his services. During the war and until 1946 he held the position of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, as well as Trustee. He did enormous work for the Scouts during the war years when the Scoutmaster Mr Hoadly was away, acting as Scoutmaster pro-tem at many of the meetings, assisted at various stages by Mr Seabrook.

Arthur Sidney "Darkie" Miles (named because of the colour of his hair)

Born in Abbots Langley, Arthur joined the Group as a Cub in 1932, and entered the Troop in 1935, later becoming a Patrol Leader. When the war broke out he became of the first Boy Scout ARP messengers in the district, and later joined the Home Guard in which he served throughout the war.

When the Rover Crew reformed after hostilities, Arthur attended a meeting in 1946 and was elected as Crew Treasurer then was later invested as a Rover with Arthur Robinson and Gus Smith.

He participated in all Rover activities until 1950 when he took out an Assistant Scout Master warrant. Attending training courses he finally went to Gilwell for a Wood Badge course and was presented with the badge by Mr Tibbitt ADC at the Group AGM in 1954. He obtained a SM warrant which he held until September 1957 due to pressure of other duties.

Arthur Leach, Scoutmaster

Whilst working in Leverstock Green the Vicar wanted to start a Boy Scout Troop and Arthur was inveigled into the Movement on the understanding that it was for 'only one night a week'. Of course, most of us have heard that one before!

Arthur joined the Troop in 1956 and changed his Warrant from ASM to SM to enable the GSM the chance he had been waiting for – to act in his capacity of GSM and really co-

ordinate the work of all sections for the Group. He received his Wood Badge along with his Warrant in early 1957.

Arthur Gostick

Arthur started his scouting in 1928 in 1st SW Herts Group, the Countess of Clarendon's Own, and they had their own camping ground in Chandlers Cross.

Moving into the Rover Crew in 1932 Arthur had the distinction of being a Rover in the first Crew formed in SW Herts.

During the 1950's Arthur joined the BP Scout Guild and helped the group maintain the Headquarters, running of concerts, social and other fund raising events. He helped with Troop nights to give instructions, easing the burden of the Scoutmaster.

Paul Staines and Jenny Bateman

It was reported in the Sept 1960 Woodsmoke that when Paul Staines married Jenny Bateman in October of that year a total of seven Abbots Langley Rovers will have married lady Cubmasters. The Group gave them a wedding present of a barometer.

Tom and Lily Murray

Tom moved to Abbots Langley in 1954 and introduced himself to Skip and became active in the Group as a member of the BP Guild and Group Committee. He produced some of the annual revues and bingo evening.

His wife Lily also served on the Group committee and their son John joined the group as a Cub.

Miss Lesley Young

Took out a warrant as Cub Leader in 1973 and had helped for 4 years previous to that.

Mrs Toni Pleasants

Joined to help with the Cubs in 1973.

Mr Pleasants

Helps with one of the Scout troops.

Mr John Hewlitt

Joined as a Cub helper in 1974

Mr Peter Sibley

Helped with Cubs from 1973 to ...

Douglas Skull

Was recruited as a helper at a Special Group Meeting in 1974

Eddie Miller

In 1928 Eddie moved to Tanners Hill when his father became a porter at Leavesden Hospital. Eddie spent the next six years in Scouting in Abbots Langley until he was called into the RAF in 1940. Invalided out in 1944 he spent 14 months in hospital and married in 1945 to Maggie who had nursed him during this time. Living in Abbots High Street they had a confectionery and tobacconist shop. Eddie and Maggie were founder members of the BP and Ladies Guild, he spent several years on the Group committee, helped at summer camps and was in attendance on night ops supplying refreshments, including ice cream on the Beacon for the Aspidistra shows. The Millers son Dave was a very active member of the group.

Dave Miller moved from Scout Leader to Cub Scouter in 1974. Then he took on running the Venture scouts in October 1975.

Don Gransby

Don had joined the Movement in 1938 and after going through the Cubs he left and in 1960 was introduced back by Gerry Poole. His role was ACL and then he took over B pack after Heather Rees left in January 1963 and as late as 1974. He was a producer of many of the gang shows.

Pete Lythaby

Akela of 'C' Cubs 1974 who got married on 28th September 1974 to Liz

GSL for 4 years

Pete Lythaby invested into Cubs January 1961

Ron Brothers

He became a member of the Scout Group Committee in the early 1960 and later took on the fete organisation in 1966. His wife Elsa, was one of the founder members of the Ladies Guild and their three children were all in the scouting fraternity at some point.

Arthur W. Edwards

Arthur and his family moved to Abbots Langley in 1953 where his interest in scouting began. His two sons were members of the group and it was during a rather unfortunate time when John his youngest son, in the cubs, had to go into hospital. He was indebted to the trouble that Akeia Keith Moore went to visit his son regularly.

Arthur was nominated for group committee in 1958 but also helped him to run his troop meetings, and he also organised and ran the football team, was a district badge examiner and helped to run camps.

Dave Willett, Norman Edwards, John Woodgate

Leaders of the Venture Scouts 1974

Eric Charlwood

Eric moved to Abbots Langley in 1947 and his son David joined the cub section. Eric then became an active member of the BP Guild in 1954 and served on the Group Committee. He also found time to take on the arduous task of Group Quartermaster

John Hancox (Chil)

John arrived in Abbots Langley in 1964 and became Scout leader about a year later.

Doug Hill ?? to January 2010

He was an Assistant Scout Leader who you could always count on to be there each week which is very reassuring.

Bill Ellis

Bill was about 8 when he moved to Abbots Langley and joined the Cubs under Akela Molly Hoadly. During the war with adult being called up, Bill found himself more or less in charge of the troop until Seeds came along to hold the fort.

When the Group shows started in 1937 Bill was part of the enjoyment, and the first one call "Y Not" was especially put on to raise money for a trek cart which they pulled around the countryside loaded with kit for weekend camps.

Bert Keene

In the early 1950s when Skip wanted an examiner or teacher for the boys who were doing First Aid, his obvious choice was the nearest St. John's Ambulance Man, Bert. This happened for a number of years until 1958 when Skip asked him if he would be willing to serve on the Group Committee. He then served for 4 years by which time his two sons were in the group. In 1960 Bert joined the BP Scout Guild and helped out at many Scout camps. He got involved in the gang shows and maintenance of the building.

Bert's hobby was photography and one night the Rover's had persuaded him to sit for hours in the Dell on badger watch to get some photographs. He took several films of the Group activities, camps fetes and competitions and made a film of Scouting in Abbots Langley.

Keith Penrose and Matt Bryan

Received the thanks badge from Keith Moore in 1970. they had given their services to the group over a long period of time, and at that time been actively engaged in the building of the HQ and giving up their annual holiday to assist with the group camp.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to those who have contributed to this history of the group and

Special thanks to Bryan Sharpe, without whom this book could not have been written. Thanks for all your stories “Sharpie” and giving me the inspiration to undertake the project over these many years!

Scouting for Boys is now in third place in the all time best sellers list, behind the Bible, and the Koran.

All in all it is believed that the total membership over the last ninety years of Scouting (and Guiding) is somewhere in the region of half-a-billion, and that its effects have touched many more.

Today there are 155 countries with internationally recognised National Scout Organisations. There are more than 28 million Scouts, youth and adults, boys and girls in 216 countries and territories. There are six countries where Scouting, to our knowledge, does not exist; in some it would not be allowed. These are: Andorra, People's Republic of China, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar.