

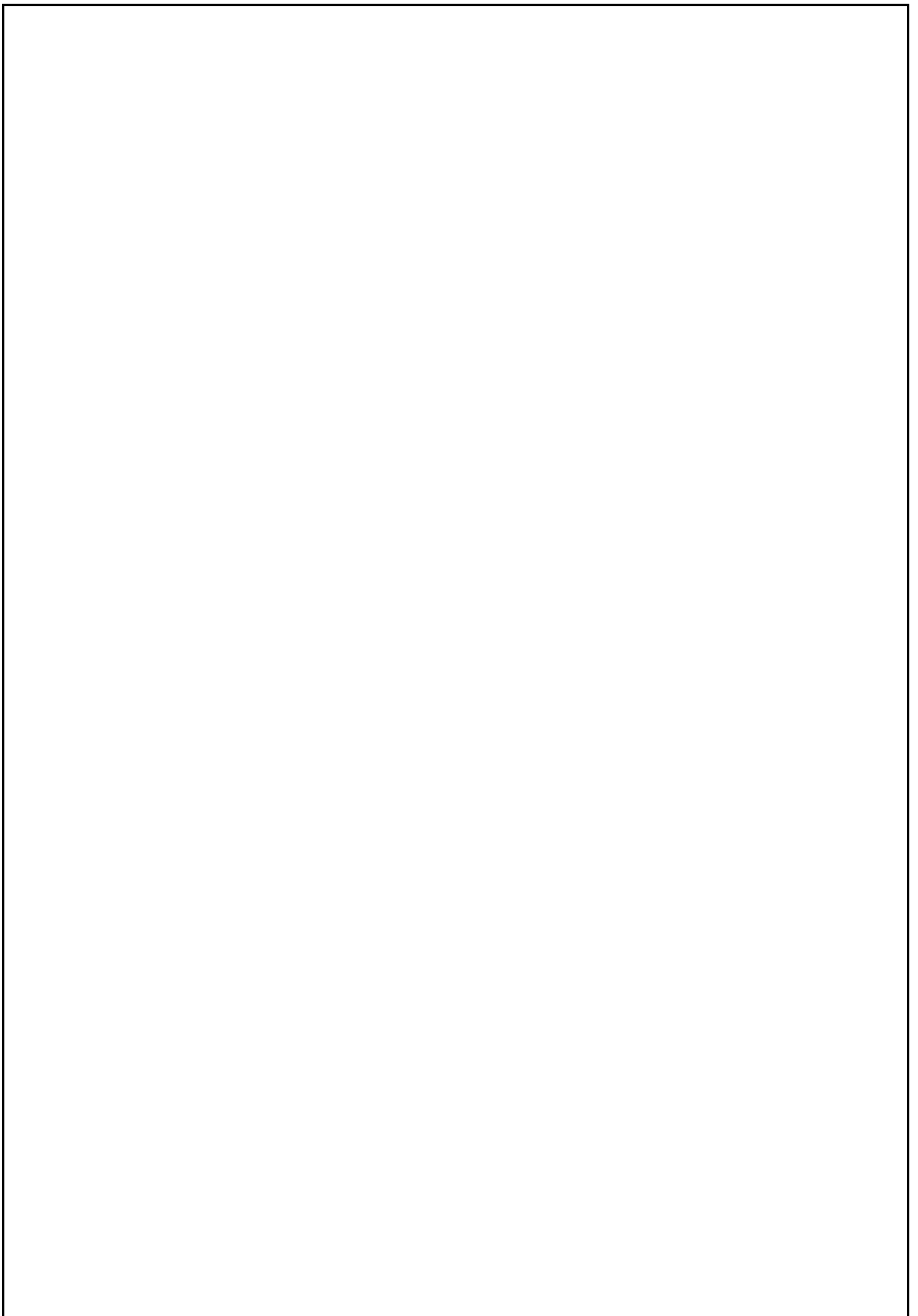
Mishaps and Mayhem

A Brief Social History of the 1st Abbots Langley 3rd North Watford Scout Group

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

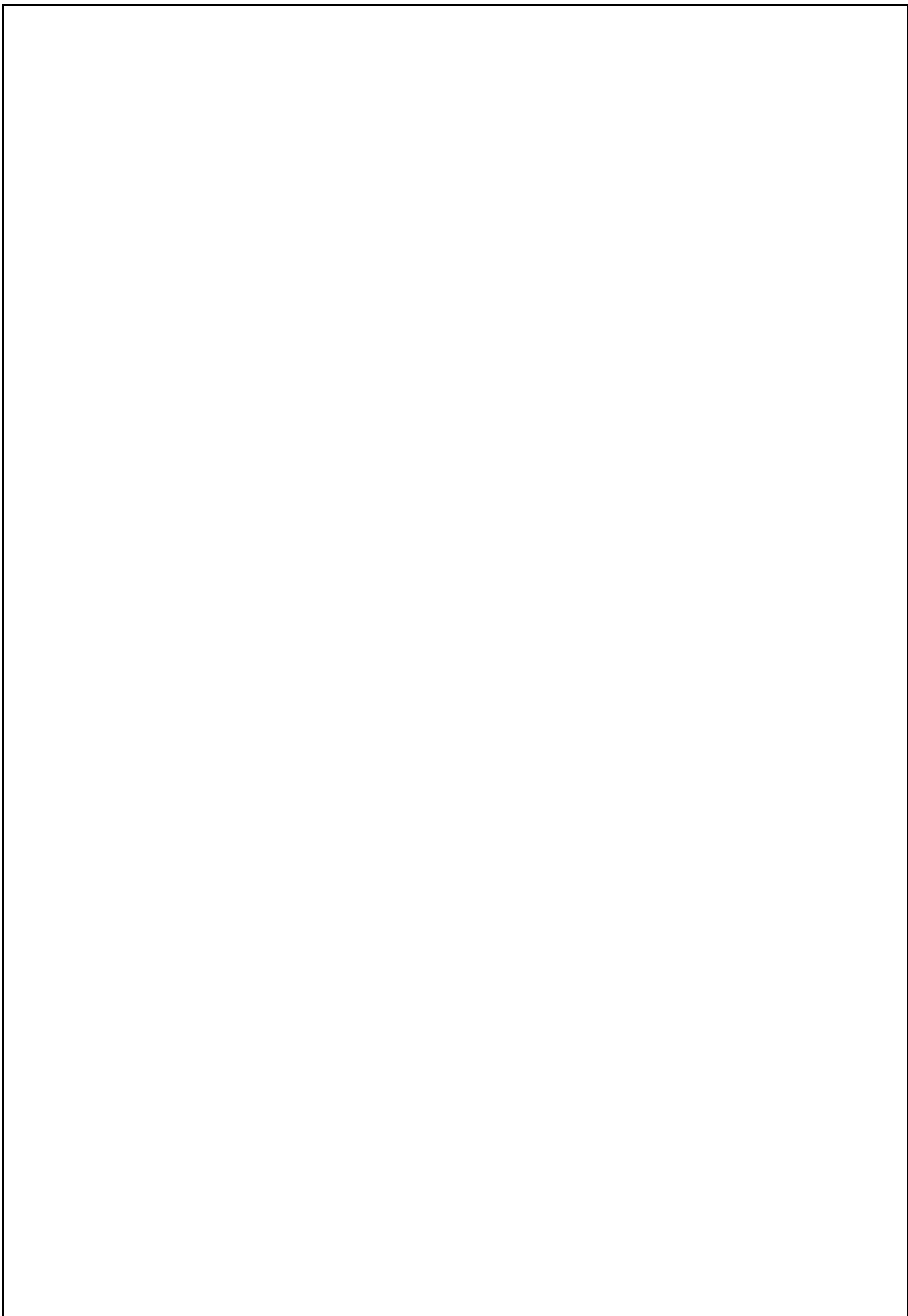


May 2011



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I. Introduction

How many of you have heard the fragmented stories of the happenings at the 1st Abbots Langley Scout Group?

“These are such great memories”

“We should get this written down”

And cries of lots more being bandied about!

So, this is an attempt to bring that knowledge together to present a little picture of what life in Scouting has been like since the Movement started in Abbots Langley.

I have thoroughly enjoyed piecing this information together, and discovered that surprisingly enough, little has changed over the time. There are still

*those “who always help and those who don’t”
problems with the photocopying of the Woodsmoke
the boiler breaking down (again)
chaos loading the vans up for camp ...*

but the group has gone from strength to strength and it is an amazing what a group of people can achieve when they set their minds to it.

Most of the information has been taken from the Group magazine *Woodsmoke* issues dating back to 1954 and anecdotes from the Chairman, Bryan Sharpe. Where copy has been reproduced from *Woodsmoke* it has been presented in a highlighted box.

I hope you will enjoy reading these adventures, and if you have a story not featured, I’m very sorry I had to finish somewhere, but there must be a whole chapter still to be written...

Pauline Styles
Editor

Who hath smelt wood-smoke at twilight?
Who hath heard the birch-log burning?
Who is quick to read the noises of the night?
Let him follow with the others
For the young man’s feet are turning
To the camps of proved desire and known delight!
Rudyard Kipling

Fond Reminiscences of Early Scouting in Abbots Langley

Fred Dobson

Keith Moore asked if I could write a bit about when I was a little boy scout. Write a bit? – I could write a book. I love Scouting and was a natural. I joined at eleven in 1937, at that time scouting was very strong for such a small village, and for boys of the adventurous nature, it was ideal. No homework, no television to distract us, and Abbots Langley our world.

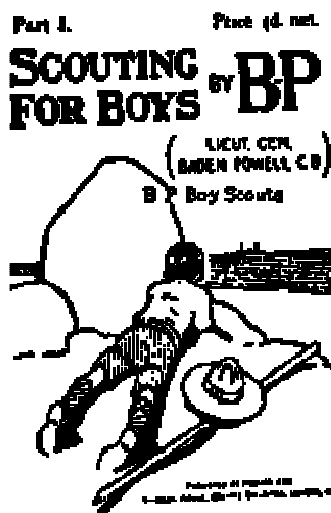
I was a 'Woodpecker' and my Patrol Leader was Clem Sharp (later killed in action in Belgium 1944). There were three Scouters, all single, so they could devote lots of time to the troop. There was plenty of out in Scouting – A Summer camp, Easter and Whitsun Camp, weekend camps and a Patrol Camp. We learnt the Promise and the Scout Law, I tried hard to keep them but failed sometimes, especially with the Scout is clean in thought, word and deed. Like our present Group Scout Leader, Frank Hoadly was a dedicated Scouter. I owe a lot to him. By twelve I could swim in the canal, kill, gut and cook an Oultine chicken or a Bedmond rabbit. By 14 I had a gun and when the war started we camped at Lady Motions in Bedmond where I occasionally mistook a pheasant for a wood-pigeon.

"Why Not" was the title of our Group concert in which one year I was conned into playing the part of Daisy Blunderbus, a ballet dancer. Tickets for the show were 5p, 7½p and 10p. There were Church parades and a Scouts own at Camp, prayers at all meetings, Saturday night socials for parents and supports at 6d, that's 2½p including refreshments. Damn busy time being a Boy Scout. I practised knots, whipping, estimation fire lighting, cooking etc at home in my garden with friends. The First Aid I remember best of all was "run to get help" and I always allowed old ladies to see me across the road.

The war took away the nerve and sense of adventure I had as a teenager, but nevertheless I became Rover Scout Leader, a position I held until the Rovers were disbanded in 1963. With the Rovers I did break the unwritten law of Scouts such as going down the Thames eight in a punt with only 3 inches of freeboard. Going down Eastwater cavern with hemp ropes or climbing Bedmond Television mast at midnight and many more, often remember a Scout "is not a fool".

2. The start of the Boy Scout Movement

After his defence of Mafeking from the Boer troops, Lord Robert Baden-Powell returned to England a national hero. His book *Aids to Scouting*, which was intended as a military training manual, teaching soldiers techniques such as observation, tracking and initiative, he discovered, was also being read by many boys and young men.



So he met with various influential people in youth movements across the country, and was persuaded to write a version of *Aids to Scouting* aimed at teenage boys. *Scouting for Boys* was published in 1908, after an experimental camp on Brownsea Island, Poole Harbour, Dorset, where B-P. tried out his ideas on four patrols of boys from London and Bournemouth. *Scouting for Boys* was initially printed in six fortnightly parts, and sold very quickly.

Baden-Powell had originally intended the scheme outlined in *Scouting for Boys* to supplement the programmes of youth organisations that were in existence at the time, like the Boys Brigade and the Boy's Clubs. But boys who were not already in youth movements also bought the book, and set themselves up as Patrols of Scouts, and quickly found themselves leaders to train them. It soon became apparent that some form of organisation was required to support these Scouts.

Originally he had envisaged Scouting as a movement for boys between the ages of 11 and 18 but as early as 1909 Scoutmasters were facing the problem of younger brothers wanting to join in the fun. Some just turned a blind eye to the age of some of the boys, others formed Patrols and Troops of Junior or Cadet Scouts.

First Recorded Boy Scouts in Watford

In mid February 1908 Alan J Emery had got his friends together in a Patrol for a start on the preliminaries of forming a Troop. They decided to call themselves the *Kangaroo* Patrol. This was the first Patrol of BP Scouts to be formed in Watford, or anywhere else in the geographical area of South West Herts, and their names were:

Alan Emery (Patrol Leader)
Marchant Scrivener
Stanley Dixon
Eddie Davies
Charles Burr
Allan King
Denis Emery

Alan Emery wrote a series of articles on Hertfordshire Scouting in the Woodsmoke copies of 1963 onwards. He recorded that the villages of Abbots Langley, Kings Langley and Langleybury (Hunton Bridge) were early starters in the game of scouting, but as these places were incorporated in a separate local association called the Langley Association they were not absorbed into the SW Herts Association until the early 1930's.

H M King Edward VII gave permission in 1909 to the institution of "Kings Scouts" but unfortunately he died in May 1910 he could see his wish fulfilled. In August of 1910 Patrol Leaders Alan Emery and Harold Collins were each awarded the Kings Scout badge. These MAY have been the first in the District but as yet has not been proven.

In 1910 the villages of Flaunden and Sarratt came under review by the Local Association Executive Committee when it was reported that the scouts in these two villages were beginning to break up as they had been attached to the Kings Langley Committee but were being looked after by the 1st Rickmansworth Troop (Mr Galley). The Langley Scout Association were approached on the matter but as they had intimated that they wished to retain these two villages in their Association the matter was allowed to drop.

At the Local Association Executive Committee Meeting on 22nd June 1914, it was unanimously agreed that all Troops in the Local Association of S W Herts should have an official number and be known by such. They were registered by seniority as the 1st, 2nd, 3rd South West Herts, but they may, if so desired, retain the title by which they were previously known in addition to the new regulation number. There were nine Troops operating in South West Herts at the time, but as already mentioned, the 1st Abbots Langley did not join that alliance until later.

The First Boy Scouts of Abbots Langley

On 15th June 1909 a group of boys, namely B.E. Hill, R. Welland and H.R. Overy, met in Abbots Langley and formed a Patrol of boy scouts under the leadership of the 1st Scout Leader, Mr H C Bonaker, assisted by C. Whittaker and F. Bennett and by Mr Overy of High Street, Abbots Langley. Mr Overy was the village recorder and lived where the Doctor's surgery is now situated and became the leader of the Home Guard in Abbots Langley during the Second World War. An extract from the Owl Patrol is reproduced below and was the 3rd patrol of the Troop at that time so the probable strength of the Troop was 24 Scouts.

Extract from the Owl Patrol log book of 1909

Meeting Thursday 17th June – Patrol to be called the Owls. Knots learned and practised. Fireman's carry practised and Scouts pace done.

Meeting Tuesday 29th June – Shooting, knots, secret signs, signalling up to H.

Thursday July 22nd - A meeting was held this day. F. Coleman, joined July 26th. New leader takes his duties. Marched to Goods Station, posted sentries, practised ambulance and A.R.

Meeting Saturday July 31st at 5 o'clock. Agreed to buy 5 hats, 5 haversacks and 5 jerseys, measured for same. Scouts 3 and 6 went to Watford in the evening and purchased the aforesaid articles. Meeting at 8.30 when the two Scouts returned. Parade in uniform for the first time.

Tuesday August 3rd met at 3.30. Obtained shoulder knots and garters. Numbers 2 and 4 biked to Watford and changed No. 4's hat. Met leader, No. 3 and No. 6 at Munden. Put bikes up, bought eggs, went in wood and made a shelter, posted sentries. No. 4 and leader went and fetched drink from 'Fox with his tenth drawn', lit a fire, cooked eggs and had dinner at 1 o'clock. Tidied up, went to river, paddled, drilled and marched home.

Thursday August 5th, Patrol marched to Bricket Wood and camped. Did work like Tuesday's outing, but not building shelter. No. 3 and No. 6 each lost a mark.

Wednesday August 12th met at 9 o'clock. Marched to Chipperfield, arriving there at 11.15. Posted sentry and prepared dinner. After dinner went and paddled in fish pond. Saw Mr Cane and son. While playing we met Messrs Hill and Davis, who bought the Patrol 2 bottles of ginger beer each. Returned to old camp and had despatching carrying. Had our tea there thanks to Mrs Davis and Mr Hill. Scout No. 4 and Corporal sworn in by leader. Arrived home at 7 pm. This was the first time that the two new members B. Kindersley and H. Kindersley were with us. There Nos. are 5 and 7.

The patrol is now the 3rd Patrol of the 1st Abbots Langley Troop. For a week the Corporal and No. 3 spent their time in camp with the Primrose League Troop at Birchington-on-Sea. They had a fine time, while in the 1st Abbots Langley the members of the Owls have been to Chipperfield where No. 2, 3, 6 ran their mile for Second class tests.

In November **1909** the Troop was inspected by Mr P W Everett, who assisted Baden-Powell with his first Camp in 1907.



Windsor Great Park in July.

In **1910** they all subscribed money to buy a Bugle which was finally obtained for 4 shillings and 5 pence and Patrol Leader R. Welland was voted to be the Bugler. Here they are below with Welland on the right carrying the bugle.

That same year saw the first census of over a hundred thousand Scouts in the UK and in less than three years, Scouting had reached a firm footing, in which the Abbots Langley group were a part.

In **1911** the Group was among 800 who went to a rally attended by Baden-Powell at Kendell Hall, near Elstree. In September of that year Abbots had two groups who attended a Rally at The Grove. They were also represented at the Imperial Rally in

1912

It is interesting to note that during the year of 1912 the South West Herts Local Association Executive Committee met seven times and the average attendance was six made up of four Scoutmasters and the Chairman and Secretary. Very little of importance was dealt with at these meetings but for the record the affairs of the 1st Watford Troop were investigated which resulted in the final winding up of that Troop.

1914 saw the outbreak of WWI and sadly the demise of these first boy scouts.

1916

To address the problem of what to do with the younger brothers, B-P. introduced a new scheme under the title Wolf Cubs based around the Jungle Books of his close friend Rudyard Kipling, the Cubs had their own distinct uniform, badges, motto, sign, salute, etc. But if Wolf Cubs dealt with those too young to be Scouts, what was to be done with those too old to be Scouts? The first Cub Pack in Abbots Langley was formed in 1930.

1917

So just before the end of WWI B-P. set up a scheme for Senior Scouts, which changed its name to Rover Scouts the next year, for anyone over the age of 18, with Outdoor Adventure and Service as the main part of its programme. This was not introduced into the Abbots Langley Group until 1940.

Boy Scouts to the Present Day in Abbots Langley

On the 20th July 1927 the first troop meeting of the present Scout Group was held in the Wesleyan Chapel Schoolroom where 13 boys attended, under the leadership of Alan Macdonald (Mac) and the following month's camp gave them a flying start. Two patrols were formed and first investiture took place in September.

The History of SW Herts Scouting Woodsmoke March 1968 Alan J Emery

When Alan left the 25th S W Herts Group to restart Scouting in Abbots Langley he found himself working in another Local Association, viz Langley & District which had always been a separate district comprising Abbots Langley, Bedmond, Bovingdon, Chipperfield, Flaunden, Kings Langley, Langleybury and Leavesden.

As far as can be ascertained, one District Commissioner had for many years supervised the movement in Langley & District and S W Herts, each district having it's own Executive Committee, Secretary and Treasurer. Scouting appears to have been introduced to Abbots Langley as far back as 1909.

For several years after 1927 attempts were made by the District Commissioner, Mr H. Francis Clarke, to set up an efficient system of working in the Langley & District Local Association, but owing to old prejudices and a difficult isolationism which prevailed, he was advised by the County Commissioner, the late Sir Percy Everett to bring all Scouting activities in the Langley & District under the jurisdiction of the Executive Committee of the S W Herts Local Association. In other words a merger was to be undertaken.

This was officially implemented on 21st October 1932 and in consequence the 1st Abbots Langley Group was allocated a District number and re-registered as the 44th S W Herts (1st Abbots Langley).

The date of Tuesday November 8th 1927 was the first recorded minutes of the First Abbots Langley Scout Troop, held in the Village Room, the meeting being under the chairmanship of the new Scoutmaster Alan Macdonald. The purpose was to elect a committee to assist in the running of the troop which was started in the previous July.

Those elected were:

Mr. H. Flint	Secretary
Mr E. Beaumont	
Mr W.H Chandler	
Mr G. Flint	
Mr H. Hamlin	
Mr F.G Harris	
Mr C. Reader	
Mr C. Sadler	
Mr R. Overy	
Mr R. Payne	

At the following meeting the additional people elected were:

Mr. F. Usher	Chairman
Mr. A. Dazeley	Treasurer

And Mr F.E. Hince appeared as a member in the next year

Alan Dazeley, the 1st Treasurer had the grand sum of 10s 2d and permission was obtained to hire the Schoolroom for Troop meetings. The balance in hand at this time was £14-5s-1d and they voted to purchase a tent for £5. Later a Bazaar realised £38-10s-6d.

Roland and Bernard Funnell were one of the original members of the Troop and they were joined by their brother Basil on 7th December 1927, and one of his earliest memories of Mac was “a pile of blokes on the floor with Mac underneath.” The strength of the troop was 7 but by the end of the year they had expanded to three patrols and early in 1928 the Troop was firmly established with four patrols.

At that time Abbots Langley was quite a small, typically English country village, practically surrounded by farms and open countryside, with its own Manor house and several large houses. There was a large pond opposite Mr Read’s stables in Chapel Ally, believed to be a gravel or sandpit belonging to Breakspear House. On **December 15 1927**, during a Scout meeting a cry for help was heard and a Scout, C. Warrell, Patrol 2nd rushed out and dived into the pool to save a young child from drowning. For his bravery he was awarded the Gilt Cross for Gallantry from the Chief Scout.

COPY OF LETTER FROM CHIEF SCOUT TO WARRANT HOLDERS
(1928)

I am glad to welcome you as a helper in the Brotherhood of the Scouts, and I cordially wish you success – and happiness, in the work that you have taken up

You will meet with hindrances and disappointments as you go along but if you act up to our motto you will “Be Prepared” for these, you will see them in their proper perspective and thus, instead of being disheartened, you will attack them with a cheery determination to pull through. Tackle your job with a smile, as a sporting adventure, and will win.

Our work would not have half the fascination that it has if all went smoothly, nor would the ultimate satisfaction of winning be half so great. The knowledge that you have succeeded in directing a number of young souls into the right path, in spite of initial difficulties, will eventually be to you a big reward.

You will find in the Movement a spirit of Brotherhood, without regard to special standing, to which I hope you will respond. This personal touch is so helpful to all.

Commencing it between you and myself, as I wish to do with this letter, I shall try to maintain it month by month through the columns of the “Scouter”. I only hope that you on your part may be inclined to respond by reading that medium month by month in return – for I believe that you will there find much that will be helpful to you and this will smooth away many of the obstacles which might arise to threaten your progress. As any rate you will learn the reasons which have prompted many otherwise incomprehensible measures.

Remember too, that your Commissioner represents us on the spot; he is a friend and adviser for you to turn to in any difficulty or doubt.

Bear in mind at all times that our whole aim is to put character and health into the boys – strength of mind and body; that in doing so we should make the steps of training attractive from the boy’s point of view; and that we should teach them more by personal example than by precept how to subordinate their own individual lives in the greater aim of the whole – in a word – how to “play the game” and to play in their place, not for their own glory but in order that their side may win.

God speed you in your work,
Yours very Truly, Robert Baden Powell

The first main summer camp was held in 1929 at St. Lawrence on the Isle of Wight. Shown here to the right

By **October 1929** the Troop had grown to 28 and when it was suggested that the Scouts might detract from the Church Lad's Brigade it was pointed out that there was room for both movements in the village.



Bill Johnson recalls some early memories in the 50th Woodsmoke

May 1962

I was half of a long partnership, Basil Funnel and Bill Johnson, were in a sense synonymous terms. We were known as “Jonfun” and one was not without the other.

Basil introduced me to the Troop early in 1929 – he had already had about 18 months in ahead of me. I seem to remember being enrolled at a Hyde Farm Camp in the early summer – I believe I was the first round a camp fire.

I remember the “Chocolate Machine” through which all rookies passed and the many meetings we held in the Wesleyan Church Hall. The tenderfoot tests in Mac’s parents house, the wild games in woods and fields which no longer exist. Names like *Black Baldwin*, *Spot Chalkley* *Obber Cox*, *Alf (alias Stinks Sewer) Newton*.

I remember the first Isle of Wight camp where Jonfun first established itself as runner up to Spot and Obber in the camp cooking stakes. A walk up through the island where at Godshill we got 35 cups of tea from one pot and very surprised café owner.

I remember the next year’s camp at Bossington when one of our number lost his feeling and broke his arm. The previous year too when he had a boil on his stomach which burst at a most unfortunate moment.

These years passed so very happily. The training, the second isle of wight camp and what should have been the third when Alan Macdonald went on ahead and met his death in a motor cycle accident.

This tragedy hit us all very very badly and scouting in Abbots Langley suffered a reverse from which it very nearly didn’t recover. But he had laid such foundations that it had to go on.

In 1930 the troop ventured to Bossington, in Somerset for their summer camp. Also in this year a Cub Pack was formed, with Miss Gladys Moore as “Akela” and so the Group gradually expanded.

Eddie Miller and Doug Read who were Cubs at the time recalled how they had met in the Wesleyan Church in the early days of the Group with Gladys at Cubmaster, and were invested in the field on which the Abbots Langley shops are now build. They had memories of hikes across fields to Bedmond laden with kit for weekend camp, a walk to St Albans for St. George’s Day parades, and walking to Hatfield to meet the “Chief”. Also cycling to Ayot St Lawrence to meet Baden Powell and George Bernard Shaw.

An HQ of their own was the aim of much of their effort for the next 5 years, and the meeting place moved from the Wesleyan Schoolroom to a loft above Mr. Read’s stables in Chapel Ally which is now Langley Road, From there Mrs Crush’s garden shed was used for a short time. Not very easy days perhaps but ones which played a great part in the shaping of boys into real Scouts.

The Group then suffered a great loss when Alan “Mac” MacDonald was tragically killed in Portsmouth on his motorbike in August 1932 on his way to the Summer Camp.

The camp was cancelled and Basil Funnell and other members of the Troop attended the funeral at Langleybury.

Mr F.S. Montague took over the Troop and he carried on for another three years from 1932 to 1935.

However, during the last part of this time things became more difficult owing to his lack of available time, and when he left the district in 1935, and Fred Cole from Kings Langley assumed control, the Troop had to be rebuilt.

Mr Frank Hoadly “Skip” took over in January 1936 and remained in the position of Scout Leader until 1955. Frank had joined the movement in 1921 with the 29th Camberwell Troop and from Patrol Leader he went on to become Troop Leader and in 1927 became a Rover Scout and also took out his first warrant as Assistant Scoutmaster. In 1935 he was transferred to the 1st S W Herts Crew at Watford having left London, and at the invitation of Mr Alan Emery, who was D C at the time, he came to Abbots Langley to assist Fred Cole, who had to give up the Troop in April 1936 owing to ill health. Skip received his warrant as Scoutmaster and later as Group Scoutmaster, and gained his Wood Badge and Gilwell Scarf in 1937 and was awarded his Long Service Medal in 1947.



The Cubs had progressed steadily, although Miss Moore had given place to Miss James, and the latter to Miss Molly Beaumont in 1935.

3. The 1st Scout Headquarters

In 1930 the Group was offered its present site for the sum of £90 and a private loan was negotiated to purchase the freehold plot and erect a headquarters.

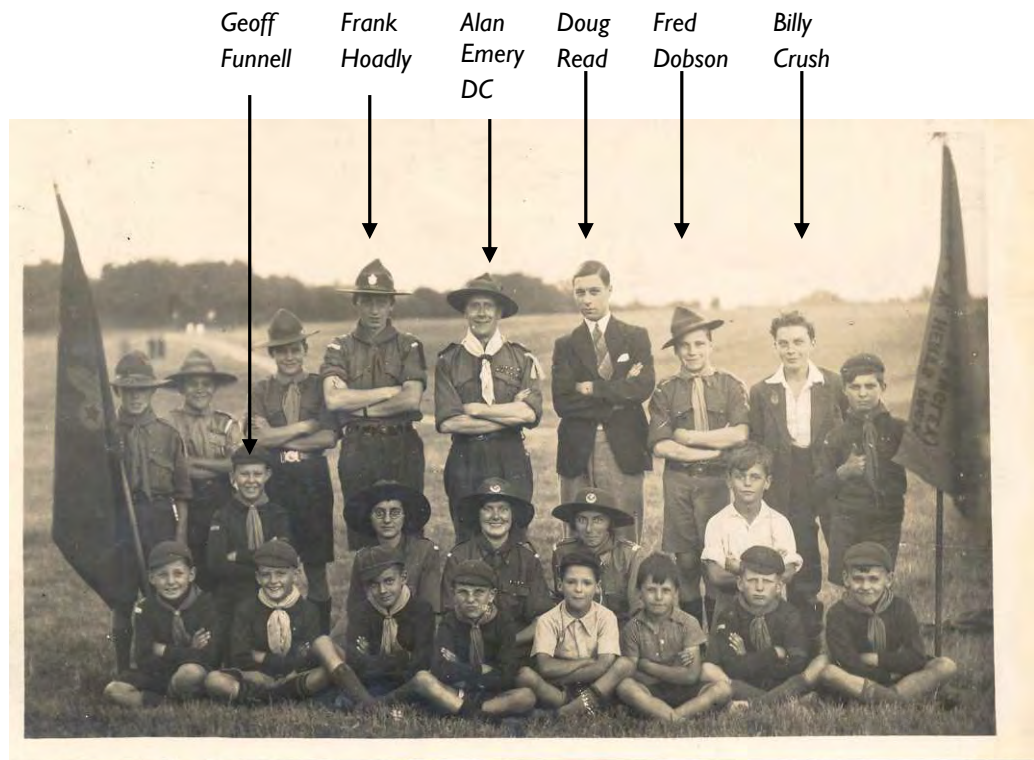
The HQ was duly erected and opened on May 27th 1933 and was a great pity that "Mac" had not lived for that day. Half of the money needed was paid off from funds in hand and the remaining £130 was raised by a loan. Repayments exceeded all expectations and by the end of 1936 the debt was fully paid off. The early group committee was very far sighted in buying the plot of land for the sum of £90 for the HQ building which was later extended to conform with the growth of the village and the Group. The total cost of the venue was £262.



The Opening of the first Headquarters on 27th May 1933
By Mrs Hogan of Breakspear Farm in the presence of
Commander PW Kent, Asst County Commissionaire
This photo shows Billy Crush third from the left

The reason Mrs Hogan was asked to open the headquarters was because she had loaned the money to build it, but she didn't want her name mentioned at the time. They were going to borrow £250 from one person and £250 from another but she offered to cover the whole cost. Eddie Miller remembered that Mrs Hogan was given the wrong key to open the headquarters for the ceremony, and everyone was kept standing in the rain waiting for the mistake to be sorted out.

The land was paid from money already in hand but not the building.



*This picture was taken in the early days in the 1930s.
 Lady Cub leaders inc Miss Molly Hoadly (nee Beaumont)*

The Group Expands

The years up to the outbreak of war passed quickly enough, with such outstanding events as the Coronation Celebration, The National Scout Appeal and the Hatfield Country Rally, all demanding extra efforts.

The group continued to expand, enjoying many weekend and summer camps. At the outbreak of War in 1939 the Troop were called on to provide a messenger service for the local ARP centre and Fire Station, and the Scouters undertook a First Aid Party and Red Cross duties. The HQ was also used as an auxiliary schoolroom. The evacuation scheme of children from London caused both Troop and cub Pack to double their size, many of the new boys being refugees from Nazi occupied lands, who spoke little or no English.

An abstract from the Troop Log of Monday 2nd October 1939

“A meeting of the evacuee scouts was held tonight, in my unavoidable absence Basil and Clem took charge, and I believe they had their work cut out to satisfy everyone’s thirst for knowledge. As one member of our troop remarked upon chancing to come into one such meeting – ‘well I thought our chaps could make a noise, but we couldn’t compete with this’. Nuff said”

Skipper

Two troops were run for a time and waste paper collection was another War service job undertaken by the Group for 2½ years. By 1939 the headquarters were proving too small and a store room, Rover Den and side exit were added to the building by 1940 at a cost of £117, with the cost finally being paid for in 1941.

December 30th 1939 – The Hospital Concert

Being a member of the District Entertainers Committee we presented an item for the District Concert, at the Peace Memorial Hospital.

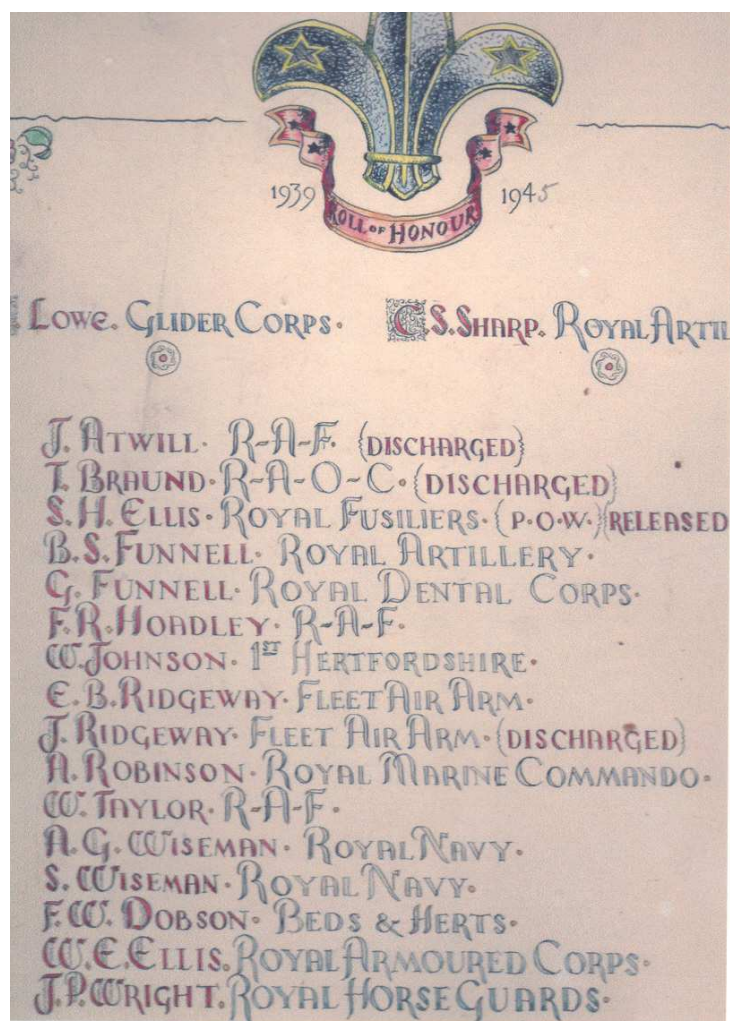
The Troop was represented by Arthur Miles, Jeff Funnel, Wizzy Wiseman and myself. Our item, from the Gang Show – “Oh I wonder how my Willy’s getting on” was quite a success, but after we had sung it about four times in different wards, we were singing each other’s verses.

Ted Ridgeway A/TL

In 1940 the Rover Crew was started, many having to go straight into the forces. The war years saw many changes, and “Skip” Frank Hoadly also followed his assistants and Rovers and was called up into the Forces. The remaining Rovers, Mr Hince and Jack Botwright carried on with the Group, and Mr Leslie Seabrook took charge in 1944 assisted by Jack Botwright until “Skip” returned in 1946. The Rover Crew was led by Bill Johnson who instigated an extension of the Rover Den and Store Room to be added to HQ.

Apart from camouflaged tents and “blackout” camping was not greatly affected until 1941, but from then to 1945 only weekend camps were held.

Roll of Honour - 1939 – 1945



Bdr. Clement S. Sharp, Royal Artillery

Clem joined the group at the age of 15 in July 1936 when the local Church Lads Brigade ceased. His age and ability quickly took him through the ranks, being made a Patrol Leader of the "Woodpeckers" in April 1937, and one of his patrol at this time was a young Fred Dobson, aged 11. He became Troop Leader in March 1939 and took his Asst. Scoutmasters warrant in Sept. 1940. He was invested in the Rover Crew in January 1941. His duty in the Church was that of Server. An accomplished musician, Clem was remembered for his violin solos in the 'Why Not' series of concerts before the war. Answering the nation's call he joined up in the Royal Artillery and it was whilst on active service on the Dutch-Belgium border that he was killed by enemy action on 4th November 1944. He is buried in Holland, and his grave is tended by the people of the nation.

S/Sgt Eric H. Lowe, Army Air Service

Eric joined the Group as a Cub and went through into the Troop to the rank of Patrol Leader. In the summer of 1937 he resigned his Patrol Leadership owing to night work, and so as to retain his membership in the Group he was made Hon. Patrol Leader. When of age he answered the call, and joined the Army Air Service. Trained as a pilot, he became a member of the Glider Pilot Regiment. And it was whilst on a training flight in May 1944 that his glider crashed, as a result of which he died. His body now lies in our village churchyard.

LAC John H. Stephens, Royal Air Force

John joined the Troop in March 1944 and had a good Scouting record. He became a Patrol Leader in March 1947 and joined the Senior Scouts in October the same year. He was a First Class Scout with all round cords, and was chosen to attend the World Jamboree in France in 1947. He also was a Server in the Church. He joined the RAF and in 1952 whilst on Foreign Service in Ceylon, he was called to "Higher Service".

"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn;
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,
We will remember them."

Laurence Hinyon

Post War Years

These years saw a renewal of all the normal scouting activities and several first-class badges were gained.



Isle of Sheppey Summer Camp 1946

In 1946 the District were asked to consider proposals to reorganise Districts meaning Abbots Langley would be taken into the central area known as Watford & District thus breaking down the successful scouting community into small bits.

During 1947 changes had to be made to the Cub Pack Leadership. Rover W. Smith took over for a time and was later succeeded by Mr R. Bewsey. A Senior Section was opened and the Group chartered a plane from Bovingdon Airfield and flew to Holland.

Two patrol leaders attended the World Jamboree in Moisson, France in 1947.

LINK UPS – HOLLAND

Trip to Holland

Skip created a vital new feature of a link up in 1946 with, the Hessen Group, Hummelo-en-Keppel in Holland. In 1947 the Group paid a first visit and camped at Laag-Keppel and in return in 1948 they visited Abbots Langley. Thus the “World wide Brotherhood of Scouts” became real.

Jack Gentle later wrote an article for the Woodsmoke -

I remember the time when I was in Holland in 1947 and the Rover crew took me out to dinner as a celebration for passing school certificate. I will never forget how we were served soup in small two handled teacups with shallow teaspoons. The crew and I were baffled – it would take hours to devour even a small quantity of soup with spoons like that. Fortunately Gus (I’ll bring-me-mug-at-it) was first to solve the problem. He reasoned that the two handles were meant for two hands and since it looked like a teacup why not drink out of it? Such was the genius of the crew in those days that no problem was insuperable.

Brian Simmons ?
Colin Flint
Wally Smith



Derrick
Flowers



1950?

3rd from left is Derrick Flowers (later
Woodsmoke Editor)

Roy Botwright is the tall man hence his
nickname “Gandi” Robinson

In 1950 the summer camp was held back in Holland again. This time the group chartered their own plane flew and flew from Bovington Airport.



Jack Botwright, Darkie Miles, Jack Gentle, Fendal ?, Dave Clarke, Frank Hoadly, Robert Smith, Dave Rees Eddie Koepfel, ? Lambert, Kenny Rye, his sister, Mr & Mrs Rye (played piano for gang shows), Ivan Atkins, Colin Flint, Keith Moore

Taken inside the plane, somewhere over the North Sea on the way to Holland in their chartered plane.

You had to be 13 to be able to go on the trip as you were put on a combined passport.



The link with the Hossengroop had been disbanded by January 1955 as reported in the Woodsmoke so they were very pleased to find a new link in Liechtenstein.



Some of the Holland Scouts and leaders whom they met



Changes in the constitution of scouting saw the formation of the B P Guild in **1949** by Frank Hoadly, which 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, and is now in the present guise of "The Fellowship" and "The Ladies Guild".

1950 The 1st Boxing Day walk was held. The Group again went to Holland.

THE ROVER CREW PARTY – 1950



Left to Right

Front row: Furthest right is Fred Dobson

2nd row: 6th from left Colin Flint, 7th Gervis Gregory, 8th Derrick Flowers, right on end Jack Gentle

3rd (small row) Jack Gentle

4th row: 5th front left Frank Hoadly, 7th Kitty Dobson, 8th Phyllis Ridgeway, 10th Molly Hoadly

5th row: 5th Geff Funnell, 6th Jack Ridgeway, 7th Darky Miles

1952 Group Silver Jubilee

The group celebrated its Silver Jubilee with a display camp, handicraft and pioneering exhibitions in Mrs Neish's field at the corner of Abbots Road and High Street.

DISPLAY CAMP

Key to Exhibits (as numbered at the field)

1. Camp Gateway.
2. "The Highlander" small Patrol Tent.
(Tea, Cold Drinks and Ices will be on sale here).
3. Ridge Tent of "1930 vintage".
B-P. Guild of Old Scouts, Troop Log-Books, Records, etc.
4. Camp Fire Circle.
Log seats belonging to the Senior Scouts.
5. Bell Tent, set out as a Store Tent.
Camp Oven, "Cool Store" (pit type), Meat Safe (hanging type).
6. A Patrol Site, including:
"Pioneer" Ridge Tent, washplace, table and seat and camp kitchen with "trench" type fire and fixed wooden dixie support, dresser and wet and dry pits.
7. Another Patrol Site, including:
"Foot-On" Ridge Tent with flysheet, washplace, table and seat, and camp kitchen with "altar" type fire and dixie rack below, plate rack, mug-tree and cutlery rack. Boot rack in tent.
8. Rope Bridge ("Monkey" Bridge) approached by rope ladders.
9. Large Army type Ridge Tent (flysheet optional, but not erected here).
Handicraft Exhibits made by the Wolf Cubs.
10. Arena for Displays (see following page).
11. Camp Flagstaff (three sections and cross-tree).
12. Hike Camp, comprising:
Bivouac Tent (two sheets buttoned over), lightweight hike tent, lightweight tent ("Small Alaskan") and flysheet, simple camp gadgets.
13. Aerial Runway, (wire hawser, block and tackle one end).

DISPLAYS IN CAMP ARENA

Tuesday—
7.00 p.m. Cubs Special Pack Meeting (1)
7.45 p.m. Scouts Trek-Cart Competition
8.30 p.m. Senior Scouts & Rovers Rescue Incident

Wednesday—
7.20 p.m. Cubs Special Pack Meeting (2)
8.00 p.m. Scouts Games and Surprise Item
8.40 p.m. Senior Scouts & Rovers. Erecting a Signalling Post

Thursday—
7.30 p.m. Tug-of-War (Scout teams of six)
8.30 p.m. Camp Fire

Sunday, 20th July

3.30 p.m. Jubilee Thanksgiving Service in Abbots Langley Parish Church, conducted by the Vicar (Rev. R. S. Wilkinson) and the Methodist Minister (Rev. J. A. Stratton).
Members of the 25th, 47th and 56th S.W. Herts Groups will attend, led by the Band of the 25th S.W. Herts. The Abbots Langley Guides and Brownies will also be present. **Everyone** is welcome.
Printed forms of Service will be available at the Church.

SUMMER CAMPS

1928 Totterhoe, Beds.
1929 St. Lawrence, I.O.W.
1930 Bossington, Somerset.
1931 Briststone, I.O.W.
1936 Selsey, Sussex (with Kings Langley Troop)
1937 Shackleford Heath, Surrey.
1938 Itchenor, Sussex.
1939 Hindhead, Surrey.
1940 Hyde Farm, Bedmond.
1945 Phasels Wood, Kings Langley.
1946 Warden Point, Sheppey.
1947 Laag-Keppel, Holland.
1948 Bedmond (with Hessengroep).
1949 Bryanston, Dorset.
1950 Beverwyk, Holland
1951 Angmering, Sussex.
1952 Seasalter, Kent.

Fred Dobson really enjoyed making mud ovens and he built one for the display. Each day he baked a cake in a mud oven which proved to be very successful.

At the back of the flats at the top of Abbots Road there is an old Oak tree which is still standing today. The aerial runway was erected from the top of the oak tree down to the campsite circuit.

Bryan Sharpe was just a Scout aged about 14 at the time and he recalls camping in a tent overnight to guard the display.

A Thanksgiving Service was held in the Parish Church at St. Lawrence.

Coronation Celebration 1953 “The Crew Creeper”

The Group participated in Coronation activities and undertook the sale of Official programmes. Two representatives attended the National Scout and Guide Service in Westminster Abbey.

The Rover Crew built “the Crew Creeper” which took part in the Decorated Vehicle Procession and was awarded two first prizes.



It was based on the cartoons of Ronald Searle and his drawings of wacky machines. Searle had done some drawings for the 1951 Exhibition on the Festival of Britain on the South Bank which was only two years previously.

The float was built in Bedmond and entered in the Bedmond carnival where it won first prize. Then it was towed to Abbots Langley but going down Bedmond

Hill they lost control and it crashed into the bank and the undercarriage which was a boiler, came away. So they had to tow it back to Bedmond to be repaired and finally back to Abbots Langley where they won the other carnival as well.

The Crew Creeper had an arm that went up and down at the side with a lavatory chain at the top. There was a coal shortage and they were selling coal dust and very poor quality coal. The Government were trying to promote the poor quality coal and it was called Nutty Slack.

Technically Bryan Sharpe shouldn't have been party to the event because he was too young to be in the Rovers, but he wanted to get involved.

After the Carnivals it had to be dismantled back in Bedmond because the base of it was their Trek cart underneath everything and they needed it for general use. The boiler and chimney were dumped down the big hole at the top of Bedmond High Street.



This photo is taken on the Bedmond Road whilst towing it between Bedmond and Abbots Langley. They are outside of Love Lane.

Top L to R Bryan Sharpe (next to birdcage), Alan Botwright
Standing – Brian Simmons

Sitting - Ivan Atkins, Fred Dobson, Michael Butcher, Geoff Funnell



Standing from L to R: Geoff Funnell, Michael Butcher (17), Jack Botwright, Fred Dobson, Brian Simmons
Seated R to L: Alan Botwright, Ivan Atkins, Bryan Sharpe (15)

The Headquarters Extension

It then became necessary to add a further extension to the Group Headquarters. Work started in 1953 and progressed slowly and steadily. By March 1954 the results of the Rover's labour were becoming apparent with the extension fund being replenished by various fundraising efforts. The roof had been put in place and work was now underway to put the floor in "with suitable stops for tea".

There was some banter on the size of the extension and it was noted that "*Whilst the committee and general purpose room are of the nature of a state ballroom, the Rover Den is so small it will probably be known as the Rovers cubby Hole.. It is plain to see who are the planners and who are the workers of the new extension.*"

Dave Rees had been acting as foreman and was the most consistent and enthusiastic worker on the project, along with Ivan Atkins who had also put in a tremendous amount of work especially whilst he was on leave. Work was given a new lease of life in September with ceiling board and hardboard wall linings nearing completion. And in November most of the carpentry, general labouring, and electrical were complete

In January 1955 the headquarters extension had made great strides and although work on the kitchen and lavatories had not yet begun, the extension portion was ready for occupation. This was due to the commitment of the Rover Scouts.

Through the great kindness of the Earl and Countess of Clarendon, we shall be able to adorn our new rooms and add to the attractiveness of the main hall by the display of some deer and other heads from animals which were shot by Lord Clarendon and the late Lord Hyde on hunting trips during their stay in South Africa. They have also given us some thumbsticks and an occasional table carved by the Pathfinders (the native Scouts there) which were presented to Lord Clarendon when he left the Union.

"Skip"
Woodsmoke January 1955

There was an informal opening at a social evening in February of 1955 and it was symbolic of the way in which the Extension was built, in that all present had a hand in the opening, by pulling together on the rope attached to a paper screen, thus opening the way into the new section.

By March 1955 the interior of the new den on the HQ Extension was nearing completion and it was reported at the AGM in May of that year that it was in full use. Grateful thanks went to Cyril Windmill and Mr Sippitt who had worked so hard on the extension. More work ensued in September with the laying of drainage pipes.

With the approval of the Imperial Headquarters, the Earl of Clarendon has added to his other gifts to us a plaque awarded to him by the Council of the Boy Scouts Association in an appreciation of his services to Scouting whilst he was Governor-General of South Africa. This has been accepted by us in memory of his oldest son, the late Lord Hyde, and of his and Lord Clarendon's association with our movement, and will be given a place of honour in our Committee Room.

"Skip"

Woodsmoke May 1955

The group are indebted to Mr and Mrs Montague of Watford for the gift of a fine flagstaff.

Woodsmoke No. 11 Nov 1955

1959

During the summer the Guildsmen and other helpers redecorated the headquarters, with the Rovers painting the roof. Then as the outside of the HQ had been redecorated the interior received attention. Fluorescent lighting was installed in the main hall, kitchen and committee room, and an Ascot hot water heat fitted in the kitchen, whilst the floor of the committee room had new lino. When September came, work on a new brick wall outside the HQ had been started. One of the old boys, Bill Crush, made some new iron gates which became a worthy memento of his scouting days with the Troop.

By March 1961 the wall had been completed with thanks to Ken Luck, and the wall and Bill's gates improved the HQ no end. Other labourers included the Guildsmen, Rovers, Committee men, Jim Saunders who started the wall and Digby Clarke who did much to finish it.

It was only a short time after by the end of **1961** three Rovers had approached some Committee Members and suggested that a new HQ should be built at a cost of £5,000.

Jack Ridgeway's brother, Shellback, wrote his opposition in the November Woodsmoke of that year as the Rovers wanted a brick building and if they couldn't go further back they wanted to go up.

"A two storey building. What I would like to say to the Rovers is come DOWN. Back to mother earth with both feet firmly on the ground. Where on earth would the money come from? Rovers – stop building castles in the air and get back to some real work."

The existing building was already 30 years old and falling to bits with a problem getting onto the corrugated roof for maintenance.

In **1953** Frank Hoadly led the Hertfordshire contingent to a Thanksgiving Service in Westminster Abbey.

1954 The first group magazine "Woodsmoke" was issued under the Editorship of Bill White, Group Treasurer and Secretary of the International Scout Club.

Woodsmoke 2 May 1954

Fred Dobson reported that Rover Scout Leader Jack Botwright had obtained a copy of Lord Baden Powell's "Pigsticking or Hoghunting" and that the flyleaf contained Baden Powell's autograph. The book was acquired and the copy showing the autograph was put on permanent display behind glass in the Headquarters. Many years later after it had been relegated to the loft, Bryan Sharpe found it in a very dilapidated state and in an effort to rescue it the Abbots Langley group have donated this very valuable book to the County Archivist where it is on permanent loan and can be viewed by prior appointment with Frank Brittain.

Woodsmoke 3 July 1954

At the Rovers in Council the highlight of the evening was the presentation by the Crew to the two senior scout masters of their Gilwell Scarves. Roll on the day when some of the yellow dusters in the Crew are replaced by this distinguished neckwear.

21st to 31st August 1954, Scout camp to Milford on Sea at a cost of £3 3/-

Notable events were journeying to the camp in a lorry. Mr "Seeds" nearly being sick testing an assortment of porridge, dampers and twists for the cooking badge. For the first time since the war a tuck shop was opened but constant demand meant supplies didn't last long. With an abundance of mud the camp oven cooked delicious roast lamb and beef, and it was not unusual to see "Dobby" (Fred Dobson) skinning a rabbit holding his nose.

1955 The troop changed its headgear to berets.

In the **March of 1955** another link between the Clarendon family and the Abbots Langley Scouts was forged when Frank Hoadly went to the Earl of Clarendon's house in Reading to collect a number of gifts for the group. These were mainly hunting trophies, heads of South African deer and the foreparts of a lion and lioness. A pair of wild dogs heads were received which were then used as trophies to be competed for at sports. One of the gifts is a table carved by the pathfinder scouts of South Africa and presented to Lord Clarendon when, as Governor General of South Africa before the war, he was that country's chief scout.

Mr Hoadly was originally a member of the 1st South West Herts Troop, the Countess of Clarendon's Own, with the Countess's son the last Lord Hyde, where they had both been keen member of the same Rover Crew. Lord Hyde was regrettable killed in a shooting accident in South Africa. Frank reported that when he went to the Clarendon Home at Midgham, near Reading to choose the gifts, Lady Clarendon shook hands with the left hand and expressed considerable interest in the Group's affairs.

Chris Lavery represented the Hertfordshire Rover Scouts in the St. George's Day Parade on 24th April 1955 at Windsor.

The service itself will never be forgotten. Every person in the Chapel a Scout, even the Dean. After the service we all lined up outside the Chapel door and the Chief Scout came down and had a few words to say to us. It will stand out in my memory as one of the biggest moments in my Scouting career.

Chris Lavery

The 8th World jamboree was held in Canada in **July 1955**. To attend the event the Scout had to have a first class badge and be between 14-18. The names of troop leader Alan Rees and Patrol Leader Paul Staines were submitted, but both were unsuccessful.

29th September 1955 – Article appearing in the West Herts Post – Bronze Statue presented by the Earl of Clarendon

When the Earl of Clarendon was Chief Scout in South Africa, a bronze statue designed by Lord Baden Powell was presented to him by the Scouts of the Union. On 28th September 1955 that statue was passed to the safe keeping of the 1st Abbots Langley Group.

It was a happy occasion, but it would have been happier if Lord Clarendon could have been there. He was recovering from an operation but was not left out of the speeches by Mr Adrian Brough who made the presentation on his behalf, and by the Group Scoutmaster F.R. Hoadly.

There was the true Scout spirit in the story behind the gift to Abbots Langley. Mr Hoadly was a Rover in the 1st S W Herts "The Countess of Clarendon's Own" with the late Lord Hyde, Lord Clarendon's son. Mr Adrian Brough was Scoutmaster.

So it was appropriate that when the Earl made this presentation to the Group run by Mr Hoadly it should be handed over in his absence by his son's former Scout Master. The statue of a cheery scout bears this inscription – *Presented to the 1st Abbots Langley Scout group by the 6th Early of Clarendon K G, in memory of his son George, Lord Hyde, Cubs, Scout and Rover in the 1st S W Herts Group (so closely associated with Scouting in Abbots Langley) and later a Rover in Cape Town, South Africa.* This statue is now displayed in the upstairs hall of the Scout HQ and can be seen here in this photograph, second from the left in the back row.



On **30th September 1955** there was a Senior Scout Gathering at Tring. Three senior scouts cycled to the meeting and Ian Tennant had his Queens Scout certificate presented to him by the Lord Lt. of Hertfordshire, The Hon. David Bowes-Lyon. Ian was the first recorded Queen's Scout in the Troop and the second was Alan Rees in November 1955.

The sixth Earl of Clarendon KG died on **29th November 1955**. He had not recovered from the operation that had prevented him from attending the presentation of the scout statuette in September, and had died of pneumonia. During 1955 Lord and Lady Clarendon had been very good friends to the Group and his memory will be perpetuated in the hunting trophies and other South African mementoes which adorn the Headquarters in addition to the inscribed Statuette.

November 1955 - The group received the gift of a flagstaff from Mr and Mrs Montague of Watford.

1956

The 1st annual series of Group fetes was held and Henry (Dick) Turpin became Group Chaplain.

There was an expedition to Sweden July 23rd to Aug 7th 1956 for all Rovers and First class senior scouts.

Alan Rees, the 2nd Queen's scout of the Troop attended the St. George's Day parade at Windsor.

In 1957 the Group celebrated the 30th anniversary of the founding of the present Abbots Langley group.

They started the year with a parents and supporters party with 50 attendees at Headquarters. Mr E Beaumont was presented with the Thanks Badge for all he had done for Scouting during the last 30 years.

On 22nd February they celebrated the centenary of BP's Birthday at the Henderson Memorial Hall with the Girl Guides.

The Scout master Arthur Leach who had taken up his office the previous year received his Wood badge. Alan Botwright becomes Cub Master. HRH Prince Emanuel of Liechtenstein, the Chief Scout, had received a Silver Acorn on St George's Day 1957 and it was hoped to meet his scouts in the following year's visit.

May 1957

Thanks badges presented to Doug Reid and Bill White at the annual meeting for their work as Guildsmen and Group Secretary and Treasurer respectively over many years.

1957 also saw B.P.'s centenary celebrations and a Jubilee jamboree and World Rover Moot were held at Sutton Park and the Group held its 1st Dinner dance in the HQ in commemoration. Bill White had the opportunity to attend, along with Scout Francis Ridgley and you can find an account of this later in the Jamboree section.

Group's 1st Annual Dinner to celebrate 50 years of World Scouting

The Group's first annual dinner to celebrate the jubilee year was held at Scout HQ on October 5th 1957. It was mainly organised by Arthur Ash and Doug Read. Tickets cost 12/6d and consisted of a first class dinner and licensed bar. Bill White thought that they should hold a similar function annually. Here is a reproduction from the Woodsmoke.

Saturday October 5th 1957 was a highlight and a fitting finish to the Group's activities in the 'Centenary Year' arrangements. On this occasion the BP Guild had arranged a Dinner and Social Evening at our Headquarters.

The first vision of the snowy-white covered tables, gleaming with cutlery, glass and flowers gave a pleasant glow of anticipation of good things to come – and come they did, but not before an 'appetiser' from the bar made a remarkable foundation.

The Chairman, Mr A.N. Ash supported by illustrious guests Dr LR Pears, County Commissioner, and President of SW Herts Local Association Mr Alan Emery and his wife, gave the Loyal Toast to the Queen, and then called upon Bill White to propose a toast to 'The Scout Movement'.

Reminding those present that this event was the culmination of a year of celebrations, first for the Centenary of the birth of BP and secondly for the Jubilee year of the Movement, Bill said that throughout the year we have heard in various ways of the achievement of Scouting during the past fifty years, from the handful of boys on Brownsea Island to the seven million Scouts throughout the world today. But as Lady Baden-Powell said at the Jamboree, 'The end is only the beginning'.

In challenging words Bill then asked what of the next fifty years? Shall we be content to drift along on the ride of our past achievements, or shall we each grasp a paddle and have a go?

He cited the sorry state of the world today, full of mistrust and misunderstanding, all so often due to ignorance, and said that if this situation is to be improved it is up to everyone of us to do something about it. He believed that seven million Scouts plus the millions of people closely connected with our Movement have the opportunity to do something, by adopting a more positive approach to our fourth Scout Law. This could be achieved by using every available means to make contacts with our brothers overseas, to find out how they are and how they live, not wait for them to tell us. This would help to strengthen the foundation of World Brotherhood which our Founder envisaged..

Dr Pears called upon to reply, said he completely agreed with the views expressed and added the necessity that we, in the next fifty years, take up the challenge with initiative and prove to the world the sincerity of our belief in the Scout Movement, and in the fundamentals that DP had laid down in the beginning. In this world of science and technology we must not overlook the basic principles of Scouting for boys, that of backwoodsmanship and the training of the boy in doing things for himself, not to be just a 'Looker-on'.

Dr Pears also said that he had been in at most gatherings up and down the county this year and was satisfied by the spirit shown, that the next fifty years would not be lacking in the will to get things done, which augured well for the future of the Movement.

Proposing the Toast to 'Our Guests' Jack Botwright, ADC Rovers, thanked them for coming and emphasized all the willing help and tolerance shown by sweethearts and wives in assisting the men folk to devote time to Scouting, and then laid the foundations for more assistance in the future by embracing the name of Mrs A.J. Emery to reply to the Toast.

In reply Mrs Emery gave a very delightful outline as to the way she was skillfully caught and given jobs to do, which finally led to being ADC for Cubs until she reached the time to retire, and on behalf of our guests, thanked the Group for a happy occasion.

Mr Maurice Staines entertained with some songs, after which the floor was cleared and Tom Murray took charge as MC for dancing and games.

Leslie Seabrook

July 1957

The summer fete was held on May 25th where the attendance was good and they raised £60 after paying expenses. Television star Terry Scott performed the opening ceremony with a few witty words, and for a considerable part of the afternoon wandered around spending his spare cash.

Although the raising of funds is, of course, the main purpose of running fetes and concerts etc, one must not overlook the fact that they provide a wonderful opportunity for those connected with the Group to display that team spirit and willingness to do something for others which is so characteristic of our Movement. All the work of preparation and time given to those activities is not lost to Scouting, it IS Scouting.

Back in those days the swimming tests used to be in the sea whilst at summer camp. The proper place to do it! And there were exciting activities like the opportunity to feel a tree.

In Sept 1957 Woodsmoke Skip reported that four (1st timer Arthur Leach, Scoutmaster, Skip + 2 others) of them had returned from the annual Wood badge reunion at Gilwell Park. The chief scout and Lady BP were there chatting to the members in between the various events, and when one of our party was shaking hands with the chief guide at the end of the Reunion and told her he had two daughters in Guiding she said "Then I must give your hand an extra squeeze".

The Cubs obtained a site at Abbot Hill School and were able to use the outdoor swimming pool during the August camp.

Bryan Sharpe and Keith Moore were on the carpet for failing to bring back the Rover flagpole from the summer camp. It was the highest flagpole the Crew had ever had at 250ft.

1958

A group dinner was held in the HQ in 1958 when a new extension was added to the HQ. There used to be a tracking pit and camp fire circle at the rear of the HQ and in January 1958 twelve railway sleepers were obtained by the crew for seating around the circle. Also a cycle shed was added.

In the January issue of Woodsmoke Jim of the seniors reported that he had the usual to day:

Nobody turned up for this, the entry forms were late for that, no money was paid for the others, and Ian owes six weeks back payment for subs.

So nothing much has changed during the last 50 years except to say that some subs are now one or two **QUARTERS** in arrears!

July 1958

The annual fete had been held making a profit of £85. Bill White was responsible for its instigation and the Guildsmen had worked on making the sideshows etc.

'Butch' was one of the most active Rovers the crew had ever had and in June **1958** he went to Australia for two years. He took his Rover uniform with him as he wanted to further his Rover services 'down under'. Some 40 scouting types from around the country met in the lounge bar of the Kings Head, commonly known as 'The Nut'. There Butch was presented with a suitably inscribed tobacco pouch by the Crew and filled with his favourite brand by 'Skip'. The event was photographed, but not by Jack Gentle who was renowned for taking ages to print photographs, as they wanted to see it before Butch returned. Whilst he was there he attended the Jamoree in Dunedin. In the July of 1959 he wrote saying they had just had a Gang show and he enclosed a balloon that had supposedly been set off at the Summer Fete as the one which has travelled furthest and asked that he share half the prize with Sharpee.

January 1959

Francis Ridley reported that the Seniors were still in existence but there were only two fully enrolled Senior Scouts in the Group John McBride and him, so with a lack of scoutmaster they temporarily joined up with the 25th Seniors.

Butch had spent Christmas with the local GSM and his family in New Zealand. He was having a busy time climbing mountains and working on the Jamboree site where he had been appointed to the security section.

A guest at the Group Dinner, Conrad Ascher tried to tell the Rovers that their private motto "U tu mai spu" was not Latin!

Woodsmoke Sept 1959

This is where we came in ...

At the Guild meeting to discuss the Group dinner the subject turned to discussing camps of the past, particularly one of 30 years previous. "Oh yes" said someone, "I remember that campsite, I did my first class hike there. Towards evening a thunderstorm came up and we started to pitch our tent and oh dear "no pegs"

"That's very strange", said a young Scout who was making the tea "I have just had exactly the same experience on My first class hike!"

This is so typical of the history of this group. So many things that happen today have happened since time immemorial in the same way. It is very comforting to think that these traditions are being upheld and that, actually they must have got it right all those years ago for the tried and tested formulae to be still working! You might say things have not moved on in all that time, but hey, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!"

The 60's

January 1960

From 1st January 1960 the Boy Scout Association became a participating body in the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. The three standards of Bronze, silver and gold, and it was agreed that the Scout movement would be exceed the bronze standard but to apply they must be 15 years of age and hold the first class badge.

Digby Clarke had found a bricklayer to start on building the wall outside HQ.

Sunday July 3rd 1960 3.34 pm St Lawrence's Church

There was an anniversary service to celebrate the 33rd anniversary of the start of the present group of Abbots Langley.



Rover Crew Investiture 1960

L to R Jack Botwright (RSL), Frank Hoadly, Chris Lavery, Darkie Miles (SSL), Mike Butcher, Dave Clarke (Clacker), Eddie Koeppel, Les Seabrook
Front – Fred Dobson, ??, Jack Ridgeway

In the 1960 Annual fete balloon race - 5 tags were returned from Germany. Heather Rees (Bill White's Daughter) became Cub Master. 1st World Aspidistra Show commenced at 23.50 on 22nd October on top of Ivinghoe Beacon.

December 1960

The Rovers repaired the church flag mast which had been left hanging dangerously over the side of the tower after high winds had snapped it.

By **1961** the total numbers in the four sections was around the 150 mark and still growing. The bulge was transferring itself from the Cubs to the Scouts and the troop had got so big it was split to form two troops. There were seven warranted Scouters for 65 Wolf Cubs and only one warranted Scouter for 60 Scouts.

Five Rover Scouts arrived from New Zealand when Butch arrived home after nearly 3 years in New Zealand and Australia. The HQ became the scene of strange goings-on when renderings of the Maori Haka would be heard from Butch and his five “Kiwi” Rover comrades!

The Rover Crew took over running part of the troop for a while under the leadership of Alan Rees. Skip had been offered some help for the troop from Derek Sayell who was Asst. RSL of the Hemel Hempstead District Crew and Butch had also promised whatever assistance he could manage. Group numbers meant temporarily splitting into two for weekly meetings.

In **May 1961** Mrs Bryan (Kaa) of A Pack Cubs completed her Wood Badge.

September 1961

The Cubs attended the District Cub Sports and to their complete surprise and great pleasure ‘A’ Pack won the Trophy. This was the first time that the Trophy had been in Abbots Langley since 1938. ‘B’ pack took third place. The **Cub Sports Trophy** is a gold painted Wolf’s head carved out of wood and mounted on the end of a Brass Totem Pole. It was first presented to the S W Herts Cubs in 1927 by the District Chairman of that time. The first winner of the trophy in 1927 was the 28th S W Herts St John and it has been a long time since its return to the group since 1938

1962 Rover Alan Rees attended The World Rover Moot in Australia.

Skip recorded in March 1962 Woodsmoke that other GSM’s he meets often wish that they had the support which is apparent in Abbots Langley, and he asked that all past and present members of the Group join with him in paying tribute to the wonderful work which has been and is still being done in Abbots Langley Scouting.

Sunday 13th May 1962

The Rover Crew took 1st and 3rd places at the County Rover Motor Rally and will organise the Rally next year. The winner was Mike Butcher and 3rd place went to Bryan Sharpe.

In **May** the Cubs won the District Football League for the fourth time in 5 seasons and had the honour of hanging the Ernest Nobbs Trophy in the HQ.

July 1962

The three best model trestle bridges were given to Mr Jimmy Day, Deputy Warden at Well End County Camp Site. They will be put into the ‘Haydon Dimmock’ hut where they will be in the permanent exhibition of Scouting items.

Sept 1962

Arthur Leach “Kim” gave up his warrant as Scout Master and the committee were looking for a “young” replacement. On leaving the group he was presented with a clock as a reminder of them. In the meantime, Leslie “Seeds” Seabrook from the Guild took on the

role. Whilst the rest of the Rover Crew were gallivanting across Europe in the summer, Butch was at Lochearnhead, Scotland instructing 100 senior scouts in mountaineering.

Rose Baldry became Chairman of the newly formed Ladies Section of the Scout Guild.

The Woodsmoke Editor Bill White, attended the St. George's Day Service at Windsor where he was presented to the Queen.

St George's Day Service at Windsor Castle – 1963

Faintly at first and the finally bursting upon us, came the familiar strains of *Crest of a Wave* when all eyes focussed onto the archway leading into the quadrangle at Windsor Castle, to see the Guards Band leading the long procession of 1000 Queen's Scouts. What a grand sight in the warm April sunshine on a Sunday afternoon.

They marched up one side of the quadrangle to the saluting base, where stood Her Majesty The Queen, Prince Philip, Prince Charles and Princess Anne, the Chief Scout Sir Charles MacLean and Lady Maclean. They then passed down the other side and out of the Quadrangle to St. George's Chapel, proudly led by Laurence Stringer the HQ Commissioner for Senior Scouts.

This was the annual St George's Day service at Windsor Castle, an event I had heard much about and seen on television many times, often wishing that I could be there yet knowing that the opportunity to attend was very remote.

It was then with great surprise and excitement that my wife and I received an invitation from the International Commissioner to attend the ceremony as guests of the International Department, and even more so because I was to be one of the party of be presented to Her Majesty.

Her Majesty walked slowly through the presentation lines, smiling and saying a few words to each of us as we were introduced by the Chief Scout, followed by Prince Philip who also spoke to each in turn. Whilst this was taking place the ladies were divided their attention between following the progress of Her Majesty and watching Prince Andrew who was enjoying the scene from a nearby window.

The Royal Party the walked to the saluting base and it was then that 1000 queens' scouts marched around the quadrangle and onto St. Georges chapel, with our party following. In this historic and beautiful chapel we took part in a very moving service, the combined voices of a thousand Scouts singing hymns and reaffirming the Scout promise will surely ring inside the chapel until another thousand boys proudly march in again next year.

Bill White

July 1963

Mr H R Overy presented the Rover Crew with the gift of books, maps and his set of pre-1914 Patrol Leaders Badges. Mr Overy was one of the original boys who formed the Group in 1909.

1963 Scout Alan Poole represented the Group and District at the 11th World Jamboree at Marathon in Greece.

Rovers

The Rovers went on a night ramble to find a badger that had been seen near a local spinney. We had just climbed through a hedge when a herd of heifers with short sharp horns came bounding towards us. It was very dark, the hedge thick with just one gap stranded with barbed wire. Over the wire dived most of the crew, but two had to take to the trees and were soon surrounded. Eventually a torch was produced and the two managed to climb down and gingerly push their way through the frolicsome heifers. The two Rovers must remain anonymous as Mackie and Alan would not like it. We did find the badgers track and this led us to his sett.

Fred Dobson

1964

The Chief Scout visited the County Camp at Gorhambury, St Albans and the District Camp Site at Lees Wood was opened on 14th May.

A building fund was launched by transferring money from the Group fund.

Bill White died and Jack Ridgeway took over as Woodsmoke Editor.

The First Scout Bus – Morris JYY 683

Much discussion took place in 1963 as to whether a vehicle of some description would be an asset to the group, or a liability. The Group committee erred in favour of mechanisation and made £100 available for the purpose. This sudden rush to the head nearly resulted in the purchase of an open top double-decker bus, surplus to Southport Borough Corporation, but after realising it would be a tight squeeze getting to the Holly Bush, it was decided to try the Army surplus auctions. Unfortunately others had a similar idea, and so for the third time lucky they tendered for a Post Office vehicle and in 1964 their offer of £15 10s was accepted.



Bryan Sharpe had contracted Whooping Cough at the ripe old age of 21, and had to have two to three weeks off work. During that time whilst the vehicle was being housed at “The Dump” near Tanners Wood, Bryan went over to fit simple slatted bench seats down either side of the vehicle to while away his time, which were not terribly comfortable but very practical. Between 1964 and 1966 it covered 1,476 miles to camps and scouting activities, 605 miles on caving expeditions, 789 miles in search of paper (for the building fund), 463 collecting jumble donations, 80 miles looking for scrap metal (building fund again) and 35 miles for grass track events. Altogether it travelled 8,000 miles during that time and cost £131 7s 6d over that time which included the original cost of the vehicle and insurance worth £10,000 against injury and liability.

Messing about on the River

Derek James became the first member of that Rover's Crew to hold the BP Award which was similar to the Duke of Edinburgh award, except only for scouts. Derek had completed a lot of his knowledge on the River Thames up to the docks to Teddington. So in July the Rovers held an special expedition up the Thames under the guidance of "The Old Man of the River".

There were about 8 Rovers who went off to Wargrave to hire a punt. Once there was a crate of beer at each end of the boat, plus themselves, there was not a lot of room. They planned to find an island and camp on it. Derek had studied the Thames and knew it all but when they got to the lock he tied one end of the punt to the chain to keep it steady. Of course the water went down and they very nearly capsized. The delights of cornflake sandwiches were sampled and Macky fell in – as usual.

As they enjoyed it so much they used to go regularly as Derek's Uncle owned a field at Wargrave that they could camp in. Once when Fred Dobson went he met them on the Sunday as he had a shop to keep open on the Saturday. He met them at a pub and Fred had bought a pair of swimming trunks with him as it was a lovely day. During the course of the afternoon the trunks split right open in the front, and it transpired that he had had them for so long that he'd worn them in the Army. There was nothing left to be done but make him a pair of swimming trunks out of a copy of the Daily Telegraph together with a paper hat. All of the way the Rover's kept splashing him with water and the paper slowly melted.

They travelled down the River Lodden which flows into the Thames, and it was very fast flowing. They got caught in the current and they thought they would be swept out, so as they went past an overhanging branch and everybody ducked, Bryan Sharpe grabbed the tree thinking he would slow them up. Of course, the punt must have weighted half a tonne on its own without the bodies and beer inside, and one man was not going to stop it, so Bryan just got lifted straight out and was left dangling from the tree. As the punt was now 100 yards ahead, Bryan had no option but to drop back down in the water and the current took him as fast as it had done the boat, if not faster, and so he caught them up and they were now in the Thames.

Eventually the punt was sunk and as they couldn't lift it because it was full of water and weighed too much they had to try to lift it bit by bit by a few inches each time. The water slowly went down and they eventually retrieved it.

Summer Fete

Mashy reported at this time that the Senior Scouts were engaged in growing their own kilts and rearing and killing the haggis, which is a difficult operation as once the haggis sprouts legs it has to be caught which can be very tricky because of the suction pads on its feet which enable it to be run across floors, ceilings etc. the best method is to set traps baited with sausage which the haggis cannot resist. The seniors will be camping in Liechtenstein in the summer where they understand there is a very rare brand of haggis living in the caves in northern Yugoslavia, its easily caught because when it sticks to the ceiling the warmth of its feet melt the ice and it falls down into any waiting open sporran.

* * * *

In addition the Rovers dug the front garden of the hut, including the rockery and the BP guild garden. Apparently there was no truth to the rumour that the shoots of hop plants have been observed breaking the surface, but it could be that they could cultivate a mass of aspidistra plants!

The annual Gilwell reunion was held in the September of 1964 and Skip attended, with 2000 others, and had the chance of meeting the Chief Scout and Lady Baden-Powell whilst there.

In November Gerry Poole and Arthur Gostick arranged a weekend to help Jock Telfer lift his potatoes on his farm. Jock has let the scouts use his fields for camps, camp fires, wide games and such like and over 5 tons of potatoes were lifted for which Jock was really grateful.

At the first meeting of 1965 the Senior Troop were presented with its own colour by Mr Hoadly. This flag was very kindly given by Skip and Molly and the troop said they would do their best to ensure that there was always a thriving Senior section worthy of it.

The Chief Scout awarded Frank Hoadly with the Silver Acorn for distinguished service to the movement, with only one being award higher, that of the Silver Wolf. It was official announced in an issue of the Scouter St. George's Day Honours list. Skip received an invitation to the St. George's day services and a place to witness the parade of Queens Scouts at Windsor Castle in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen. This honour is usually only reserved for those mentioned in the Honours List.

In March 1965 the Rovers were told about a hole in the ground in a distant spinney. So ever ones to explore they eventually found a 28ft deep hole which they went down on electron ladders. Shaped like a bottle and cement plastered, what it was they never found out!

The Senior Scouts took 1st place in the annual Tempest Hicks First Aid Competition.

Two Scouts from Liechtenstein Ludwig Buchel and Meinrad Kind, accepted the invitation to visit Abbots Langley and camp with the Troop at the end of July.

Leslie Seabrook died and John Hancox becomes Scoutmaster. Mrs Seabrook later presented the Troop with a Camp Flag Staff in memory of her husband.

Also Bill White had died and Jack Ridgeway stepped into his shoes as Editor. A memorial plaque was later unveiling in the "Bill White" room with a simple ceremony.

The senior scouts made an expedition to the Yorkshire Moors during the Easter weekend for their Explorer badge, where they covered forty nine miles.

Rover Scout **Derek James** was tragically killed in a road accident whilst on holiday in Somerset on **5th October 1965**. A memorial service was held on **28th November 1965** in Watford Town Hall where Lord Arran paid tribute to him and Ralph Reader CBE delivered the address. A District Trophy was also created in his memory.

The Building of the New Headquarters

In January 1965 plans for the proposed new HQ were drawn up by Alan Leach and submitted for approval shortly afterwards. The cost of the building was to be £9000 and a committee was formed to be in charge of fundraising. This consisted of the Chairman Bert Flint, Skip, Mrs Leach, Mr A. Moore, Mrs Reynold, Mr Skipp, Gerry Poole, Mrs Baldry, Mr Charlwood and Mr Edwards.

The Group committee had set aside £200 for investment in connection with the rebuilding fund which was launched on St. George's Day 1965. Added to these funds was the money collected from the Bill White memorial Appeal, and a memorial plaque was commissioned with a brief ceremony being held on April 23rd 1965. At this time waste paper collecting was also started for the building fund, coffee mornings and any other ad-hoc fundraising that they could think of.

As part of these fundraising efforts Jock Telfer allowed them to run grass track motorcycle and motor cross meetings at his Mansion House Farm off of East Lane. This was run in conjunction with the St Albans motorcycle club and later, the British Auto Union and the Chesham Auto club and raised hundreds of pounds. It was a tremendous undertaking done on a professional scale. Between the vehicles and the crowd there had to be three lots of rope which took a lot of setting up.



This picture was taken in about 1968 at Mansion House farm.

Arthur Edwards and Ken Hankin drafted out preliminary plans and it was necessary to spend a £100 outlay originally in order to set the event up. The size of the problem in the organisation was immense. They had to find riders and clubs to participate, a suitable course with easy access for spectators and traffic, notify all local residents, find the guarantee prize money, ambulance cover and personnel to man all stations for an expected 2000 – 3000 people.

It was on Sunday 12th June 1966 that the first grass track meeting was held. Admission for spectators as 2/6d and the programme 1/-, and with approximately 2,500 attending and many overheads for a first meeting they still made a profit of £170. People came from all over the country and as far as Derby as it was publicised widely through the automobiles newsletters. It was laid out in the shape of an hour glass, one half on the side of a hill and the other on the opposite hill proving to be an excellent track with suitable vantage points for all spectators.

Toilets that the group already had for camps were positioned in the spinney at the back of the photograph on the next page and a footpath had to be slightly diverted along the hedge because of where the race track went. This did not go down well with one of the local residents of Summerhouse Way who was walking his dog and wanted to stay on the original footpath. He got rather nasty and the Chairman at the time Mr John Grieves who was a very placid man churchgoing man, succinctly dealt with the matter and the man did not pass!

It did create some problems for the Police with about 400 of cars exiting East Lane after the meeting. Especially as they realised that they hadn't charged anyone for parking and so to make more money they got the little Cubs shaking buckets all along the Lane as people were waiting to get out and collected some more funds that way.

At one of these meetings an amusing incident occurred. Being a canny Scot Jock had told all that this was to raise money for the Scouts and that NO cars would be allowed into his fields without paying for a ticket. A Scout Leader, a newcomer from North Watford, was put on the gate, when a small green car turned up with no ticket.

“You can't come in here!” the gate keeper said.

“But I am the farmer,” came the reply

“I don't care who you are,” said the gatekeeper who was none other than Bib Butcher, and later became his son in law.

They raised about £300-£400 each meeting which went towards the building fund. They also decided to collect scrap metal which included gold and silver. The committee were originally against this idea as they thought it reduced the group to being like Tinkers. However, when the Rovers came back from the scrap metal merchant with a first cheque for £375 the committee changed their minds.

The new Scout Hall could not have been done without the help of Jock Telfer who loaned tractors, trailers and building equipment, along with himself.

In March the final plans were approved and the estimate to build it was £10,000 for materials.

The building of the new Scout Headquarters in Langley Road, Abbots Langley began in 1970 when the old HQ was demolished and the site cleared. All the building work was carried out by members of the group and parents. Jock Telfer as always was a helping hand and when they dug the footings of the building by hiring a machine as it needed to be 4 feet deep, turned up to help. As the machine cut the footings, Jock was taking the earth away with tractor and trailer. He made 46 journey of 4 cubic yards each time.

Whilst the building went on the Group meetings were held for about six months in a marquee on Jock Telfer's farm. The three Cub packs A, B and C and two Scout Troops met every night of the week in all weathers.

Alan Rees and Bryan Sharpe digging the foundations for the new HQ in 1970



Laying the electric cabling



*Kitty
Dobson*

*Ada
Poole*

*Matt
Bryan*



*Jock
Telfer*

*Eddie
Miller*

*Keith
Penrose*

*Bib
Butcher*

OUR BIG DAY

Written by Probosis II for Woodsmoke

After the torrential rain of the previous day we were surprised and delighted that Saturday July 25th dawned bright and sunny, very soon people were hard at work, for today the Scouts and Guides of Abbots Langley were out to make this a great occasion.

Food had to be delivered to the refreshment points, the dais to be daily decorated with flowers and it wasn't until we stood back to admire our work that we realised that the sun had vanished and had given way to a cloudy sky with slight rain. Our spirits sank a little for the forecast had been "possibility of heavy rain" but optimistically we pressed on and erected the ice cream kiosk.

It was at this time when we learned that Bert Coggins, Assistant National Organiser of the BP Scout Guild was unable at the last minute to attend. As this was being discussed the call went out "Get Ralph Reader on the phone." I think everyone's heart missed at least one beat, while the comments ranged from "Oh No" to "Just our so and so luck", and all stood waiting for the news to arrive. I am sure sighs of relief were heard at Langlebury when the "thumbs up" was sighted from the Secretary's garden and everybody quickly gathered around to learn that Ralph was just making sure he had the details correct for the journey to Abbots and asking if he could bring friends.

After this dramatic and (now as we look back) amusing incident, the preparations were soon completed and the VIPs were arriving within two minutes of each other to enjoy a lunch and "natter" before the afternoon's ceremony.

As 2 o'clock approached a final check proved the weather was still fine and everyone was at their correct station and the crowds began to mass around Langley Road and the High Street and to them it would appear that everything went well and without a "hitch". People will have different opinions as to the highlight of the afternoon. To some the selection of music by the Berkhamsted and Boxmoor Silver band or maybe the simple and sincere service, then perhaps it was the amusing speeches each carrying a message to its listeners.

No doubt Mother's proudest moment was seeing her youngster marching in the parade behind the band of the 61st S W Herts Scout Group.

I feel sure that the moment Ralph will remember was when he stepped out of the veteran Trojan to the tune "Crest of a Wave."

Everyone was very impressed with the new building as they looked around before going to tea in the Methodist Church Hall and marvelled at its size and unable to believe that all was accomplished without the aid of council grants.

Our day was completed with a dance in the Catholic Church Hall.

I would like to end by taking a sentence or two from a letter the organising committee sent to the local press:

"We wish to thank the willing helpers who volunteered their services before, during and after the event, without all this help the successful result would never have been achieved. On behalf of the Scouts and Guides, we wish to thank the people of Abbots Langley for their support over the last six years and for turning out in such large numbers to welcome our guests. It is this kind of support that makes the effort all worthwhile."

The foundation stone laid by Ralph Reader CBE on 25th July 1970.

Keith Moore was astonished to find that Ralph was so impressed with the efforts of the group on his "state visit" that he popped back a short while later to show a friend.



Thumbs up from Ralph Reader after he laid the foundation stone



Part of the crowd at the ceremony

GANG SHOW leader Ralph Reader came rolling into Abbots Langley, on Saturday — not on the "crest of a wave", but in the back of a splendid green vintage Trojan car.

He came to lay the foundation stone of the new 1st Abbots Langley scout and guide headquarters.

Accompanied by Mr Melville Balsillie, county scout commissioner, Mr Reader was driven through the village High Street behind the scout group's band. People lined the street to catch a glimpse of the Gang Show legend and hundreds more crowded round the half-built HQ.

Praising the scouts, cubs, brownies and

Mr Gang Show lays scout headquarters stone

guides who formed a guard of honour, Mr Reader told the crowd: "What a terrific sight they make. I'd like to see a picture of these kids on every front page of tomorrow's papers, instead of the pictures you usually see in the Sunday papers."

He described the building as a "wonderful achievement", and said it was a place to live and play in.

"This building should be a home to keep kids off the streets. One of

the troubles of this country is that there's too many houses and not enough homes."

The scouting movement, he added, was the greatest youth organisation the world has known.

Mr Balsillie said the new headquarters was the result of a vast amount of hard work. "I'm sure it will be completed in a very short time," he added.

The scout and guide group, said Mr Balsillie, needed not only money,

but adult helpers.

"We want a cub-scout leader, two assistant cub-scout leaders, and a number of women to lead the brownies and the guides." The scouting movement throughout Hertfordshire, he said, was crying out for more adult helpers.

The new headquarters will house three cub packs, two scout troops,

a venture scout unit, brownies and girl guides.

Everything except bricklaying has been done by volunteers working in the evenings and at weekend.

Since the building fund was open six years ago, £6,000 has been raised. A further £2,000 is needed.

Story: SIMON EDEN
Pictures: IAN BROWN

The decision was taken to go ahead with the rebuilding of the HQ in one complete stage rather than adopting the phased programme, and everyone knew it would be a gamble. They had worked out that the odds were balanced in their favour to do so, and being shrewd gamblers, they placed their bets.

This meant that they had to rebuild and re-occupy within the same summer, because the abandonment of the phased rebuilding meant that they would have no headquarters.

Between the date of the last meeting in the old 'hut' and the first one in the new 'headquarters' the total elapsed time was 207 days.

The polished flooring was laid by J & J Flooring (Watford) of Marlborough Road, who left additional tiles to finish the floors of the two toilets and kitchen.

Jock Telfer, Ted Ward and Cyril Windmill who were not members of the Group all gave up their valuable time towards the completion of the building, and Mr Adams supplied the plumbing.

The upstairs room was dedicated to Bill White, the former Woodsmoke Editor, and by 1971 all meetings were held in the new building and the group was renamed the 3rd North Watford, 1st Abbots Langley.



By July the forecourt was ready to be cleared and laid. There were about 12 people on the Saturday and Sunday of the first weekend who turned up to help, but on the second Saturday there was a panic as only a few helpers had turned up. Just when the ready mix cement arrived, however, out of the blue, a gang materialised and all was saved. Then on the Sunday the kerb stones were lifted and re-laid and the forecourt, front footpath and bowling green drive were all awaiting the tarmac finish.

The General Report of 1966

This made radical reforms to the Boy Scout Association which were carried out in 1967. Firstly the Association's name changed, dropping the Boy to become the Scout Association. The Cub section dropped the Wolf to become Cub Scouts; the Scout section also dropped the Boy, and the upper age limit was altered

to 16; Senior Scouts and Rover Scouts were disbanded, to be replaced by Venture Scouts for the 16 to 20 year olds and the B-P Guild 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.



Finally the training scheme's changed, gone were the first and second stars, in came the Arrows; out went first class and second class, in came the Scout Standard, Advanced Scout Standard and Chief Scout Award; the Queen Scout Award was retained, but no longer was it a Scout section badge, but belonged in the Venture Unit, and no longer was it a case of earning proficiency badges, but included long term service, commitment, and a 50+ mile expedition over four days.

Uniform

“Whilst fully appreciating the expense factor, Scouters do feel that the special wartime relaxation of the rules for uniform due to supply difficulties, clothing coupons etc, need no longer apply, we do urge that all members should wear official uniform.

*“Skip
1954 AGM*

Cubs – green jersey, blue serge shorts, orange scarf, green Cub cap.

Scouts – Khaki twill shirt, blue serge shorts, orange scarf, scout belt and hat. Patrol leaders only may wear white lanyards.

Senior Scouts – Khaki twill shirt, blue serge or cord shorts, orange scarf, scout belt, maroon beret.

Rovers – As for Seniors, except green beret in place of maroon.

Following the General Report of 1966 the Scout and Scouter Uniforms were changed and in came green berets, mushroom trousers, and green shirts for the Scouts, and fawn shirts for the Venture Scouts and Leaders.

The group changed its uniform on 1st October 1968

In the late 80's the Uniform review saw the Cub cap and Scout beret being dispensed with, which although they have been gone for over five years still seemed to crop up as symbols for the movement.

29th January 1966

500 Senior Scouts from Hertfordshire took part in the County Marathon. This took place on a wild and windy night in and around Ashridge Woods. The object was for teams to infiltrate the enemy lines, contact local partisans, find and destroy a bridge. The enemy was the Territorial Army and the bridge had to be wired and exploded in a predetermined time. Abbots Langley Seniors excelled themselves in taking 1st Place in this competition.

At the AGM in May it was reported that the 44th S W Herts was the largest Group in the Local Association. In attendance was the new Commissioner for S W Herts, Terry Soull on his first official visit, who commented that the Group not only quantity but *quality*. He then gave Chris Elburn his Queen Scout badge. Molly Hoadly, Rose Baldry and Alan Leach were presented with thanks badges. Eddie Miller was elected Vice-Chairman.

The impact of the new reforms in Scouting meant that Scouts would stay in their section an extra year for 5 instead of 4 years. Having been ordained as THE largest group in S W Herts and very near the largest in Hertfordshire, it necessitated the Troop to split into two, acting independently but combining for special activities. Bob Fennemore joined John Hancox as Scout Masters, Roger Cooper ASM and the whole group consisted of 2 Cub packs, 2 Scout Troops, a Senior Troop and Rover Crew

Alan Poole was awarded the **Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award** in May of this year, which was the first in the Group.

Brian Poole achieved his Queen's Scout Award at the age of 16³/₄ years.

The Group bus was replaced with a gift of another vehicle from Mr and Mrs Elburn and was resprayed by Messrs J & R Dalton of the Abbots Garage.

1st November saw 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.

Dedication of Bill White Memorial Flagpole

Many of Bill's old friends of the County turn out to attend a short service in the BP Scout Guild Chalet at Gilwell for the dedication of a flagpole, donated by the County Branches in Bill's memory. Dick Turpin, the 44ths Chaplain carried out the service and 80 odd voices were raised in the chosen hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers."

November 29th 1966 Lord Clarendon died.

1967

This year was the Diamond Jubilee of Scouting and the Fortieth Birthday of the present 1st Abbots Langley Group. It proved to be a challenging year with many of the 1966 report recommendations being put into practice.

A third Cub Pack was formed under the leadership of Fred Young.

And finally, the Rover Crew were dissolved. The 44th Rover Crew had reformed shortly after the 2nd World War and had always been a power of strength to the Group and District. They had undisputed authorised notoriety in Potholing, piano moving, and midnight Aspidistra Shows! It was envisaged that most of them would join the BP Guild.

An evening to mark The End of Rover Scouting “a reunion” was held in the Henderson hall on 18th October 1967.

Conrad Ascher, the County Commissioner wrote:

Dear Sir

I was attending the dance and the celebrations last weekend to commemorate the sad demise and funeral of the Abbots Langley Rover Crew.

You do not need me to tell you the occasion was a great success. The music, the atmosphere, the whole organisation were splendid. You do not need me to tell you that your list of guests distinguished. Indeed, I feel tempted to add the rhetorical question, had I not been invited myself? But this temptation I strongly resist.

You do not need me to say how delicious and ample the buffet was, did I not make at least eight separate journeys to the kitchen? Did I not bring many plates of sardined toast and jammed cake for all the others on my table to eat? Did they not, out of their kindness of heart let me eat some too? Did they not thus disregard my figure and dieting? And what of that marvellous funeral cake?

I feel like adding – but will not – that you do not need me to tell you how good the speeches were. If I did write this, some evilly disposed person would shout “big head” and shatter the rural quiet of Abbots Langley. You do not need me to say that I very greatly enjoyed meeting so many friends again and what a memorable function it was.

But, this must be said about the Rover Crew, and said in no uncertain way. It was one of the finest in the country, let alone the county. Its activities and its members spread deep and wide. It will be sadly missed, or rather it would be sadly missed were it not for the fact that the spirit of service and of gaiety which is resented will continue. Only the name under which it flourished has gone, but the spirit survives. It was said of Charles I upon his execution that nothing in life became him so much as his leaving it. This is true of the Rovers, except that their whole life has been as fine as their leaving it.

March 1967

Bryan Sharpe reported in the Woodsmoke that the Rovers had been asked by the British Cave Research Group of Great Britain if in their spare time they could lay some traps at the bottom of wells to catch blind fresh water shrimps. After advertising in the local paper and touring the district for suitable wells, they thought they had found some of these shrimps in the well in Eddy Miller’s back garden. By **Nov 1967** the Crew were successful in catching three specimens of blind fresh-water shrimps which were pickled in Formaldehyde and sent to Brig. A. E. Glennie of the Cave Research Group. He was delighted and said that the type had never been found in this area before. He came over to see the well in which they were found, lowered his own trapping devices to catch more specimens.

Frank Hoadly tendered his resignation at the AGM as he felt that if the 44th were to flourish under the recommendations of the Advanced Party Report, a younger man was needed at the helm. Skipper has built the Group into a close knit and well respected family over the previous 32 years.

Woodsmoke Sept 1967 Skip Hoadly

Naturally it is with mixed feelings that today, October 1st, I have just written to the District Commissioner enclosing my Warrant for cancellation, after almost 32 wonderfully happy years as a Scouter here. In that period Abbots Langley has grown enormously, and of course, our own Group has expanded likewise from about 11 scouts, 24 Cubs and 4 Scouters to its present strength of around 150 members, plus the BP Guild.

However there is one important thing which remains unchanged and that is the friendly support and the village atmosphere which I have consistently experienced during this time and which I feel is still present to hand on to my successor. Here I really must say a heartfelt "thank you" to everyone who made me – a stranger from London – so welcome and for accepting me readily into the full life of the community. I am indeed grateful for the truly marvellous way in which all the efforts for Scouting in this place have been encouraged, and I have often wondered whether the boys themselves have realised the full extent of the work put in on their behalf by our lay friends. Being boys, I don't expect that they then give the matter more than a passing thought, but I am sure that later in life they have appreciated it by the way that so many have been ready in their turn to lend a helping hand in one form or another to the rising generation. You have all been very tolerant of my shortcomings, and have often glossed over my mistakes, which perhaps was not really good for me although it boosted my morale!

Several of the folk who were interested in the Group when I first arrived on the scene are still assisting, albeit "in the wings", and to them much of our progress is due. One such lady, is, of course, my wife, for she was "Akela" in 1936, and ever since our marriage her forbearance and active encouragement has enabled me to give far more time to my G.S.L.'s duties than would otherwise have been possible.

To some of our more distant readers without personal knowledge of Scouting here the above remarks may appear to paint too glowing a picture to be true, but I am writing quite sincerely, just as I have found things. In fact, the best wish that I can give to Keith Moore is that he too may be able to write in a similar strain when "old age" overtakes him! I am confident that you will not let either of us down, for I am leaving the Group in excellent hands - yours and his!

The Warranted Section Leaders were invited to join the Group committee, thus achieving a closer liaison and understanding between the officers of both. Bert Flint resigned as Group Chairman and Alan Leach took over the position.

The District Commissioner presented Fred Dobson with a 15 year long service badge as a warranted leader. And a Thanks Badge went to Arthur Edwards for his hard work as organiser of events for the HQ fundraising.

Keith Moore then took over as GSL from Frank Hoadly, and commenced his duties in October

On the 8th July they held a Donkey Derby.

A camp of the top Scout Patrol leaders from all parts of the UK was held between 29th July to 5th August 1967 on Brownsea Island to commemorate the Movements 60th birthday.

The new scout badge was introduced on 1st October 1967 with subtle changes and being referred to as three arrowheads and no longer as the fleur-de-lys.

Ken Harrison started to help Gerry Poole and Chil run the Scouts in September.

Four members of the Venture scouts had a summer expedition to the Cairngorm mountains and isle of Skye, Scotland.

In the group committee meeting of November 1967 it was decided that a small sub-committee be formed to be responsible for maintenance of the HQ, this consisted of the group chairman Alan Leach a structural engineer, and two Guildsmen Bryan Sharpe, a carpenter and Keith Penrose, electrician.

1968

The group celebrated its 40th anniversary with a dance and social in the Henderson Memorial Hall. The event was organised by Frank Hoadly and members of the group council. About 150 people attended dancing to Ciro's band until the ceremony of cutting the group's 40th birthday cake took place at 9pm when the honour of wielding the knife was shared by Mr L Pears (Deputy County Commissioner), Mr A. Emery (President of South-West Herts Division Scout Council and past District Commissioner), Mr Terry Sohl (District Commissioner) and Mr L. Willis (Past District Commissioner) and Ron Freeman (Training Commissioner).

Surprise of the evening for Frank Hoadly who sent in his warrant last October, was the presentation of a plaque by the present Group Scout Leader, Keith Moore, on behalf of the group, past and present inscribed: "In appreciation and gratitude for 32 years as a devoted Scouter and Group Leader."

Mr Moore declared: "Scouting has greatly benefitted by his leadership, wisdom and dependability.

There was a standing ovation while everyone sang, We've been together now for 32 years. Then Dr Pears, on behalf of the district and group, presented Mr Hoadly with one of the last District Scout Master's badges available. The new badges are for District Scout Leaders.

Dr Pears stated that he had long admired the work Frank Hoadly had done. "He must have had a tremendous influence on Abbots Langley," he said, "Not only in Scouting for they (the scouts) have become men, have married and become fathers creating an influence which has extended throughout the population."

Mr Hoadly modestly disclaimed responsibility for the increase in the population – then quietly thanked those present for their tokens of appreciation, which, he claimed, had come as a complete surprise to him, and concluded "The future is all our concern. Under its present leadership the group will continue to flourish and make its name known even more widely in the country, district and Abbots Langley."

In March Peter Lythaby was the first of the Troop to get a new Chief Scout's Award. Together with his Scout Cords he was in the unique position of probably being the only boy in the 44th who held these two awards, as the Scout cords were abolished in October 1968.

The Venture Scout began their first mountaineering club in December with an expedition to Bethesda, Wales, and their numbers had grown to 22.

1969

Fred Dobson cooked over a hundred pancakes for the Venture Scouts all night exercise under very testing conditions. Abbots Langley had entered four teams and came 1st, 2nd, 5th and 17th. The course included 15 tests over a distance of 18 ½ miles and was a very tough course.

The Venture unit then went on to win the Snowdonia Peak Assault. Out of 28 teams taking part, only 13 completed, 5 teams being from SW Herts, one of which were Abbots Langley. They were presented with a silver cup by world famous rock climber Joe Brown.

Eddie Miller took over as Group Chairman in the November from Alan Leach, at a time of much activity when the new headquarters was about to be built.

In August the Cub Football team finally received the football league shield which they had won for the 1968/69 season. The trophy was given to the district in 1958 by Mr E Nobbs, former Asst. District Commissioner for S W Herts, and since then the 44th had won it 5 times.

On 31st August members of the group attended the opening of "Flight Oaks" a new building at Lees Wood, named as a tribute to "Flight" Cracknell, Camp Director of Lees Wood and Chairman of the Lees Wood Friends and supporters Association.

Members of the group helped at the 2nd "Six Counties Camp" At Woodlarks near Farnham for boys with handicaps.

Guild members attend the 21st anniversary service of the BP Guild at Westminster Abbey on 31st May.

Dave Miller applied for a warrant as scouter in charge of Pathfinder Troop after John Hancox left the village.

1970

A 16 year Long Service award was presented to GSL Keith Moore. At the AGM, Jack Ridgeway (Woodsmoke Editor) and Gordon Collier (Treasurer) were given Thanks badges. In Abbots Langley these badges are only given for outstanding service to the group.

Woodsmoke was included in the Hertfordshire Scout News, attributable to Jack Ridgeway's editorship and in October, the magazine reached its 100th Edition.

There was lots of activity on the HQ building but as ever, they seemed to cope well to get the job done. The old scout hut was demolished at Easter and the new HQ built. Ralph Reader paid a visit and laid a foundation stone in the lobby on 25th July.

On 3rd July the Pathfinder Troop entered Abbots Langley's first scout car in the National Scout car races at Scarborough. Peter Collier, Howard Johnston, Keith Penrose and Dave Miller left the village at 7.45 pm they arrived at 2.45 am to pitch tents and were down at the track by 9am, which was along the promenade. The vast majority of the work on building the car was done by Andrew Sturla who unfortunately couldn't be at the race. The car passed inspection after having the rear chopped off because it was too high, but as the first driver Peter Collier was at the start someone pulled the car back and the 3 speed gear jammed and it never left the starting line. Howard Johnston was racing in the afternoon but the chain came off not very far from the start. 107 cars entered ranging from some looking like bathtubs to those build like a centurion tank.

The Cub's held their first meeting in the new HQ on 23rd October.

The 21st Boxing Day walk was held.

The Group entered one team from each Cub pack into the District Road Safety Competition and took 1st, 2nd and 4th places – the 3rd going to a team who were coached by the Police.



1971

The GSL Keith Moore was awarded a Medal of Merit for his contribution to scouting in general and Abbots Langley in particular in **1971**. Dave Weatherby attended World Jamboree in Japan as ASL. Bill Goode became Group Chaplain.

In July. Miss Lesley Young was invested as a Scouter and received her permit as an Assistant Cub Scout Leader.

The September edition of the Woodsmoke reported:

S *T*O*P P*R*E*S*S

50 minutes before going to press I have been told that this morning the Ladies Guild have taken nearly £19 at a coffee morning

1972

With effect from **1st January 1972** the 1st Abbots Langley transferred their Troop's designation from the 44th South West Herts to the 3rd North Watford. Their official title becoming 1st Abbots Langley, 3rd North Watford.

Around this time a "Sunday Activity Group" was formed by the younger element of the of the Guild and a warranted scouter. It was open to boys who had passed the Advanced Scout Standard, or be over 14. The Group started by taken part in rock climbing, precision compass work, caving, canoeing and mountain rescue, which were deemed to be Adventurous Scouting Activities.

As the year was European Friendship year, the summer camp was arranged to be held in Holland.

Keith Moore was running the Scout troop in the absence of a Scout Leader, as Dave Miller had to withdraw because of work commitments. Keith was later joined by Brian Poole as an assistant.

A group annual dinner was held in the new HQ, with Ralph Reader as the guest speaker.

The Chairman, Eddie Miller, was presented with the Thanks badge by the GSL at the AGM, along with Vic Lythaby and Arthur Gostic.

In July Jack Ridgeway received a letter from the South Africa Headquarters Commissioner for Publications with a certificate honouring "Woodsmoke", For improved communicating in Scouting and an Honorary Membership to the Scout Press Club to Jack.

Miss Janice Wiseman became an Assistant Cub leader late in 1972.

Dave Willett took over as Venture Scout Leader at the end of the year.

District Hertford to Ware County Raft Race 1972 In the raft christened “The Second Crew Creeper”

*Story recounted by Bryan Sharp, with additional material
from the article in Woodsmoke by Bert Keene, the Chairman at the time*

The annual raft race from Hertford to Ware for Scouts and Guides was held on 16th September. This race was open to all those over the age of 16 and so The Guild decided to make an entry.

Work on the raft had started 3 weeks prior to the event under the guidance of Bryan Sharpe. After a couple of days the basic structure 10ft x 5ft was completed and it was decided to try it out on the canal. This must have been foresight on the part of Bryan because when Bib finally got onto the raft it was below water level, but a few more five gallon drums gave the buoyancy required.

They had entered the competition the year before but because they were carpenters and deemed to have more skill than others, the rule this year was that no nails or screws were allowed. So instead they used a banding machine which banded the drums together with metal strips. For safety reasons they had to wear a life jacket, but felt that wearing Paton shoes was acceptable. One official remarked “you’re not going rafting in those shoes are you?” and Bryan’s reply was “Why, what’s wrong with them. You don’t think we’re going to get wet do you?”

On the Friday evening prior to the race it was decided to build up all the items so that it could be easily assembled at the riverside. It was now that the designer had misgivings as to whether it would float because in addition to the captain and crew of three, the raft was now fitted with a full size television set complete with aerial, fishing rods, four easy chairs, cannon, whaling harpoon, Guild flag, auxiliary motor, periscope, sun umbrella (from outside the King’s Head) Davy Jones locker, tea making equipment, ships bell, steering gear, Captain’s carpet, figure head, line of washing, toilet roll and chain, anchor and silver water otter.

On Saturday a start was made to assemble the raft on the river bank at Hertford, to be ready for the race at 1.30 pm and it attracted a lot of attention from the many people who were there. Many thought it was just a show piece and would not float and this included the two scouters who were issuing the seaworthiness certificates. When the starters call came to get into the water there was a general rush by all to the bank to watch the raft launched and as everyone expected, to sink. We were confident and with the four man crew aboard they made for the starting line.

A five minute warning shot is fired to enable every team in the race to get ready but Croxley Green took this for the starting signal and they started to paddle furiously down the river. When the starting signal was eventually given Bib was still hanging over the side trying to fixt the rudder, also the raft was facing across stream. After much shouting and cheers the raft started down stream with the crew singing the Eton Boating Song.

They’d taken with them an old crate with straw sticking out of it. At the beginning of the race while they were waiting to load their raft into the river, they positioned the crate nearby. They charged the crowd 2 shillings to look at the British Silver Water Otter. The idea was that one person at a time opened up the lid and there was a Swan, English silver water hotter. In other words a kettle! Of course people were fuming and humiliated by being

caught out. Lil Murray was standing beside the crate because she was good at convincing people to tell their friends and get them to come and have a look themselves. They stumbled away saying, “go over there and have a look at what they’ve got. It’s absolutely unbelievable!” In the end they had a queue set back slightly from the crate so that they couldn’t see what was happened. They made £3-£4 from the proceedings before they’d even started the race.

Meanwhile, with the deck chairs screwed to the floor of the raft, the record player they had taken on board was playing and smoke pluming from a lit fire in the chimney to look like it was driven by steam, they continued down the river, followed by a shark fin sticking out of the water behind them secured to the raft with a bit of fishing wire. The fin was Fred Dobson’s idea, and he wouldn’t take part as he was working, but he’d made a log that floated just below the water with a shark fin sticking out of the top of it. As they progressed they brewed cups of tea and handed them out to the poor souls who had already capsized and were floundering about in the river. Very useful when they were drowning and trying to swim for the shore to have to do so with a cup of tea in their hand.



John Lythaby, Bryan Sharpe, Keith Penrose, Bib Butcher

Bib was the Captain dressed in full uniform, including a bowler hat festooned with pink ribbon. Bryan in full gear with top hat, Keith in shirt sleeves with a sea rangers hat and John Lythaby with off shore seaman’s outfit with a peak cap.

It was not long before the crew were being overtaken by the boys in the next race and several showed concern when Bib tried (not very hard) to sink any craft made from inner tubes with his whaling harpoon. The cheers from the supporters on the tow path spurred them to greater effort.

Each bridge across the river was crowded with sightseers and Bib gave them a welcome with his trumpet. Many people were surprised to see such a strange craft on the river and the

children enjoyed the antics of the crew. A Japanese tourist was standing at the bridge taking photos and after each one he would rush down to the next bridge to see how the escapade was progressing. There must be a family in Japan who think that this is the norm for British boating!

As there were 40 entrants overall the locks got very congested and so they decided that they would carry the raft around a couple of them. As the crowd were being thoroughly entertained by all these antics they became very enthusiastic and all helped haul the cumbersome, rather heavy raft out of the water and around the lock to the next part of the river. That alone would have got them disqualified had they been seen.

Finally they reached Ware and at that point in the river there were lots of warehouses. As they couldn't lift the raft off of the water without help they were at a loss for a while until they spotted some crates of empty Scotch whiskey bottles ready to be filled. So they floated across and went into the warehouse to pick up some bottles which they duly filled with river water.

The whole escapade was taken too kindly by the County, who thought it wasn't in the spirit of the event. Well the Abbots did actually get disqualified and as they thought that Croxley Green had made such a tremendous effort they decided to give them a *whisky bottle*, as Conrad Asher was the International Scout Commissioner at the time and a Barrister who also gave after dinner speeches.

After this they loaded the raft back into Dave Miller's Pickford's lorry. The Croxley Green mob came charging across the car park, and they thought, oh dear, we've loaded this bottle with river water and they've found out already. But they hadn't. They came across to thank them, kindly, for such a wonderful thought. That made them double up in the back of Dave's van and Bryan Sharpe remembers his stomach heaving with laughter. So finally, they drove off as fast as they could.

It was heard that they had a Guild meeting a week later because Croxley Green had their own Guild, and they asked everybody to bring a small glass along, because they were going to celebrate with the bottle of whiskey that they had been given, but were absolutely furious when they opened the bottle!

The photograph shown is the only one we could locate of the raft, unless we can track down the Japanese tourist!

1973

Bob Fennemore, Scout Leader of Panther Troop, agreed to act as Deputy Group Scout Leader for Keith Moore in March of 1973

Lesley Young took out a Cub Leader warrant in **1973**.

In the first part of the year, Bib Butcher and Heather were married. They had also been printing and collating Woodsmoke for over a year.

A group of Scouts won the Peak Assault held in March 1973 in the Junior section, namely Ian Gill, Lance Gill, Christopher Cook and Anthony Middleton.

Both pack of Cubs won 1st and 2nd prize at the District Sports competition.

Jack Ridgeway attended a Magazine Production Course at B P House, where the first slide shown on how a magazine should look was our very own Woodsmoke with a "clear, modern and uncluttered cover". There was to be a magazine of the year competition for which the September/October edition of the Woodsmoke was entered, but sadly was unplaced.

The Ventures and Sunday Activity group spent a wet weekend in Wales climbing, the Group vehicle broke down, but they had a great time!

Gold Star Football Champs



Abbots Langley joined the Gold Star Award Scheme on 7th September 1972 and sent in their first badge claims on the 19th of the same month! Two further lots of claims followed shortly afterwards and 12 Cub scouts became proud possessors of Gold Star Badges. Ian Turn was highly enthusiastic about his team and some of the talented footballers in the group who practiced hard to win badges were captured in this photograph.

Lto R John Whittle, Barry Soams, Chris Swann, Tim Hives
Ian Turner (standing)
Trevor Healing (kneeling)

Members of the group helped at the Six Counties Scout camp in Ommen commencing 8th August. This comprised 51 Scouts with a handicap and 100 others most in the Scout movement.

By the end of the year the group were in need of more Scouters to help the Troop. No change there then!

3 brothers Carl, Lance and Ian Gill took part in Europatrol 1973, the largest camp held abroad by British Scouts to-date, with 750 in attendance over 5 weeks. The World Wild Life Fund had subsidised the expedition meaning that 3 hours of their time there would be spent clearing up Lake Garda.

1974

The Ladies and BP Guilds planted silver birches outside the Parish Council Offices in Langley Road to commemorate "Plant a Tree Year" on 2nd December 1973. Rose Baldry reported in June 1974 that she had visited the tree several times and it seems to be flourishing and had a very elegant plaque. She would like to Guild to place a seat underneath it so that she can sit in the shade in her old age and keep an eye on the tree and the HQ.

Help was at hand in the guise of Andrew Purr who became Assistant Scout Leader, Pete Lythaby – Scout Leader of 'C' Pack, Lesley Young and John Stillman as Assistant Cub Scout Leaders, Chris Austin as Assistant Scout Leader, and Norman Edwards as Assistant Venture Scout Leader.

The Cubs took part in a District Tree Squatting competition in **March** which entailed living in a tree for 24 hours. They managed to come 1st with a team led by Tom Gentle.

Mrs Telfer died in May of this year and Molly Hoadly in August.

A new pair of curtains made by Ada Poole were hung in the Bill White Memorial Hall. These were only replaced in 2007 as you can see in this picture with Bryan Sharpe diligently sewing the hem with instructions from Bib Butcher.



Jack Ridgeway tendered his resignation as Woodsmoke Editor. In some 27 years of production the publication has only had two editors, a record of which many national newspapers would be proud.

The Venture Scouts formed 3 sections within itself – Mountaineering, Mechanics and Canoeing. A programme was mapped out for the Mountaineering Section to include a certain amount of training in mountain walking and rock climbing. Membership covered anyone over the age of 14, including members of the Scout Guild.

The Group visited Liechtenstein.

Derrick Flowers became Woodsmoke Editor with his first edition in October/November. In November 1974 Ada reported in the Woodsmoke that she had been with the group for 18½ years. 12½ of which were as a warranted Scouter and had just taken out a warrant as Akela of the Cub 'A' Pack.

1975

Tom Gentle was selected to attend as one of the North Watford District representatives at the world jamboree held at Lillehammer, Norway in **August**. He was given £5 towards his pocket money from a Rover Scout with the directive that "Thomas was to remember in the same way a Scout going on such a trip in twenty year's time". Whilst in Lillehammer he was visited by Bryan Sharpe, Keith Penrose and Dave Miller, and Lord Baden Powell's son visited the Herts contingent in their Camp each day.

A cub scout, Paul Donkin who was 9¼ years old had had an accident whilst at school and later died as a result of the injuries sustained. Keith Moore expressed his sympathy for a young life cut so tragically short.

On 7th February the Mountaineering section travelled to North Wales, staying at Hertfordshire's Coetmor Mill in Bethesda for a weekend of walking and climbing, led by Bryan Sharpe with cooking by Bib.

In July of 1975 Dave Willett, Venture Scout Leader, moved abroad and left the unit in the hands of Dave Miller.

The Men's Guild organised a trip to Coetmoor Mill and five gallant members of the Ladies Guild conquered Mount Snowdon under great duress and gruelling conditions. It was their great determination and tenacity which enabled them to reach the summit, with one member even willing to lay down and die, recalled Rose in the Woodsmoke

In **1975** the 5th group van, a British Rail Workshop vehicle was purchased and converted into a 23 seater bus by the Guild.



The Peak Assault was held on Dartmoor.

The summer camp was at Hailsham and you can find an extract of the week in the Camps section.

Ralph Reader CBE was awarded the United Nations Ceres Medal in recognition of the millions of pounds raised for Scouting from Gang Shows all around the world. The Farewell Gang Show ran for two weeks at the end of October, Mr Reader having decided to retire.

In **October** the decision was made to close down the Cub "C" Pack and absorb them into A and B packs. Ken Harrison took over as Scout Leader of the Pathfinder Troop.

At this time also a Supporters Association was formed with John Grieves as its Chairman.

The Pathfinder Scout Troop narrowly secured the Derek Jones **District Sports trophy** by two points; Whilst Cub pack 'B' won the District Athletics for the second time in three years and District Commissioner Roger Sands presented certificates during a parents evening. This was the first **double** ever by the group. The novelty item of the day was the Chariot race with make shift trek carts to be manoeuvred over and around an obstacle course with a passenger carrying 4 balloons full of water.

Steve Flowers received a Gallantry medal for assisting in a canoeing incident.

Woodsmoke - Sept 1975

An incident occurred on a weekend camp which highlights the qualities Patrol Leaders have and are capable of using when they have to.

Three boys were out on the Thames having canoeing instruction from "Butch" in what can only be described as rough weather. It was so rough that a tree was blown down which hit and caught another canoeing instructor in its branches. The instructor was knocked unconscious and fast in his canoe. The three boys witnessed this incident and were obviously shocked for a minute or two. "Butch" went to the aid of the injured man and left their boys without a leader.

Instinct told the boys to paddle to the safety of the bank. It was while the lads tried to get to the riverside that the three canoes capsized putting these three lads in trouble and which but the presence of mind of one of our Patrol Leaders, Steven Flowers, could have been very serious.

Steven, although not an experienced canoeist went to the rescue of two of the boys from the other party and got them back to the safety of the bank, then went to help his friend Kevin Porter who had also capsized, to the bank. Steven's presence of mind in this difficult situation was second to none, he remained very cool, calm and collected which I am sure prevented what could have been a very serious incident.

I am not sure that I would have the confidence in many adults to re-act as Steven did. Although he has been put to the test as it were, I am sure that similar results would have been achieved by any of my Patrol Leaders had they been there.

Rest assured Mums. That we have a bunch of very good Patrol Leaders who are caring for your lads. When Steven was congratulated for his efforts, he remarked "It's what any Patrol Leader would do."

1976

The Cub's celebrated their Diamond Jubilee of 60 years existence. They were also the winners of the District Cub Football league.

The Canoeing and Mountaineering sections were functioning very well. Butch was running the canoeing assisted by Dave Miller and asked the Group Council for £300 to buy equipment. So a number of canoes were purchased and a good supply of safety equipment. A favoured acquisition was the canoe trailer, build by Charlie Buckerfield and Lou Pickering. Similarly the Mountaineering Section under Bryan Sharpe pursued a progressive programme.

A weekend was spent in Wales with a party of all sort of Scout types – Guild members (of both sexes) and Venture Scouts with ages ranging from mid teens to the over seventies, using the Group minibus and travel to Coetmoor Mill, North Wales. The party divided into three sections.

One led by Keith Moore embarked on an ambitious project walking in the mountains. They were in preparation for the trip to Liechtenstein, so David Tolhurst, Steven Flowers, Peter Flowers and Trevor Healing scrambled up several hundred feet to their overnight camp carrying tentage, cooking gear during a two day hike.

The second party of four, led by Bryan Sharpe, went rock climbing, pre-selected routes of between 450 and 500 feet

And the rest, with leader Keith Penrose, took a five mile walk (at lease that's what they were told).

The canoeing section was also very active with practice sessions at weekends on the Grand Union Canal and repair and overhaul teams at work in the HQ. The climax of the training came with a visit to Longridge National Scout Boat Centre for a canoeing weekend when 17 boys undertook their proficiency tests. 7 passed part 1, 7 passed part 2 and 2 gained the Canoeist badge. Later 6 boys also achieved their British Canoe Union Inland Kayak proficiency certificates.

The Guild acquired a new 23 seater bus for the benefit of the group as a whole.

Gordon Collier relinquished the job of Treasurer when he moved away, and Fred Young agree to take the role on.

The scout troop were 40 in number with 7 scouters. Dave Willett was assistant Scout Leader along with Mr Joyce

Three Queen's Scout Awards were given at the AGM to Chris Cook, Alan Pateman and Peter Dennett. These were the first Venture Scouts to obtain this award in Abbots Langley for many years. A Medal of Meritorious Conduct was awarded to Stephen Flowers, the Group Secretary, Doug Read, received the Medal of Merit and the Deputy Chairman a Thanks Badge. The Chairman, Eddie Miller made a presentation to Gordon Collier in appreciation of his long and loyal service to the group. The AGM had taken the form of a cheese and wine evening and attracted good support from parents.

The Pathfinder Scout Troop gained the "County Commissioner's Standard". The first one in the Group.

The Peak Assault team achieved an impressive third place, when 40 out of the 54 teams entered could not finish the course due to the extremely bad weather conditions. The team, which was the youngest in the competition, comprised John Denton, David Tolhurst, Ian Gill, Lance Gill, Tony Bail and Kevin Middleton and were ably trained by Bryan Sharpe, competed against teams including the Herts Police and the army.

Total distance covered – 32.5 Km

Highest Point – 898 metres

Lowest Point – 152 metres

Bob Fennemore accepted the invitation to the post of Assistant Group Scout Leader, whilst Brian Pleasants took over as Scout Leader of the Panther Trip. Bob had been their leader for 10 years and was ably assisted through much of this time by Doug Hill and also by Bill Niel.

A report was published called “Adult Support in Scouting.” The effect of this on the group was minimal as the group was large and already encompassed practically all of the suggested bodies being recommended in the report, albeit with different names.

Christopher Cook took over the chairmanship of the executive committee of the Venture unit from Ron Brothers, who had done an admirable job since the formation of the unit. Alan Pateman reached the age to leave Ventures but continued to help run the Scouts as Assistant Scout Leader.

A training weekend for Scout Patrol Leaders and Assistant Patrol Leaders was held in the village in March. Initiatives including

- a) rescuing a person from a burning building (30 ft up)
- b) Getting a patrol over an electric fence (a real live one)
- c) Transporting a patrol plus supplies over a 500 feet deep chasm (actually only 8 feet)

Eve Dartnall and Dave Miller helped with the catering and Roger Sands (District Commissioner) arrived for the final session on Sunday afternoon – the course assessment. All agreed it had been a thoroughly worthwhile experience.



View of the miners track from about ¾ of the way up.

The Panther Troop had an Easter Camp at Brynfoil in North Wales and the journey in the Group bus took 7 hours. A dozen boys lumbered up Snowdon via the Pyg track to the summit. The weather closed down half way up and they couldn't see anything of the view, so they decided to call it a day and return via the Miners track, thoroughly disappointed, but with the satisfaction of knowing that they had negotiated one of the more difficult Snowdon routes.

Frank Hoadly received the Bar to the Silver Acorn from Air Vice Marshal Sir Bernard Chacksfield (Chief Commissioner for England) at the County AGM on July 12th.
Gerry Poole received a Medal of Merit.

Mathew Gentle and Carl Gill entered the Herts Scout Sailing Open Meeting. Not knowing what opposition to expect they took the precaution of practising on the water the previous Thursday. Despite a couple of bad starts the boys finished up as winner and for their efforts they won:

The Grebe Cup	best Herts Scout boat
The Endeavour Cup	best crew and helm
The Sailing Cup	they never quite know what that one was for
A medal each, and A knife each	

Initiative and enterprise showed that they could “do it on their own”.

The Quartermaster, Lou Pickering, moved his stores from the loft area in the HQ to the room at the rear of the stage which was designated workshop, but had not been used in five years.

A District Cub Jubilee Camp was held at Lees Wood.

The Pathfinder Troop entered the Delecta Competition and came first in their section and second overall.

Panther Troop introduced a Scout of the month competition, and the first winner was Simon Pleasants. The following month it went to Kevin Middleton.

The purpose of the Adult Support in Scouting document became more clear and the main change affecting the group was that fund raising should be removed from Uniformed members' responsibility. This resulted in the abolition of the Scout Guild and formation of the Scout Fellowship and Ladies Guild.

The Venture scouts visited Liechtenstein in August and also Scotland. An account of Liechtenstein can be read in a section which appears later in this publication.

The Venture's attempted to walk the Lyke Wake Walk but the first try was aborted because of a fire on the moor. On the second attempt the conditions were very bad but they trudged on through heavy mud, bog, water and the weather eventually cleared. The idea was to complete the 40 mile walk in under 24 hours to become a member of the Lyke Wake Walk Club. Unfortunately they lost their way about 4 miles from the finish and had to be picked up by road having walked over 40 miles in 19.5 hours. A good achievement, considering the poor conditions and the fact that 9 hours of it they were walking in the dark.

The group's 50th Anniversary and 70 Years of Scouting (The Queen's Silver Jubilee)

The Group celebrated its 50th anniversary taking its date from its reformation in 1927.

Roger Sands ended his reign as District Commissioner due to business and John Griffin took over. Abbots Langley are greatly indebted to Roger in the way that he moulded the district of north Watford into one of the most go-ahead districts in the county.

Bert Flint, the Group's chairman for many years, died suddenly. He was a hard working man who had put a lot of effort into the group. Lou Pickering, Quartermaster for the previous 6 years, gave up the position. He had spent a lot of his spare time repairing and maintaining things in his charge and had saved the Group a great deal of money and inconvenience. His expertise was hard to replace, but by November they had secured the services of John Tolhurst.



Lesley Turner (nee Young) left the Cubs at this point for the realm of motherhood, and later Jean Knapp resigned. However, there was new blood in the guise of David Edwards and Ben Salvatierra who took out leader warrants. Later that year three new scouters Tony Bianchi, Gerald Hansen and Dave Weatherley joined as assistants.

Eve Dartnall took over running the Uniform Swap shop from Hazel Watts who had run the venture since its inception.

The Panther Scout Troop gained the County Commissioner's Standard and became only the second troop in the District to have achieved it. The other troop being our very own Pathfinders! The Standard, which was valid for 12 months, is awarded as a result of an informal inspection by the County Commissioner's team. They looked for smartness in uniform and ceremony, full use being made of the training scheme, good co-operation with Cubs through the Link Badge, special activities for those over 14 with a link with Venture Scouts, and good standard of badge work. The troop must also be enjoying themselves, giving some form of service and taking part in District events.

The Ventures had a night hike starting from Tring station, via Ivinghoe Beacon, through Aldbury (for refreshment) and arriving back at Abbots Langley before Midnight.

The Scout Guild officially came to an end at the end of March when it was renamed. Little effect was felt by the Abbos and Rose Baldry commented "as far as our branch is concerned, we still have our orgies and outings ..."

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

11th JULY 1977:—

Service of Commemoration in Methodist Church, Langley Road at 19.30 for Scouters, Adult Supporters and past members of the Group.

12th JULY 1977:—

Cheese and Wine evening, continuous film and slide show of Group activities.

13th JULY 1977:—

Open night : 18.00 - 21.30
Meet at Headquarters.

14th JULY 1977:—

Group Revue in Headquarters at 20.00

15th JULY 1977:—

Camp Fire at Little Notley, Mansion House Farm, Bedmond Road 19.30

16th JULY 1977:—

Sports at School Field, Cecil Lodge at 15.00
Buffet Dance in Headquarters at 20.00

17th JULY 1977:—

Service of Thanksgiving in Church of St. Lawrence the Martyr at 15.00

A programme of events was drawn up to celebrate the group's anniversary. The activities were faithfully adhered to for the whole week and all members, friends and supporters who had pledged their support were true to their word. It was the Group Secretary, Doug Read who had piloted arrangements for the week through to their fruition.

The Group were also joined by 11 members of the link up group from Ruggell in Lichtenstein, who dovetailed perfectly into the arrangements. This resulted in Abbots Langley being invited to the Golden Jubilee celebrations being held in Ruggell in 1981.

GSLs Comments

So, the Group is now 50 years old!

What, you may well ask, is the significance of that?

Indeed, many Scout Groups have attained this milestone. However, many more Groups during the same period have embarked upon the self-same trail, only to fall by the wayside; so what separates the 'successes' from the 'failures'?

I think that there are a number of contributory factors. In our case, the village community, and all that it means has given us identify and that sense of belonging which means so much in a voluntary organisations, and for this, the 'group is deeply indebted to the people of Abbots Langley who have proved such good friends and loyal supporters over the half century.

Another of the corner stones of success could broadly be classified as 'people and personalities'. By this I am really trying to suggest that a lion's share of the recognition for our successful continuance as a powerful and active group should be served for those loyal servants who have worked for the Group in many capacities – both uniformed and otherwise – over many years, many of them being almost unnoticed, but all equally important. Abbots Langley has been fortunate in having many such helpers.

Tradition is another of our strengths and all praise to my predecessors for the tradition they have built up both within and surrounding the group.

We are a strong group at the present time because of the strong past. We inherited this strength and we have a duty, each and every one of us, whether scouters, lay helpers, parents or supporters in any other capacity, to make use of these advantages and to ensure that we leave the group at all times at least as strong as we have ever known it.

May god bless and guide us over the coming 50 years.

Keith Moore

At one Venture meeting Roy Hoadly gave a talk on **interior decorating**. After initial problems with the blow lamp, the evening got well under way and finished with paper hanging all ways. Some members of the unit were suitably inspired and continued on a serious redecoration of the den.

On a Venture Trip to Derbyshire in February of that year Dave Miller, Tim Legard, Pete Linskey, Chris Collier, Dave Tolhurst, John Denton and Tony Bail set off to reach the summit of **Kinder Scout**. Plans soon went wrong as the snow that was falling began to get worse, but the party were determined to get to the top, which they did in 4 inches of snow.

The District Night Exercise was a gruelling affair held in March. Two teams entered: Matthew Gentle, Michael Hopkins, Simon Pleasants, led by Carl Gill, and David Bail, Paddy O'Connor, Robert Linskey, led by Peter Davies came in 3rd and 9th respectively.

A canoeing weekend was held at Butch's cottage in Brighton with canoeing off of Littlehampton and a tidal river. The **Peak Assault** was at Dolgellau in Wales.



A weekend away at Coetmor Mill was run by Brian Pleasants. Keith Moore led a mountain route up **Tryfan** but failed to make the summit by only 400 feet due to gale force winds.

An appeal went out to raise £13,000 for the **Lochernhead Scout Station**. In 1962 Hertfordshire Scouts, lead by Melville Balsillie, leased Lochernhead Station and 5.5. acres of land surrounding it, from British Rail for 21 years. The station then was completely derelict and with considerable expenditure of money and effort, it was opened in the summer of that year as an activity centre by the Chief Scout. Since that time it has been an outstanding success and provides a unique opportunity for young people to undertake activities in the hills and on water. The courses in hill-walking and mountaineering leadership, which have developed over the years, are among the best available nationally and during the previous 15 years, thousands of boys and girls have received training at the station. The Management Committee were concerned about the future of the station when the lease expired in 1983. It became obvious that British Rail would not be willing to renew the lease and probably wanted to develop the site commercially as a holiday centre, for caravans or chalets. The Hertfordshire County Scout Council made an offer for the purchase of the freehold and as a consequence BR agreed to sell for £13,000 providing the purchase was competed by 25 December 1977. Grants were applied for and donations requested of parties who supported the purchase. In all a total of £17,000 was raised and secured the site for future use.

In May the Venture Scouts took part in a Sedan Chair Race weekend at Gilwell Park, after building themselves a traditional sedan chair. The other 166 chairs that were entered varied from an oil rig to a matchbox in design. They secured 39th position.

In August 11 Ventures went to Rua Riola in Scotland for a week's course in canoeing, rock climbing and survival.

A third attempt to complete the **Lyke Wake Walk** was made by six Venture's. The walk commenced at 5.25am and finished at 9.15 pm. Time taken for the walk – 15 hours 50 minutes. Total distance walked 39.5 miles. Party members Dave Miller, Pete Linskey, Mr Tolhurst, Tony Bail, John Denton and Brian Robins.

Cub Pack A held their first father and son camp at Lees Wood.

1978

In the January the Ventures made another visit to **Coetmor Mill** – Dave Miller, Brian Robins, Steve Flowers, Chris Cook, Dave Tolhurst, Garry Friffin, John Denton, Pete Linskey, Roger Ford, Tony Bail, Pete Dennet and Len Herridge, together with the Bricket Wood Venture Unit. 10 members walked around the back of **Devils Kitchen** and various hills, lakes and rivers. The Boggittes races ahead but the Abbos soon caught them up.

Up in the hills there were patches of snow and they finally reached somewhere Pete Linskey could try out his crampons. When he finally got them on, somebody pointed out that he had them on the wrong way round! They also climbed at a local quarry and on starting back the bus broke down, but as the North Watford Unit were at nearby Snowdon, some of them managed to scrounge a lift back with them.



View of the Devils Kitchen

John Grieves became the Group Chairman. Don Grantham resigned as leader of Pack A, and **Jack Ridgeway died**.

Butch completed a senior canoe instructor qualification and the canoeing section was going strong with a total of 25 members. 6 BCU trainee Senior Instructor qualifications were achieved in canoeing weekends at the end of March was held at Butch's Sussex cottage and North Devon. Whilst in Devon on the River Torridge they tackled their first obstacles of difficulty, a small salmon ladder. Butch led the way and they all negotiated it passing over various small rapids further down the river. Then came a ten foot high weir with salmon ladder to one side. Tim Ward, the assessor, shot the weir to point out any dangers, the main problem being they had to keep exactly in the middle of the ladder otherwise the canoes would become jammed. The ladder was 7 feet in width with a wall at the bottom with just a 3 foot access. Butch showed them how it could be done and two more followed. Dave Tolhurst unfortunately approached it off centre and crashed in the wall turning over but managed to right himself and with assistance, shot through. Next Pete Linskey also approached off centre and into the wall, capsizing the canoe and wedging it across the walls. He was under water for a few anxious moments and then came out of the canoe. The boat, still wedged, unfortunately could not take the pounding of the water and split in half. Butch gave his canoe to Pete but the weather became a hazard and they finished the course in the middle of a hail storm. The next morning, after a few hours surfing at Westward Ho, they packed up to return home. The six who passed were – Dave Tolhurst, Steve Flowers, Graham Wiseman, Brian Robins, Pete Linskey and Pete Flowers.

Chris Roome broke all Cub records by being the youngest in the B pack to earn the Gold Arrow, and the only one to have gained all 18 individual proficiency badges, plus the DC's camping award.

The Panther Scouts took 2nd place in the District Night Exercise, and won a prize for the team with the most potential.

They also won the County Commissioner's standard for the 2nd time in 18 months.

1979

On the night of 1st January due to the intensely cold weather, a pipe burst in the loft of the HQ, allowing hundreds of gallons of water to cascade through the ceiling in the main hall below. The resultant damage was that a large portion of ceiling came down and areas of the wood block floor lifted. In addition, certain electrical fittings were rendered irreparable. As the repair was obviously going to be both extensive and expensive, they had to lodge an insurance claim. The small hall had to be used to dry out things recovered from the loft, so there was no part of the HQ left to hold meetings. The Methodist Church came to their aid for two to three weeks when meetings were held in their hall.

In the interim the Bill White Room was redecorated and by late January the group moved back into its own HQ once again, with the main hall taking several months to repair and ready by the beginning of April.

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.

The older scouts had the opportunity of going to Snowdon on a vigorous week in May.

The Panther Troop held their summer camp at Broadstone Warren, and the Pathfinder Troop went to Guernsey.

The Cubs achieved equal 3rd place in the Cracknell Shield. The Sixers of B Pack went to London to visit BP House, the Natural History Museum and the Science Museum.

A newly formed committee with Mary Joyce as the Chair met at the beginning of September with the sole purpose of raising money for the Group and to relieve the uniformed branch from such activities so that they could spend their valuable time training the boys. It was hoped to have a few new ideas for functions in the next year

Fred Young received a Thanks Badge at the AGM.

The Panther Scouts won the District hike competition.
The Pathfinder Scouts came 3rd in the District Camping Competition.

36 members of the Ladies Guild enjoyed a cruise along the canal from Watford to Batchworth Lock with obligatory refreshment stop before returning. Cub member Peter Moore gained his Gold Arrow and chose Keith Pritchett of the Watford Football Club to present him with it, who accepted the honour.

There were 70 people in the party on the District Cub Train outing to Clacton on 22 September.

Don Gransby replaced Toni Pleasants in Cubs, and Brian Pleasants resigned the leadership of the Panther Troop to be filled by Gerald Hansen who transferred from the Pathfinders.

The 30th Boxing Day walk was attended by 30 with a signed plaque as commemoration.

A day trip to Chertsey by the **canoeing section** saw them viewing the water from underneath and using the local hotel car park as a changing area, whilst on a practice session.

Changing with the times

Since the General report in 1966, Scouting has changed in leaps and bounds over the last - thirty years.

In the Cub section the Bronze, Silver and Gold arrows lasted just eleven years before a new developed arrow scheme was introduced, which allowed Cubs virtually complete freedom to choose which twelve activities they took part in for each of the three arrows. This was again superseded in 1990 by a new award scheme consisting of the Cub Scout Award, Adventure Award and Adventure Crest Award, still allowing the Cubs to choose the activities they wish to take part in, but in a much more structured way. Another minor change is the age range of the section, with the usual transfer age dropping from eleven to ten-and-a-half.

In the Scout section, the Scout Standard and Advanced Scout Standard didn't last as long as the arrows, disappearing in 1983, to be replaced by the Scout Award, Pathfinder Award, and Explorer Award. These also introduced more choice for the Scout, and yet again modernised the programme. Only minor changes to the scheme have been made since 1983, most noticeably to put traditional Scouting skills back into the core of the programme.

In the early 1980's Scout Groups were allowed to take in boys in the 6-8 age range to Beavers although at this point the Beavers were not part of the Scout Association, only their Leaders were allowed in. This changed on April 1st, 1986 when all Beavers became Beaver Scouts overnight. Initially the section had just one badge to earn after the Beaver had been enrolled, but in 1995 a new programme introduced two new badges, imaginatively known as the First Beaver Scout Badge and the Second Beaver Scout Badge, allowing with the Beaver Scout Challenge Badge for the older Beavers.

The Venture section has, on the whole, not changed much since its inception, a few minor changes to names and requirements for the badges name change but that is all, other than the controversial decision in 1976, when young ladies were allowed to join Venture Units. The first time girls had been allowed into the youth of the Movement since B-P. started the Guide Movement in 1910.

The B-P Guild had all but vanished, being replaced by the Scout Fellowship.

Another very controversial change was also made in that Groups were given the option of whether to allow girls in Scouting in all sections. The only proviso was that if you allowed girls into a Group that was it, there was no turning back, and they had to have the option of staying in Scouting. So, if a Cub Pack went mixed, then the Troop and Unit it fed into had to be mixed, but not necessarily the Beaver Colony that fed it. Currently in the moment approximately 5-10% of Groups in the Country are mixed.

The Group formed an Outdoor Activity Section, under the Chairmanship of Bob Fennemore, rather than a Canoeing section. This section gave the opportunity for Scouts (especially the older ones) to take part in caving, rock climbing, hill walking and canoeing. Younger scouts were allowed to take part in the less arduous activities, but if it is to be a success it is up to the boys themselves to take part in the activities as they occur.

In its previous form the group was not giving the leaders of the Scout sections what they really wanted, so with new objectives the OAS offered support to all the sections for a six month trial. Specifically they:

- a) provided a support structure that assisted the Cub and Scout Sections to plan adventurous and challenging programmes;
- b) made available a range of outdoor activities that supplemented and complemented the programmes planned by the sections.
- c) offered a number of proficiency badge courses in addition to those provided by local campsites and district teams;
- d) assisted cub and scout leaders with their preparations for non- group events such as district and country competitions.



The Outdoor Activity Section spent a weekend at Ambleside on the last weekend of January. The intention was to introduce Scouts and Ventures to a new experience of snow and ice walking, with experts to guide them. In three teams they undertook - a leisurely stroll up Pavey Arc and along the ridge to another peak; a slightly longer route; and a climb of Sea Fell, the highest mountain in England. The only disappointment of the weekend being a lack of snow.

Venture Leader Alan Pateman (left) and Expedition Leader Dave Tolhurst (right)

The Venture Unit came 9th in the Peak Assault competition. The event was held on Dartmoor or Exmoor, the course having been set by one of our old members Alan Rees. It was a very arduous exercise and a certain standard of fitness was required. 70 teams took part in all and many did not finish.

The Patrol Leaders of Panther Troop asked to do the Mechanics Section of the Chief Scouts Award, and so the new Scout Leader, Gerald Hansen, allowed them to work on his car!



In February a Patrol Leader Training weekend for both Scout Troops was held at Phasels Wood. A variety of skills were covered and here is a photo of the organisers in a humorous mood.

Panther Troop leaders Dave Weatherly and Gerald Hansen with Doug Hill

In February, the Panther troop won the District Night Exercise at Lees Wood; the second time this trophy had been won by the group as the Pathfinder's had won it three to four years previously.

Left to right Back Simon Lloyd and David Culliton, front Nick Hearne and Chris Styles



Brian "Biff" Pleasants took over as Woodsmoke Editor and redesigned the format and cover. He was only the fourth person to hold this position in its then 26th year history.

The Scouts came 2nd in the District annual night exercise.

"Jock" Telfer became Group Chairman.



Ada Poole received her Wood Badge from Gerry Poole.

She was very proud to receive her award in front of "her boys" because without them she wouldn't have been able to complete her advanced course.

Caving Trip

Dave Weatherby, Pete Flowers, Pete Linskey, Steve Flowers

The cave chosen for this trip was Swildens Hole in Somerset and the route a fairly difficult one, known as the "Round Trip".

After changing into our wetsuits and caving helmets, we made our way to the drain type entrance to the cave which is in the copse in the middle of a field. Dave, Pete F and myself had electric lamps, but the intrepid Mr Linskey was using a carbide lamp which unfortunately runs by dripping water onto carbide to provide an acetylene flame. I say unfortunately, because the route we planned to take involved a sump dive and we were unsure how the lamp would react to total immersion in water.

Once through the manhole we followed a stream way down to a ladder pitch over a waterfall; after descending this we followed the stream a little way down and then branched off into another passage on our way towards the mud sumps. For the two Pete's and myself, this was our first taste of a mud sump. Luckily the mud level was low and only a little bailing was required to get a good air space between the mud and the cave roof. The idea, Dave explained, was to lay on your back in the mud until just your face remains uncovered and push your way along keeping your mouth out of the mud until reaching the area where the roof rises again.

It took a few hours to get through all three mud sumps and the light passages in between them, until we reached our main objective Sump One. This is where the stream we followed down from the entrance meets the cave roof, the only way to get to the other side is to dive under water and through until reaching the chamber the other side. (A rope has been provided as a guide by the local caving club). We all dived the sump a number of times for practice and then made our way up the streamway, up the ladder path and on the cave entrance where a warm and fairly sunny day awaited us.

Steve Flowers

Although Mr Flowers doesn't elaborate on the behaviour of the carbide lamp, I hear from the horses mouth, that obviously the carbide lamp went out once it met the water. However, surfacing in the dark on the other side, Pete found a group of other scouts were already there, and so he nonchalantly strode up to them and pinched a light from one of their lamps.

A combined trip was arranged by the Outdoor Activity Section to Edale in May, led by Dave Tolhurst. The fifteen strong party travelled in the Group bus to Derbyshire to enjoy an action packed weekend, and enjoyed fabulous weather. There was a day spent on Mam Tor and another day caving. The youngest Scout on the trip was Mark Murphy.

The Cub's joint team for the District swimming gala netted a joint 3rd place, and in the Cracknell Shield competition, which was in its 25th year, the team only missed coming 1st by 1 point and came joint 2nd.

A Group family camp was held in Lees Wood on 19/20 July. Out of 90 people attending, 61 of them were associated with Cubs.

Rose Baldry retired as Chairman of the Ladies Guild after 18 years. Past and present member met to say thanks you to her and present her with presents.

WALKING THE RIDGEWAY

During 1980 the Group decided to tackle a long distance path, and so they chose the Ridgeway. This path stretches some 90 miles from Swindon to Ivinghoe Beacon.

Stage 1

Overton Hill, Near Avebury to Ashbury

Distance 20 miles Sunday 13 July

Places of interest on route included Barbury Castle and Fyfield Down which are believed to be the source of the Sarcen stones used to build Avebury and Stonehenge. Also just off the route is Liddington Castle.

Only 14 people made this part of the journey, and as they were paying for the Group bus to pick them up at the end of the day, made the trip a bit expensive. There were quite a few blisters due to inadequate footwear and also inappropriate clothing because of the weather. So they terminated the walk 4 miles short of their goal, to be resumed on the next leg.

Participants were: *the Cullitons, the Pleasants, Danny Shehan, Chris Roome, Mike Bushnel, Nick Hearn, Phillip Malinson, Michael Johnson and two Guides Linda Brown and Suzanne Way.*

Stage 2

Ashbury to Warren Farm

Distance 21 miles Sunday 21 Step

Places of interest were Waylands Smithy, a megalithic long barrow dated 3500 BC, Uffingham Castle, an ancient hill fort with a white horse cut into the hill nearby, Letcome Castle another hill fort and a monument to the founder of the Red Cross Society.



Pictured here are 11 of the regular Ridgeway walkers. Mike Bushnell's umbrella was put to good use on the 1st and 3rd stages. 3rd from the first on the front row, Alistair Hearn, a Cub at only 10½ kept up with the rest of the walkers.

The original idea of doing 20 odd miles in a day was somewhat ambitious, so the rest of the walk continued in 13-15 mile stages. On Stage 2 they covered 17 miles
Participants were: *Danny Shehan, Biff, Stephen Pleasants, Crusher, Suzanne Way, Sally Moore, Nicola Butcher, Heidi Chalkley, Peter Johnson, Chris Styles, Mick Irvine, Dave Andrews, Mike Bushnel, the three Cullitons and Doug Hill.*

Stage 3

Warren Farm to Hill Farm

Distance 21 miles Sunday 19 October

Passing through Streatley and Goring on the Thames and Grims Ditch

On stage 3 they walked 14 miles.

Stage 4

Hill Farm to Wendover

Distance 15 miles, Sunday 16 November

On this stage Chequers and a monument on Combe Hill can be seen.

An 18 strong party surpassed themselves by completing 17 miles in good weather with the going extremely soft under foot. Returning to where they had left off the month previous they walked along Grims Ditch.

Stage 5

Wendover to Ivinghoe Beacon

Distance

12 miles Sunday 14 December

On this final stage the small village of Wigginton is passed through.

The walk was completed and on reaching the trig point on Ivinghoe Beacon they opened a bottle of bubbly to celebrate with achievement in rather damp and soggy conditions most of the way.

The Outdoor Activity Section took a trip to the Wye Valley in October to instruct some Scouts in canoeing and walking.

The Cubs achieved joint second in the District Sports.

The Ventures had plans to have a dark room in the loft and a scalextric track in the top loft.

THE GROUP BUS

Abbots Langley had their very own special transport, a yellow bus once owned by British Rail. It was purchased in 1974 and here is its story.

Up to 1974 the Group had owned a succession of vehicles for the transport of equipment and personnel to events and camps. At about this time considerable unease was being expressed about the situation, particularly when the statement of accounts was presented at the AGM. The costs were of special concern.

The Guild suggested to the Group Council that they should be given the opportunity of running a vehicle on behalf of the Group. At that time a twelve seater Bedford minibus was in the Group's possession and that was broken down. When it was running it was invariably overloaded and generally mistreated.

The Guild decided to cut the losses and start from scratch. In the summer of 1974 a lot of hard work was put into fundraising events with help coming from the Venture unit. Together with a grant from the Group the princely sum of £500 was assigned to the 'transport fund.'

A small sub committee of Guild members was formed to manage the proposed vehicle and its finances. Eventually in 1975 a new bus was purchased, a 3.8 litre BMC diesel which was previously owned by British Rail. It had fifteen seats and a workshop at the back. In the latter part of 1975 extensive modifications were carried out by the Guild members and it was converted into a twenty three seater with large luggage boot.

The bus was used extensively by all sections of the group. Cub outings to swimming baths, Scouts to District camp sites, Ventures to bowling and other short trips, and much longer journeys undertaken by the trusty steed, the longest of which being Leichtenstein. That same year it carried Ventures to the Scottish Highlands with a caravan on tow! Annually it was used for the Peak Assault competition. Other scout groups also benefitted when it was used to get to Coetmor Mill in North Wales.

A complete engine rebuild was necessary in 1977 and fortunately most of the work was carried out by members of the group at no charge. The Ventures also painted the exterior in early 1980. When the Guild was disbanded, management of the bus transferred to the Group Executive, and they allowed it continue unchanged as a sub-committee of the Executive!

By May of 1981, however, a new Group vehicle was purchased. Well new to them, that is. Very modern by their standards it was an "L" registered Ford coach, previously owned by the Hertfordshire Area Health Authority and based at Leavesdon. It had 24 seats and a 4.5 litres engine.

There was a fair bit of work to be done on it, and whilst the bodywork was in good condition, it was in need of a coat of paint to smarten it up. As there was no luggage space they planned to fit racks above the seats and a towing bracket for a trailer.

And so the group then owned two buses, but the Transport Committee decided that it couldn't enjoy the luxury of a backup bus as running costs were too high, so they put the "G" registered 1969 bus on sale.



Keith Penrose, Bryan Sharpe and Bib Butcher



1981

Robinson's jam labels were collected to buy a new Union Jack for the flagpole.

Thanks badges were presented at the AGM to Mrs Jean Johnson for all the work she had done for the Group over the years, and the other to Dianne Gransby who had helped with 'B' Pack for a very long time.



There was a newly formed Mens' Fellowship with (left) LtoR Pete Linskey Treasurer, Keith Penrose Secretary and Alan Botwright Chair. (right) committee members Steve Flowers and Tony Bail.



The group acquired a "new" Scout bus which Bryan Sharpe and Bib Butcher then worked on.

Ada Poole received the Medal of Merit from the Chief Scout.

Bob Fennemore, Assistant Group Scout Leader, receive the Chief Scouts commendation

There was a visit to Liechtenstein to join them for their 50th anniversary celebrations.

A mixed Venture unit was launched with 4 girls, Linda Brown, Sue Way, Sally Kirby and Nicola Butcher.



4 Venture scouts went on to win the Herts canoe slalom team trophy.

Seen here, Steve Flowers, Lee Kirby and Pete Flowers

The Panthers came third in the District Challenge Hike and the team consisted of Pete Johnson, Gordon Sharpe (Pathfinders), Graham Culliton and the Jeffery's twins.

Daphne Bryan started to help in the newly formed co-ed Venture unit, as Alan Pateman had been away from Ventures since August 1980 due to illness.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES – CANOEING

In 1981 Butch was taking his 'E2' grade of senior canoeing instructor. He first had to gain his 'E1' which entitled him to test proficiency. Butch had been working with four canoeists (1 scout and 3 guides) for some months to gain their Inland Proficiency Certificate – Stephen Pleasants, Suzanne Way, Nicola Butcher (his daughter) and Sally ... so to save him searching for candidates for his examination, they all volunteered.

They needed to practice hard to acquire the required standard and mock exams to simulate the real thing. They went to Longridge where they revised strokes before attempting the weir, with only one mishap, who was back in her canoe in minutes.

The next week Suzanne and Nicola practiced Eskimo rescues on the canal and obtained a large audience. They then went to a stretch of the canal near the Fisheries Inn at Harefield twice a week.

By August 28th, they were ready for a mock 2 star test which included theory as well as practice. After they had finished Butch told them that it had been a real test and that they had all passed.

So on September 20th they arrived at Longridge 2 hours late after Butch's car had broken down on the day. They spent time practicing and then after months of hard training they passed their Proficiency. And as Butch was also being examined on this day as well, he was successful in achieving his 'E1' with a high standard.



1982

The Group celebrated the 75th anniversary of the formation of the North Watford Scouting District.

21 members of the Fellowship and guests visited Boulogne for the day, complete with bus, which they thoroughly enjoyed.

Woodsmoke was produced by two scout leaders Ken Harrison & Dave Weatherly and then two Scouts Kevin and Neil Handisyde until 1983.

Pather Troop had a barge weekend on a boat called Belfast. They went to Berkhamsted and back, and only one scout managed to jump into the water; his excuse being that "it was dark."

Daphne Bryan and Dave Tolhurst ran the Venture unit in Alan Pateman's absence.

The Group hired a skip and cleared out all the rubbish accumulated in the Headquarters since it had been opened 12 years previously.

The Cubs were introduced to canoeing in a ten week course. This covered most of the tests required to pass the One Star certificate of the BCU, and had been extended by two weeks to allow for the age of the participants.

10 August, the Ventures had a 10 day expedition in the Lake District. During this, there was a three day hike that none of them will forget due to the bad weather all the way.

The Cubs walked from Abbots Langley to St Albans on 9th October, and still had the energy to go in the playground when they got there.

Around this time the **Girl Guides** were extremely active in their walking and canoeing, and there was a big cross over from this section into the **Ventures and Outdoor Activity Section**.

1983

Nicola Butcher and Suzanne Way went on a trainee canoe instructors weekend, and the canoeing section of the Outdoor Activity Section was extremely busy.

The Ladies Guild held a party to celebrate the 20th anniversary of their inception.

On 24 April 1983 **Pete Flowers** had the honour of joining in the parade and presentation of Queen Scouts to HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, at Windsor Castle.

At the District AGM of the same year, Roger Sands was presented with the Silver Acorn.

Danny Sheehan of the Ventures attended the Jamboree in Canada.

In May, Daphne Bryan became the Venture Leader with Alan Pateman and Dave Tolhurst as Assistant Venture Leaders.

The Cubs came joint 2nd in the Cracknell Shield being only 2 points behind the winners!

As Woodsmoke was not printed between 1984 and 1994, information on the Groups' activities during that time is not recorded as well as it had been previously.

1984

The Peak Assault team in 1984

Lto R ?, Robert Spurling, Chris Middleton, Lee Kirby and Gordon Sharpe

Bottom – Pete Johnson, Steve Pleasants



1985

Gerry Poole received the Silver Acorn.

1987

Pete Lythaby became GSL.

Dave Gray started a Group magazine called 3 in 1 for the Abbos.

A celebration of the Group's 60th anniversary was commemorated by walking the Oxfordshire Way one Sunday of each month.

60th Anniversary – Sausage Sizzle - 1987

To celebrate the Group's 60th anniversary, barbecues measuring 10 years long were positioned in the service road in the villages where a large sausage was cooked.



LtoR A scout, Keith Moore, Bryan Mayes (Scout Leader), Bob Fennemore

1990s

1992 Paul Seekings became Scout Leader.

1994 Keith Moore resumed the role of Group Scout Leader.

1995

Keith Moore resurrected Woodsmoke after a 10 year absence.

The issues of the group were largely the same as they always were, and always will be!

Due to the fact that all vehicles would have to be fitted with safety belts a “New Bus Fund” was launched. It was not feasible to adapt the current vehicle and so a new one costing approximately £23,000 would be needed, for which the Parish Council agreed to give a generous donation as a launch pad.

A **Beaver Colony** had been started in the Group and in 1994 for the first time, the Beavers found themselves without a leader. Phil Atkinson was running a Colony at the 8th North Watford, and was also District Beaver Leader. He stood in for 17 months at Abbots Langley, and then decided to leave the 8th North Watford and became our Beaver Leader from 8th May 1995. He had two warranted leaders and two helpers for the colony of 24.

The **Cub Pack** had 29 in it and was run by Brian Hawkins, assisted by Lynn Lythaby and Chris Frith with outside help from Keith Moor, Pete Linskey and the Ventures.

The **Scout Troup**, of which there was only one, consisted of 27 boys. They continued to pursue a varied programme of first aid, orienteering, climbing, pot holing, canoeing etc. They had entered a team in the Green Beret and a canoeing/sailing competition run by Butch and his team. Also five boys attended a County canoeing slalom weekend. The Scout Leader was Paul Seekings, and he was aided by Tony Dabson, Eddie Chalk and Doug Hill.

The **Venture Unit** had diminished in numbers, but was still working hard at all the competitions they entered. They had one team scheduled for the Peak Assault, but were bitterly disappointed when the event was cancelled for the first time in twenty year due to atrocious weather conditions,

They had been testing the Phasels Wood caving complex and joined the Fellowship for various lectures. Andrew Bratt came fourth in the adult section of the County Canoe Slalom.

The Unit had no major expeditions planned for the year as they expected to lose most of their current members to University in September, meaning that the newest member may soon be the only member!

“Although some may not feel that our numbers are important, I look at our uniformed sections and see that the Cubs are run by ex-Ventures, the Scouts are run by ex-Ventures, the Ventures are run by ex-Ventures and increasingly the Fellowship is run by ex-Ventures all under the age of 30. I can only leave you to draw your own conclusions.”

Pete Linskey, Venture SL

Venture leader Alan Pateman died.

The Venture unit was taken over by Ian Botwright and Daphne Bryan with assistance from Pete Linskey and Butch.

Mary Lythaby, one of the founder members of the Ladies Guild, died on 12th September. The HQ had had many of the windows replaced with virtually non-breakable material to help combat the vandalism that was occurring.

Members of the Cubs visited the Jamboree in Dronten, Holland – Ben Zirker, and his brother, Robert Gabriel and Jonathan Easter.

The Scout Troop entered the Green Beret at Tolmers. They came 19th out of 98 teams, but beat all the other Troops in the North Watford District.

The Venture's Unit had increased to 4 and were in training for the Peak Assault by the end of the year. They were keen to recruit two more people, 6 being the minimum number who were allowed to enter.

The Scout Fellowship arranged its customary trip away on the weekend before Christmas which was to their old favourite - Coetmor Mill in North Wales.



That evening the print had practically been worn off the ordnance survey maps until everybody was satisfied as to the itinerary for the following days climbing.

Our party had chosen the Carneddau – a superb ridge taking four tops over 2,500 ft, not dissimilar to the Cairngorms in their topography with almost plateau summits.

A number of us leapt out of the minibus, pulled on our rucksacks, still burping bacon sandwiches and headed off up the short but steep access path that leads to the start of the walk. It led to a small lake with moody waters, the walk in was made more enjoyable by an early dusting of snow on the high tops and the humbugs that were handed round. A small zig-zag path leads you to a small saddle and at such a place it's handy to have a prop to allow yourself resting time. A camera can do the trick letting you catch your breath before your lungs explode through your chest like "The Alien" as you pretend to take a photo of an interesting rock. A change of clothing also lets you off the hook; simply take something off or put something on, and your colleagues will never know the real reason you've stopped. They will be obliged to wait politely as you go about your task, which you can time to complete at the same moment you recover the skill of breathing in and out.

After a short break we wandered off in ever diminishing visibility and headed towards Carnedd Llewelyn with the wind was reaching some force. I then met someone I knew from Lochearnhead Scout Station so we stopped for a few moments and she said "are those your Scouts?" I then, with a suspicious glint in my eye took a woeful look at the party; maybe she thought I was Pete Linskey's dad. As we parted, I silently thought to myself how old she must have thought I was!

On reaching a Cairn we stopped to eat a frozen lunch which brought traumas of its own as you try to hold onto your tuna mayonnaise sandwiches and a penguin in a force ten gale. I then noticed some of the party looking around to see who had brought a flask of hot tea – not me – all I had was a bottle of frozen water. Once the sandwiches had gone we turned to the task ahead of trying to stand up and move while the wind turned your face into a pizza. The wind had then made its full force apparent, with difficulty moving across the snow you needed the profile of a snake in a Commando style crawl to evade the unrelenting gusts. With snow and ice hitting your face like shot gun pellets, a decision was made to descend the ridge behind some crags which offered little protection, and stumble into the valley with a long walk – our people were looking forward to a hearty meal and a relaxing evening after the trauma of the day.

Russ Whitely
Scout Fellowship

1996

After a year's trial of a new style Woodsmoke, it was approved to carry on in the same way. Keith Moore was the editor, Kathleen Turner, the typist and Doug Hill collated. It was agreed that it should appear on a quarterly basis, with sufficient copies to be printed for every member of the Group without charge to them.

Jim Johnston tendered his resignation as Treasurer and Mike Trotman, a Fellowship member took over.

The Scouter situation was still an issue (no change then) and they considered closing the waiting list for Beavers and Cubs.

The outside of the HQ was painted by volunteers in the summer.

The Scouts entered virtually all of the competitions organised by the District that year. In March a Team finished 8th out of 26 in the Night Trifid Trophy, April was the Three Districts First Aid and Emergency Incident Competition. Here they did score too highly, but were the only Troop from the North Watford District who entered. In May the annual canoe slalom at Rickmansworth was entered.

The numbers in the Venture unit were beginning to give concern, and was likely to have to be shut down.

Doug Hill received a "Thanks Badge". He didn't like to say that he had already received one, so accepted it graciously! Jim Johnson also received a badge for his services as Group Treasurer.

Cub scouts celebrating 80 years of cub scouting

1997

Keith Moore received a call in the middle of the night on the first weekend of the year from John Frost who had been passing the HQ and could hear the sound of running water. Mindful of the big freeze of the previous year, they hot footed in down to the building, where on opening the door, they saw a scene of devastation. The floor of the main hall resembled a swimming pool, and so they set to with mops to get most of it up over the next four hours. The HQ maintenance team led by Bryan Sharpe and assisted by John Lythaby, began to isolate and repair the burst pipe. It took a while for them to negotiate an insurance settlement to have the repairs done to the floor, so it was not until February that they could use the hall again for meetings.

After two year's of fundraising by the sub-committee, a new minibus was bought which had seat belts fitted. The committee had raised £3,750 and the Three Rivers District Council gave them a top up loan, and three members of the committee, Bryan Sharpe, John Lythaby and Derek Hartley found a 15 seater diesel Mercedes.

Russell Whiteley joined to assist the Scout Troop, as he had been a Scout Leader for some years as a local troop. One of his stipulations was that Paul Seekings stayed on as Leader, thus ensuring he did not have to take it over himself!

The Peak Assault team were Matt Sharpe, Amanda, Dan Kingston, Chris (Kings Langley) and Michelle (Kings Langley) and Gareth Palmer.

The Group found themselves in urgent need of a new Cub Scout Leader when Brian Hawkins tendered his resignation due to pressure of work. Brian had been running the Cubs for four years. This is when Gerald Wilson took up the mantle and became Akela and he was assisted by Christopher Frith and Matthew Sharpe.

It was then the turn of the Scout Troop who were suffering from the lack of leaders, and Paul Seekings appealed for volunteers to help support the boys. Clive Winder refereed an evening of Troop football held at the Leisure Centre, and began assisting with other activities, showing a keen interest.

By the end of the year the Beavers had also lost two Leaders – Phil Atkinson and Tracey Furness, which meant that they could not take any more boys into the colony from the waiting list.

The Fellowship once again visited North Wales and got blown about trying to conquer the Carnedd range in Snowdonia.

On 11th November 1997, Keith Moore had been a member of the Scout Movement for 50 years, and hosted a reunion for people that he had met along the way. John and Lin Lythaby took charge of the catering and the venue was the HQ of course.

1998

The Venture Unit were dwindling in numbers due to members going on to University, but those that remained were being supervised by Pete Linskey.

The Beaver section was being run by GSL Keith Moore in the interim, assisted by Lin Lythaby, Catherine Lloyd and Steve Lambert, but by the end of the year they had obtained the services of Annie Gilbert as Beaver Leader

The Scouts came fifth in the Night Trifid competition. Paul Seekings stepped down as Scout Leader on 31st July and Russell Whitely stood in as replacement Leader for a while.

Matthew Sharp became Assistant Cub Leader

The first girl Scouts were introduced into the Troop.

1999

Keith Moore retired as Group Scout Leader, having reached the age of 65, but he agreed to continue producing Woodsmoke as the Editor. Fred Young, the Group Chairman, also decided to step down at this point as he was 69.

Bryan Sharpe took over as Group's Chairman.

Mick Welch took on the task of Group Scout Leader for a trial three month period.

Clive Winder became ASL and Nicola Butcher began assisting him on the Thursday evening sessions. 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.

The Scouts came 2nd and 7th in a District Tree Squat, which entailed making a platform up a tree and living up it for 24 hours.

A Lifesaver Course for the Troop was held at Watford Springs by Fellowship members Dave and Alison Sturgess, who are qualified lifesavers.

Kitty Dobson died.

The central heating system at HQ broke and they had to get a new heater installed for the princely sum of £3,750.

Keith Moore received an invitation from the office of the Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire to attend a Royal Garden Party hosted by Her Majesty the Queen at Buckingham Palace. He had been nominated to attend by Roger Sands, the County Commissioner. Keith found himself within 15 feet of the Queen and enjoyed a very memorable day.

The Venture's Peak Assault team came 5th overall, picking up the single team per unit trophy and were only one point off the Sword for the old South West Herts district trophy.

“The size of the unit was so small that we were a whisker away from scratching ourselves out of this years' event but getting a team in is almost as hard as winning and they almost did win, only in the weeks to come will that dawn fully on them and I hope that will inspire even greater things in the future. Fifth place in such a demanding and popular competition is very good indeed”

Pete Linskey, AVSL

The Venture unit lost a few more members to university and gain one more, but numbers still remained low. They had managed to follow an interesting programme which included rock climbing, canoeing, cycle rides and testing the new orienteering course at Phasels Wood designed by Pete Linskey. They managed a trip to Scotland for a short summer expedition which took in Ben Nevis, amongst others.

A new signboard was installed at the front of the headquarters with the international Scout badge and colour.

The Cubs attended a District Camp and the tent was flooded out during a thunder storm in the night when a river of water ran through the tent.

Iain Stanley started helping the Cubs as part of his Duke of Edinburgh Scheme.

The Fellowship had an Autumn weekend trip to Pen-Y-Bont-Fawr, an account of which follows on the next page.

Pen-Y-Bont-Fawr and Wide

“And what on Earth possessed you to bang about in a minibus for hours, spend the night in bunks listening to other people snoring and then, if that wasn’t enough, walk for miles in the pouring rain?” The man in the pinstriped suit looked at me as though I had trodden in something soft and smelly in my socks. I shrugged my shoulders and answered lamely “because it’s there.” Something that I had heard a mountaineer friend of mine once say.

My mind went back to the smooth ride in the Scout bus courtesy of Edwin and how we arrived at a pub (the Three ... thingies) to find that the door was barred. The sense of sheer panic was almost tangible until some bright spark led us round to the open back door. Isn’t it amazing just how the need to imbibe obscene quantities of bitter brings out hidden navigational instincts in one.

We arrived at Pen-y-Bont-Fawr Scout Hall in our usual quiet manner and proceeded to unload and bag the best bunks. Supper followed and finally we all – or rather the more civilised of us, slunk off to bed leaving the insomniacs to gossip into the small hours.

The night was full of sounds of Butch, in splendid isolation, making the most of the echoes of an empty room to practice his famous snoring techniques. I was awakened during the night vaguely aware of a certain group of fellow refugees re-enacting the crowd scene from World War Two.

Eventually morning dawned and after staring bleary eyed into mugs of welcome coffee we staggered forth, down to the dining room for bacon and eggs. Why does bacon always smell better than it tastes? Breakfast over we settled down to the serious business of deciding how we were going to exhaust ourselves. This decided, four groups set out into the cold and damp of a Welsh morning. The traditional dawn chorus had been postponed because of the universal preference of nest over draughty treetop. Doug and Bib were intent on beating the daylights out of the local pub door until they were let in. Butch, Russell and Paul vanished in the vague direction of a mountain. While Pete, Josie, Tracy, Ali, Dave, Sue, Edwin and Mark set out on what can only be described as a marathon hike of fourteen miles. Poor demented souls! Tony, Joy, Pauline and I, under the navigational skills of Tony, walked through some really breath taking, though moist scenery (twice in one instance – but I will draw a discrete veil over that amusing incident)!

We all eventually arrived back at base to nurse our blisters and exaggerate about the day, feeling that we had really achieved something notable, in a masochistic sort of way. Then came the Saturday meal. Firstly there was soup then the piece de resistance. Paul and Tony had prepared a Coq-au-vin that would have made a strong man want to write odes to. Followed by a vast chocolate pudding, the glorious repast ended with a lot of very satisfied if rather rotund customers waddling off in various directions to ‘rest’ – with the exception of that worthy bunch the washing-up brigade. The local pub needed our attention that evening but the entire population of Pen-y-bont-fawr seemed to have the same idea with the consequent ‘sardinisation’ effect. Once again supper – not that we really needed it, and a night of deep sleep and tranquillity until we were awoken by the cheery crash of tea mugs and a muffled expletive from Bib.

Sunday was to be an easy day of short walks and a modicum of beer drinking – Yeah right! Cleaning and packing ensued and with a final nod of approval we bade farewell to Pen-y-bont-fawr and the Scout Hal then with Dave at the wheel, convinced that the bus had gained Formula 1 status, sped back to civilisation.

So what on Earth possessed us? I smiled and looked at the man in the pinstriped suit but he was already making for his nice warm, air conditioned office, sadly shaking his head as he went.

Peter Marett

2000

Butch and his camp committee arranged a millennium Group camp in the summer at Phasels Wood. Members of every section attended along with the Fellowship. There was a total of 63 camping which included some twenty parents.

The Group welcomed the first visit by the Chief Scout W George Purdy to the HQ on Sunday 11th June. He had been on a visit to Hertfordshire which included attending a Queen Scout dinner on the Saturday evening, followed on Sunday morning by a gathering of scouts at Tolmers camp site from all over Hertfordshire. He then travelled to Langleybury where he laid the foundation stone for the new scout headquarters that was being built to replace the hall that was destroyed by fire in 1998.

He arrived at headquarters at 3pm where he was welcomed by Beaver Ben Bland, Cub Ross Noonan and Scout Jonathan Easter. Inside the HQ refreshment were served and he spent half an hour talking to members of all sections and supporters of the group. Whilst there he awarded Iain Stanley the Leadership Award along with a Meritorious Conduct award to Ada Poole.

Mr Purdy was presented with a framed photo of Baden-Powell to commemorate his visit. This unique photograph, which had not been seen before, had been found on a slide donated to one of the Scout jumble sales. Bryan Sharpe had it restored at a photographers and framed. The photograph was taken in about 1913 and showed him displaying his array of medals, but there was missing a button on his shirt!



Mr Purdy left Langley Road to a cry of Ogi! Ogi! Ogi! with uniformed members lining to road to wave goodbye after a very enjoyable day.

* * * * *

Doug Read died. He was a founder member of the Group and had been Group Secretary for 38 years.

The Scouts entered three teams in the Night Trifid at Lees Wood. One team led by Iain Stanley and team members Adam Lambert, Karl Wood, Jolene Sharpe and Lisa Winder achieved 3rd place.

The Scout Troop had recruited Bernice Perkins and Phil Brant as Assistant Scout Leaders.

Alison Redmond joined the Cubs to assist in its running.

Annie Gilbert, Beaver Leader, had to step down and so a new Leader was sought.

The Venture Scouts won the Sword for the top team from SW Herts at the Peak Assault bringing the trophy back to Abbots Langley after a 30 year absence, and took 3rd place overall and the trophy for the top single team venture unit.



Daniel, Alan, Charles, Lawrence and Peter Kingston

This year's Peak Assault was, as I'm sure you now know, extremely successful. The team (Daniel, Alan, Charles, Lawrence and myself) brought the Sword back to Abbots after thirty or so years. We won the trophy for highest team with a single entry and we came fifth in about forty. All in all, we did rather well, even if I do say so myself. It wasn't the most organised start we could have had, with only one of our two support members bothering to attend, no food supplies for Friday's dinner nor Saturday's breakfast, but we managed to get something from somewhere.

We set off reasonably early on the first morning about 08.30 or something, and set off in reasonably high spirits. The sun was shining it was quite warm, and the first base was just up the hill from Base Camp. We started off well, getting all the first set of bases, still feeling reasonably happy, until about the fifth base, which was completely surrounded by marsh. We all ran in head first, Daniel and myself coming off worst, going in up to our waists. Somehow it wasn't so sunny anymore. This set the tone for the rest of the weekend on Dartmoor which seemed to be just one great big bog from thereon in. We got through the rest of the day (just with myself coming off worst in the cramp department) and collapsed in the overnight camp, with no hope of walking again for several hours. We had left the base camp about fifteenth or something, so it was quite a pleasant surprise to see we had come in to the overnight camp about sixth, having utilised our time as effectively as we could.

We eventually managed to erect the tents, and collapsed for the rest of the day. However, Charles still had some energy left, and proceeded to amuse everyone who had arrived with the sight of him jumping the entire length of the camp to the toilets in Alan's bright orange bivvy bag. After a short while, he then set about jumping back, amusing everyone no end.

The rest of the stay in the overnight camp passed without much incident, other than someone setting fire to their plot of land, and we thoroughly enjoyed our rest. The following morning, feeling extremely stiff, we got up ridiculously early, like 07.00 or something, had an (ahem) hearty breakfast and left for base camp. However, the first team to leave had evidently gone the wrong way, and every other team had followed them, ourselves being no exception. We struggled through the course, only picking up five out of seven bases, and finished with half an hour or so to spare. Then, upon reaching Base Camp, we proceeded to relax in the way only possible after nearly killing oneself to get a few measly points on a boggy, marshy, sunny, tiring Dartmoor weekend. But the drama didn't end there. Oh no. The awards ceremony came around, and we all sat down to await the presentation. They got round to the highest single entry team, which they presented to us, and we went up, feeling jolly proud. They then awarded **The Sword, our Sword** to Batchworth Sea Scouts. *Batchworth Sea Scouts!* We duly complained, they amended the error and they reclaimed **The Sword** from the celebrating Sea Scouts and awarded it to us belatedly, and after the hoarding masses had departed. We then cheered, swung it around dangerously, and climbed on board our coach home. We departed feeling thoroughly pleased and tired. Once home, I crawled into my bed and lay there for about two days, recuperating. With the great gift that is hindsight, I realise now that it was all for the greater good, and am preparing for the inevitable pain that will be next year's Peak Assault. Which of course, we will win!

By Peter Kingston

2001

Janet Sands took on the role of Woodsmoke Editor.

Helen Welch became the Beaver leader.

Keith Moore died in March and £1000 was bequeathed from his estate helped fund two Scouts, Iain Stanley and Jonathan Easter to attend the Jamboree held in Thailand 2002/03.

The Scouts were placed 2nd in the Night Trifid competition.

The Beaver, Club and Scout sections of the Group membership had increased and all places full, with waiting lists.

Iain Stanley visited Baden Powell House in London to be presented with his county Chief Scout Award Certificate. The weekend was spent visiting the sites of London with other award winners.

The HQ had a bit of a facelift with new barge boards, soffit, fascia and gutters.

2002

The Group won the Herts canoe slalom unit trophy for the 2nd time.

Clive Winder became Scouter in Charge” after the resignation of the Group Scout Leader Mick Welch.

The Troop achieved third place in the District Survival Challenge at Lees Wood. Teams of three were given seven hours to build a shelter which they then had to sleep in.

On 16th February the Scouts entered the Night Trifid competition at Lees Wood and achieved 2nd place, which was the best position they had had for many years. Team members included Karl Wood, Robin Lambert, Jack McCarthy and Lisa Winder and Nick.

A new Explorer unit was started led by Steve Dickety and Tracey Beamont. This unit replaced the Venture Scouts and admitted youths of the age range of 14 to 18 years. It only had four members but proved to be the strongest in the west of the county when they came 1st in the inaugural District Trillium competition, a gruelling 4 hour night orienteering exercise. Team members were Iain Stanley, Jonathan Easter and Jamie Winder. It is an extension of the Night Trifid and the Trillium was named after a flower which has three leaves (representing the three districts involved) and a small flower in the centre representing the “budding Explorer Scout”. They started last but plotted the grid references excellently and decided to run to find the cards at each location. They covered approximately 10 kilometres in two and a half hours before returning to base, and the next group rushed in 3 minutes later. They found that they had returned first after leaving last, were the only ones to get all of the letters and complete the anagram.

There were not enough Explorers to make up a team for the Peak assault, and so Iain Stanley joined a team from the 5th North Watford to compete in the black mountains in mid Wales. He found the experience thoroughly enjoyable and addictive and couldn't wait to form his own team for the following year.

Bryan Sharpe took possession of Keith Moore's Medal of Merit and Silver Acorn Awards and Fred Dobson had them mounted and framed. They are hung in the Bill White room, which is upstairs at the Scout HQ, to commemorate the work he did for the group and his generous legacy.

Fred Dobson gave a Dobson lecture of slides of old Abbots Langley which raised £350 for the Jamboree fund.

A new Guide company was started at the headquarter on Friday evenings.

The HQ had some more work done to it again with three new windows at the front and soffit, fascia and guttering on the side, all in Upvc to cut down on the maintenance. The back stairs were also repaired.

Helen Welch, Beaver Leader gave birth to a baby girl – Katy Mary on 10th August.

Wally Smith, an old Rover scout and one time Cub Leader passed away on 9th June.

A number of scouts entered the annual Triathlon Competition. Out of 22 teams entered from three districts Abbots Langley came 1st, 3rd, 12th and 16th. The winners of the trophy were Tom Sibbit, Ben Halcomb and Tom Williams.

The Cubs came 4th in the District Camping competition held at Lees Wood. They also held a BBQ at Lees Wood where parents and family were invited at the end of the summer meeting. All joined in the rounders and helped make the evening a great success.

The group got involved in a local community project helping at an animal sanctuary in Bedmond. This involved repairing buildings, replacing fences and clearing rubbish.

The Group Minibus "Old Rusty" went to the Great Scrap Yard in the Sky. The Group Executive sanctioned the purchase of a replacement and the group looked towards other people using the bus in order to recoup the major investment necessary for the acquisition.

The Group celebrated its 75th anniversary and had a Family Camp in Lees Wood on 20th-22nd September organised by Butch. Over a hundred people attended and participated in numerous new and varied activities over the weekend. Saturday evening culminated in a pig roast around a campfire. They intended to hold the event bi-annual thereafter.



Seen here preparing the pig is L to R Bib Butcher, Edwin Chalk and his father Eddie Chalk.

Below Pete Lythaby slaving away in the kitchen.



"We woke up on Saturday at about 6 o'clock to see a dead pig lying on its side with two men slitting open its stomach! They poked a steel rod in through the pig's mouth and out of the other end, before announcing, 'This is tea!' We were put off our food for the rest of the day. By the time we all got back to the camp after activities we were so hungry we could hardly wait to eat the pig! It was quite tasty and I enjoyed it a lot."

Dominic Benson

2003

The Fellowship went on an Easter trip to Oxen Wood Activity Centre in Wiltshire.

Jock Telfer died.

The Group won the Herts canoe slalom unit trophy for the 3rd time and 2nd consecutive year.

The Scouts took 1st and 2nd place at the District wide games on 18th January out of a total of eleven teams. The winning team 'Bandits' consisted of Dominic Benson, Ben Halcomb, Robin Lambert, Jack McCarthy and Tom Sibbit. This was followed by victory in the District Night Owls and Trifid competitions for the 1st time since 1980 by Ben Halcomb, Jack McCarthy, Tom Sibbit, Tom Redmond and Chris Sheppard. A hat trick victory ensued and for the 2nd year running they won the Triathlon Trophy with a winning team of Ben Halcomb, Tom Sibbit and Tom Williams, and were not put off by the change from the rifle shooting which they excelled in the previous year to archery, and still came out top.

The Group entered four teams into the SCOT challenge – Scout Compass Orienteering Trophy on 3rd November in Whippendell Woods. They were the best represented group in the District. It was a wet miserable day and the teams were clad in an array of brightly coloured waterproofs. They set off at ten minute intervals armed only with a map and compass and various forms of nourishment! The best placed team was that of James Hood, Alistair Gabriel and Lawrence Hendrey who finished 2nd place overall, with the other teams finishing 5th, 6th and 7th.

Jonathan Easter and Iain Stanley represented the group at the 20th World Scout Jamboree in Thailand over the Christmas 2002 and New Year 2003. Later in the year they gave an informative talk on their trip with great enthusiasm.

Bryan Sharpe and Michael Butcher received the Medal of Merit and 40 Year Long Service Award, which was presented to them at the Christingle Service which was administered by the new Group Chaplin Anna Matthews.

Clive Winder received his Wood Badge as Scout Leader.

The minibus had a tow bar fitted to enable it to tow a trailer or canoe carrier.

The Explorer leaders had to move away from Abbots Langley for work commitments leaving the Unit without a leader. Matthew Sharp stepped into the breach as Assistant Explorer Leader for a time.

Thirty six people walked on Boxing Day to Potters Crouch for the 56th Annual walk and many more turned up at the venue.



Peak Assault Team

LtoR Karl Wood, Liz Gordon, Iain Stanley, Adam Lambert, Jonathan Easter, Sandy Maclean
In 13th position overall

2004

The 3rd bi-annual family Group camp was held at Phasels Wood in June with over 150 attendees, half of whom were children. Dave Sturgess ran the camp, Paul Hanson provided the catering, and the dynamic duo catering team of Tony Dabson and Pauline Marett were in the kitchen. A full report of the weekend can be read later in the Camp section.

Mike Butcher, Fred Dobson and Fred Young died.
Pauline Styles became Woodsmoke Editor.

The Cubs won the Chairman's shield for the top team of North Watford in the Cracknell Shield and were 2nd overall in an event that had never been entered before.

Iain Stanley and Alan Kukielka received his Queen's Scout award from Roger Sands. The Scouts went on summer camp to Ystradgynlais, Brecon Beacons 24th to 31st July 2004.

Seven Cubs, Justin Hornsby-Cowan, Josh Hill, Kieran Guffick, Jonathan Benson, Matthew Johnson, Christopher Winder, Nikhil Kotecha and Jack Lucas went canoeing at Rickmansworth Aquadrome for the Top Cub Award.

Russell Whiteley, Scout Leader gave up his warrant after 7 years with the Troop and Alison Redmond, Assistant Cub Leader decided to take a break, and Aisling Benson and Jo Johnson joined the team.

The Explorer Unit was still unsettled, and Matthew Sharp had volunteered to become the Explorer Leader supported by a number of parents. However, the District had decided that the Unit should merge with another unit called Omega due to the low numbers. They would meet alternately at the HQ in Abbots Langley and Langlebury.



LtoR Back Bernice Perkins, Jack, Lawrence, James, Front Ian Leach, Russell, Alastair, Ross, Steve Quinn, Clive, Tony Dabson

7 Scouts were the first in the Group to receive their Gold Chief Scouts Award - Jack Courtenay, Alastair

Gabriel, Ben Halcomb, Lawrence Hendrey, Jack McCarthy, Ross Noonan and James Sidaway.



6 Cubs attained their Silver Chief Scout Awards – also the first in the Group and received their award at the AGM. From LtoR – Jonathan Benson, Christopher Winder. Kieran Coan, Assistant District Commissioner for Cubs, Norman Brandon, Joe Turberfield, James Hendrey, and Gerry (Sam Kidd was missing from the photograph).

Later in the year another 5 were achieved by Alec Dean, Adam Ferguson, Bradley Gooder, Josh Hill and Justin Hornsby-Cowan.



The Scouts entered the new District Cooking competition, and although they were unplaced, they worked well as a team.

Team members – Rachel Essam, Jack McCarthy, Grace McCarthy and Mark Macdonald.

The winners of the 2004 Scouts of the Year competition were rewarded for their commitment, dedication and good behaviour with a narrow boat trip on the Grand Union Canal from Hunton Bridge to Berkhamsted and back on the weekend of 24th/25th April



Getting the life jackets fitted before departure.



2005

Ada Poole died. Bryan Sharpe received another 40 years service award.

Liam Goodman, a Beaver, achieved his Bronze Chief Scout Award – the first in the group, and Daniel Lowrie his Silver.

The Top Ten Scouts of 2005 again spent a weekend on the barge called Dick's Folly travelling to Berkhamsted and back. This year two girls were in the group Julia Wood and Grace McCarthy. One of the memorable moments was when Dominic Benson got a fish hook in his ear after George Styles had released the line from being caught in an overhanging branch.



The Beaver's achieved 2nd place for the best banner and craft activity in Beaver Bangers.

The Cubs had a camp at Lees Wood.



2006

The Group were again suffering from the lack of leaders. The Assistant Scout Leader Phil Brant decided to step down, and Helen Welch and Lin Lythaby were struggling to run the Beavers without parental support, when Laura Ashton, a Young Leader, started to help out.

Dave Gray and Pete Johnson ran a two day kayaking course for twelve scouts over two weekends. Everyone passed and achieved their BCU I* Award.



LtoR back – Dave Gray, Julia Wood, Jack McCarthy, Sammie Gillespie, Matt Gentry, Ross Noonan, Thomas Redmond, Tom Lambert, Pete Johnson
Front – Fred Sugden, George Styles, Dominic Benson, ?, Christopher Winder

The Explorer Unit was re-established under the leadership of Alison Redmond and Rob Lambert.

Gerry Wilson Cub Leader died and Chris Frith took over. Holly Noonan had also joined the pack to help out. The Cubs took part in the District Volleyball competition for the first time and finished 3rd out of 7 teams.

The Scout Association announced its policy for co-educational scouting, but this was nothing new to Abbots Langley who had been mixed since 1998.

Lin Lythaby was presented with a Medal of Merit.

The Scout HQ was used to film a TV programme called Living It! which features the main hall and stage.

The Beavers celebrated their 20th anniversary.

Another successful Group family camp was held at Phasels Wood. with a fantastic 240 people attending which proved to stretch organisational and catering skills of the Group to its limit.

St. George's Day Parade

Another good turnout once again



A successful weekend was spent on Dick's Folly for the top ten scouts of 2006.



Back LtoR Michael Benson, Clive Winder
 Middle Chris Watts, George Styles, Jonathan Benson, James Hendrey
 Front Sam Kidd, Luke Hanson, Daniel Lowrie, Christopher Winder, Grace McCarthy and Malcolm McCarthy

And the top six Cubs went to Phasels Wood for a two hour rifle shoot.

The Fellowship ad Ladies Guild had another successful day at the Abbots Langley carnival



Rachel Drake

Lin Lythaby in the foreground



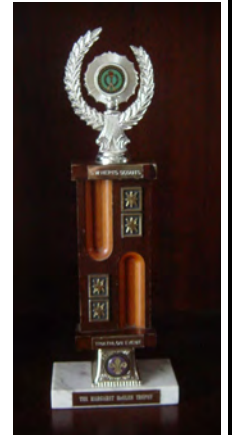
Tracy Reeve(nee Gray)



John Harkin, Dave Gray, background
 Hazel Harkin (nee Butcher), Ed Chalk & Bryan Sharpe

2007

The scouts achieved best **ever** result of 5th place out of 110 at County Green Beret held in November of the previous year. The team comprised LtoR below: George Styles, Marc Redmond, Luke Hanson, James Hendry, Joe Turberfield and Jonathan Benson.



A team of 4 Scouts, Jonathan Benson, James Hendry, Marc Redmond and George Styles won the District Trophy at the County Triathlon in October.

They also won the District Night Trifid competition.

The Albatross Explorer Unit was a year old and had 19 members.

2007 was the Centenary Year of Scouting and one of the many activities that was organised was the District Centenary camp. It was held at Lees Wood over the Whitsun Bank Holiday weekend and was wet and wonderful. The activities and events were non stop even though the weather tried to dampen spirits. As our country was Greece the finale was a superb Greek banquet with everyone dressed in togas. We were rewarded by winning the trophy for best sub camp meal.



Chris Frith, John Harkin, Tony Dabson, ?, Hazel Harkin, Rob Sheppard. Front Rachel Drake. Dave Goodman, Pauline Styles, Ian Leach, Clive Winder, Jo Johnson, ? Michael Benson, Aisling Benson, Dave Turle

A special St George's day parade was held through the streets of Watford for the Scout Centenary.

The Abbots Langley carnival was a very hot day and made a tremendous £1,600 for the group.

Jonathan Benson represented the Group at the 21st World Centenary Jamboree at Hylands Park. Members of the group visited spending an interesting day's visit.



1st Abbots Langley Cubs hosted the District Cub Show at the HQ to celebrate the 90th anniversary of cub scouting and was the brainchild of Norman Brandon (Assistant District Commissioner Cub Scouts). There was a tremendous amount of effort put into it and £1,600 was raised for GOSH, which was the Cubs nominated charity.

The Group celebrated Founders day for the 150th anniversary of Baden-Powell's birth. The Cubs and Scouts were runners up in the swimming gala and overall 2nd in the District. Woodsmoke reached its 200th Issue with a special edition being published. Clive Winder received his wood badge as Group Scout Leader.

Christopher Winder was the Scout of the Year

A record number of Chief Scouts Awards were achieved than ever before. A total of 8 Cubs completed their Silver Chief Scouts Award and there were 16 Gold Chief Scouts Awards completed. It was a sight for sore eyes to see all the Awards presented on 12th July.

The Scout Fellowship had their Autumn trip away to St Briavels, a Youth Hostel set in a moated Norman Castle in the Wye Valley. A pleasant day's walking was followed in the evening by a medieval banquet with participants dressing up. Each member had to entertain the Lord and Lady when the number under their plate was called.



*Pauline Styles and Bib Butcher
As the Lord and Lady of the Manor*

Paul Seekings and Ann Clough



Hazel and Erica Butcher

2008

A victory for the 3rd year running in the District Triathlon competition by Matthew Bowden, Max Halcomb, Matthew Johnson and Nikhil Kotecha.

Another very successful Group family camp was held at Phasels Wood. Over 180 members of the group attended.

Clive Winder received an outstanding achievement award and later in the year the Chief Scout's commendation.

The Scouts were victorious for the 2nd year in succession in the District Night Owls Competition, beating every other team by 100 points or more.

All sections of the group continued to be over subscribed and the Group Scout Leader, Clive, was feeling the strain as he was also the Scout Leader and in need of someone to take over the latter role.

As part of their Platinum Award the Explorers undertook an environmental project by putting up bird boxes in Phasels Wood.

Aisling Benson retired from Cubs due to pressure of work.

Christopher Winder was the Scout of the Year for the 2nd year.

In November The Fellowship and members of the Ladies Guild paid a visit to the County Museum to see the exhibition 100 years of Scouting in Hertfordshire hosted by the County Archivist Frank Brittain.



2009

This year was the 100 years of Scouting in Hertfordshire and also 100 years of Scouting in Abbots Langley.

The Herts centenary was celebrated by a District Camp “The Herts 100” at Tolmers in June. 70 youngsters from the group attended supported by leaders, Fellowship and parents.



Holly Noonan, Assistant Cub Leader

The theme of our camp was “The Golden Lions” and there were lots of different lion masks and costumes of yellow, whilst Clive dressed up as a lion tamer.

For the adults, the Group celebrated its centenary with a dinner and dance at Hunton Park with an attendance of around 120 past and present members. A memorabilia show was put on of artefacts, trophies and photographs from bygone years, along with a film showing the building of the HQ.

A three course dinner was enjoyed and a commemorative programme with a potted history of the group was produced.

During the evening speeches were made and special presentations given to the GSL Clive Winder, and Chairman Bryan Sharpe. One received a ball and chain and the other a crown.



Bryan was presented with a scroll and a poem, an abridged version of which is reprinted here:

*There was a young fella called Sharpe
Who joined the Scouts for a lark
He thought it was clever
To stay there forever
And golly has he left his mark,*

*He's served us for many long years
So together lets all raise our beers
To a Chairman who's great
And doesn't run late
So come one and all and say Cheers!*

*Please enjoy this great celebration
A historic interpretation
For a wonderful man
Who does all he can
We give you your own Coronation*

The Scouts won the District Cooking competition for the very 1st time in January and then also competed in the District competition.

A 2nd Beaver colony was started lead by Lisa Sharpe and Caroline Hubble.

The District swimming gala was held at Woodside Leisure Centre and Beavers, Cubs and Scouts from the Group took part in a very exciting competition. The Beavers and Cubs both came runners-up in their respective sections, with the Scouts coming 1st. This means that the Group won the overall District Trophy.

The Scouts were victorious for the 3rd year in succession in the District Night Owls competition.

Henry Sugden was awarded the Scout of the Year.

The Fellowship's Autumn Trip was to Burnham Deepdale on the North Norfolk coast.

PART 2

IMPORTANT STORIES

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	10 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 is still in production at the time of printing this history.

During all this time not much has really changed to the format from its inception to present day. Of course technology has allowed us greater ease of publishing and the introduction of colour.

In his article in the first “Woodsmoke” the Hon. Secretary D.A. Read wrote about the activities of the BP Guild of Old Scouts being a band of 12 members who give “service” to the group by sitting on the committee and undertaking various tasks. This is called The Fellowship today and I see also like today’s members of which there are roughly 20, they too are always looking for new members.

Even after 50 odd years, very little has changed!

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.

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.

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.

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 Frauz Josef II, crown prince of Liechtenstein, so they went to the capital of Vadaz 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.

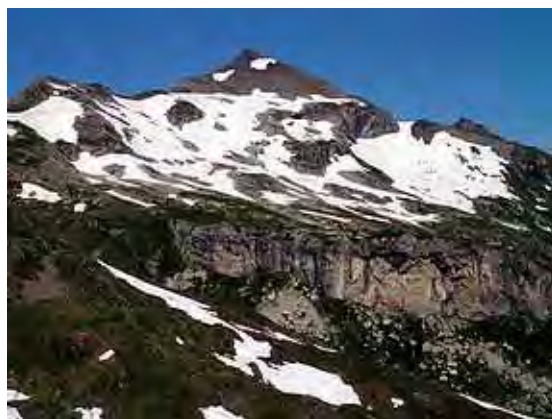
It was an extremely successful trip apart from the one casualty of **Howard Johnston** (aged 18) in an unfortunate climbing accident. Dave Willett, the Venture Scout Leader was taking the Ventures climbing and the Rovers were asked if they wanted to join them, so the Rovers took the microbus and meet 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 them 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”



Jack Ridgeway

Jack Botwright
Fred Dobson

Boxing Day Walk, 1952

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 bestead. 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 were 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

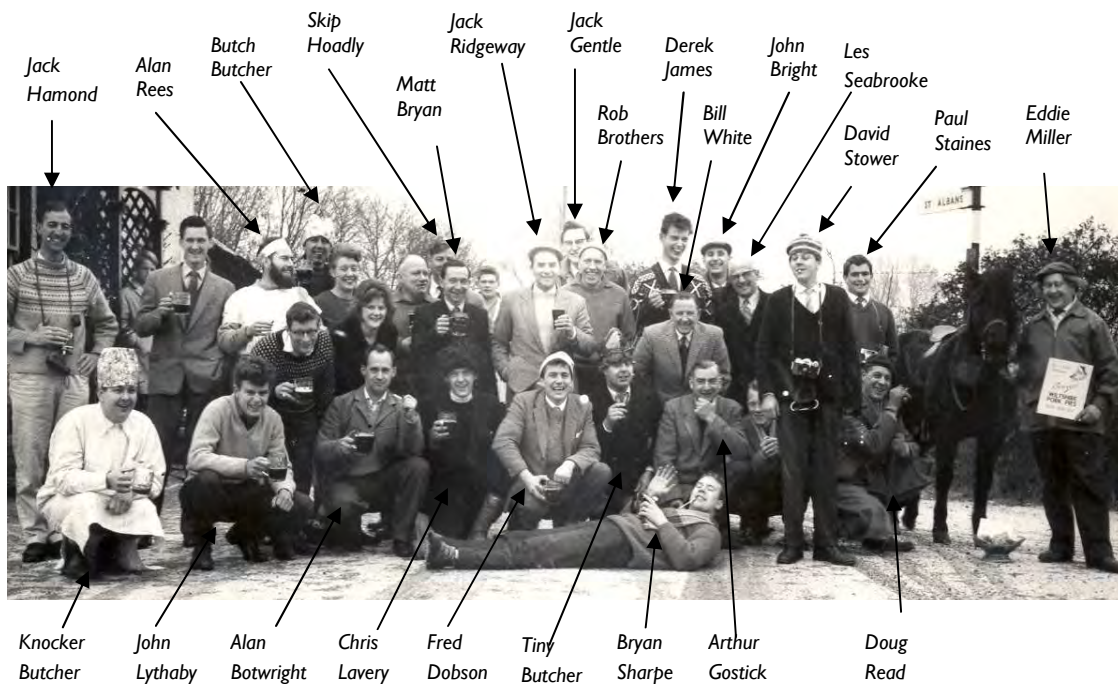
By Fred Dobson

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 Hose 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 and 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 Potterscrouch 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 pieces. 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.

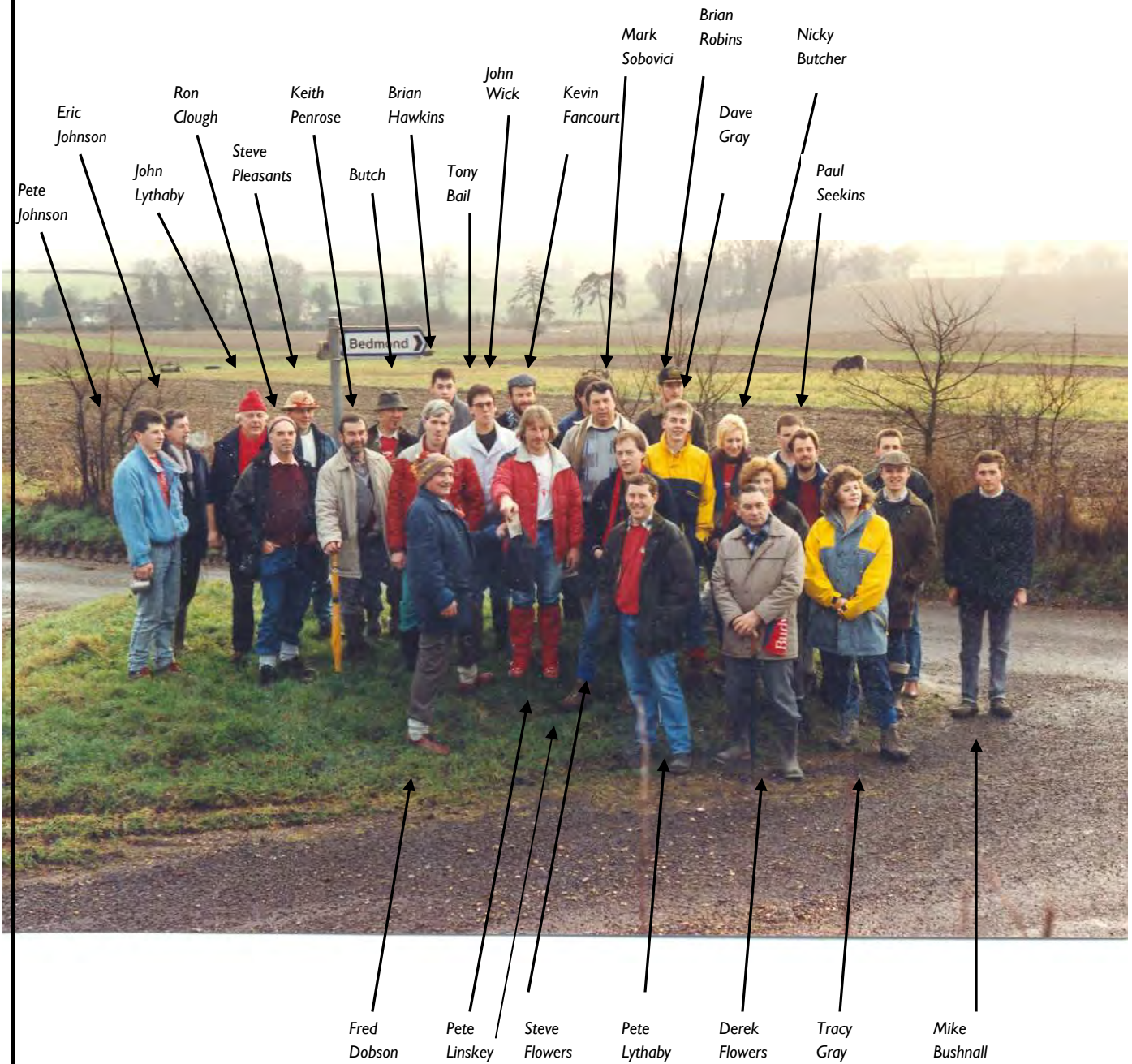
**Seventeen men and one dog
Took part in the Boxing Day walk 1973**

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 hep 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, husband and ½

Right: Ed Chalk, Clive's BIL, Sara 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:-

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.

Anywhen 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 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 –



at

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 I 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)



The best aspidistra on the Beacon!

ABBOTS LANGLEY Scouts can now join Gracie Fields in singing about an outsize aspidistra!

It was on Saturday night that the Abbots Langley lads hiked from Tring station to Ivinghoe Beacon with their treasured aspidistra in a litter.

What more suitable time and place—November, mid-night, and the ascent of a wind-swept beacon—for a night hike demanding resource and endurance? This year a record entry of competitors, literally hundreds of them, including a team of New Zealand Scouts, took part in this great aspidistra event, now four years old.

The Abbots Langley Rover crew organised it, Abbots Langley's B.P. Guild of old scouts laid on the refreshment—but above all, Abbots Langley's senior scouts were awarded first prize of a silver cruet set.

Some of the "aspidistras" didn't look at all like the plant Gracie sang about. One, in fact, looked more like a lady's flowery hat!

But there was no doubt about the Langley lads' winning entry—a magnificent aspidistra given them last year by Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Davey, of the Abbots Langley Working Men's Club, and maintained with great care ever since.

Graphic Photo 68260

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 Aspistras 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 Aspistras show died away, the sad thought remained that this was the last Rover organised World Aspistras Show.

Those Present:

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

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 it but the stalagmite just gave way and he fell down holding it. He landed on both feet, sprained an ankle and broke a foot and the weight of the fall landed him on his bottom and injured his back.

Imagine the trouble of getting him out with those injuries. He was on a bedding plane with the roof and floor not very far apart. 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.

During this weekend Bryan Sharpe had a very nasty fall whilst down Longwood Swallett, falling some 25 ft from the roof of a cavern that was being explored. He was successfully brought out by John Wood, Alan Rees and Jim Parnell (a New Zealander from the London International Club). 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.

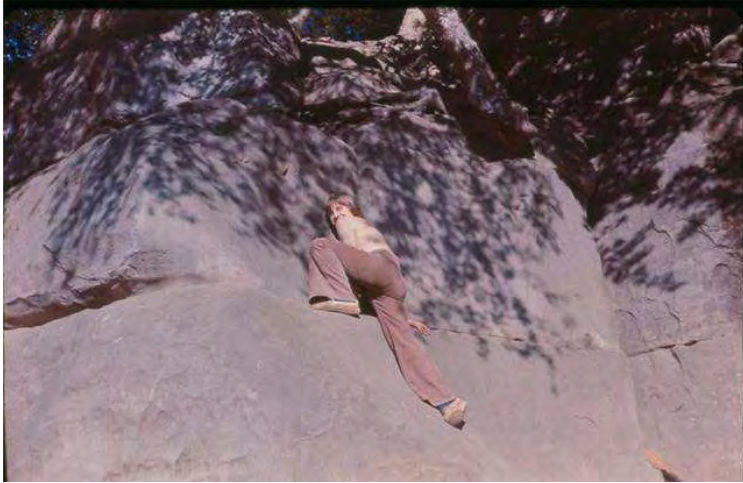
As there was no climbing wall in South West Hertfordshire in 1971, and as far as is known, maybe not even a climbing wall with proper handholds in the whole of Hertfordshire, it was the brainchild of Bryan Sharpe to build a wooden climbing wall to practice on at Mansion House farm. Bryan recalls that 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 Tutenhkmun 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 Guilding 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 join 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 link 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. (duplicate of section in this part)

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 (Pathfinders) Derbyshire National Park (Panthers)
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

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!

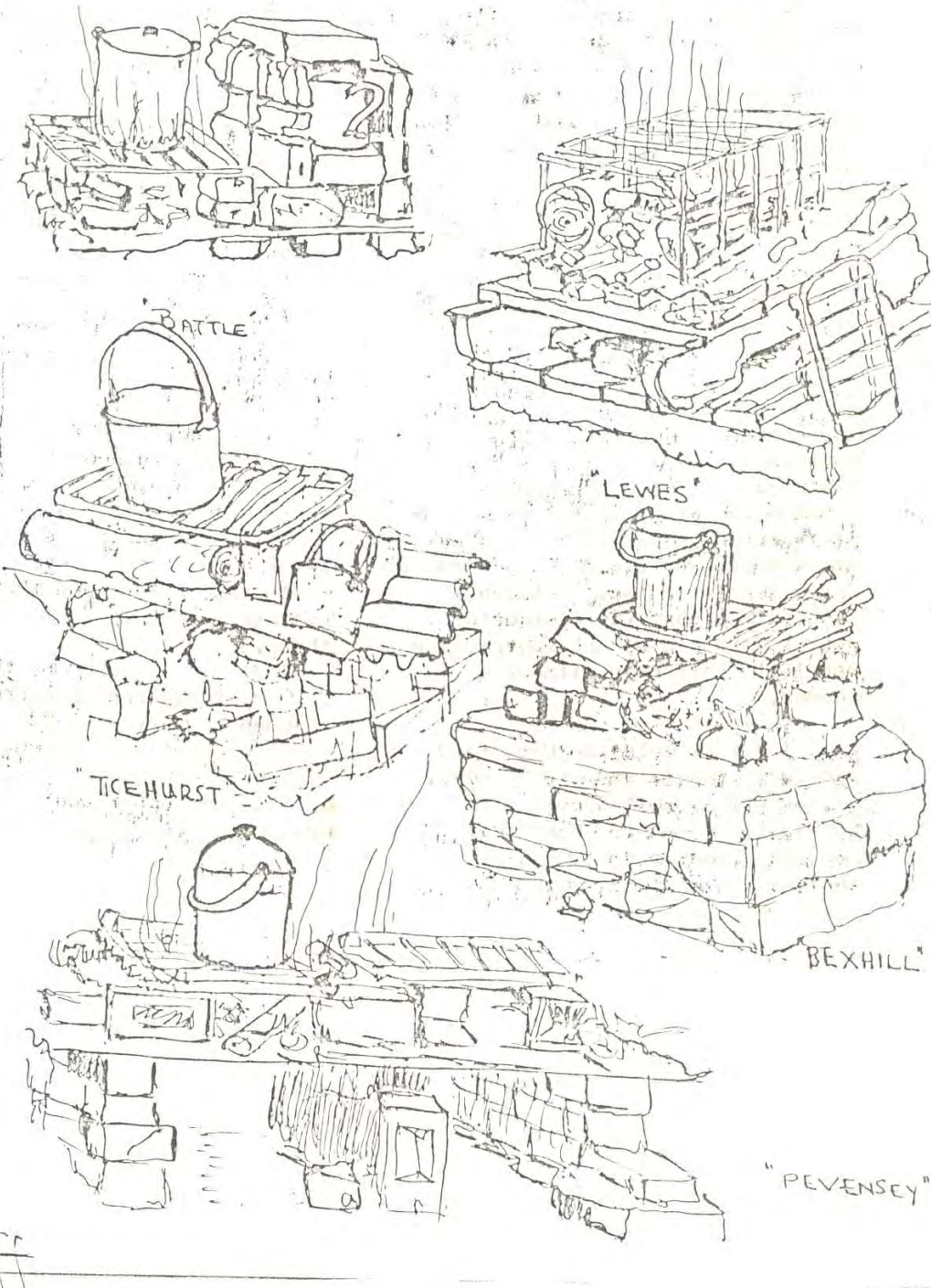
Bryanston, Dorset August 1960

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 below 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'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 Otage, 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

"Dobbie"

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, all 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, non 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.

Vic 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, petelinskeyItribute 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

PRESENT DAY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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 led an expedition to Somerset. Although 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 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 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. Its become a sort of password "Is Bryan going?" if he was and he nearly always was going, then other 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 and so 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 and Pete Linskey, which went live in July 2011.

He received the Medal of merit from Roger Sands.



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

As he was getting old 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.

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 2003 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 miner 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 since 19.. to Present



Tony Dabson



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 Cubbing by a friend, where she held a warrant at ACM of 18th S W Herts pack for two years and it was at the Cracknell Shield competition in 1957 that cupid shot his first arrow.



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

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 Jack's 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 from 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 Treasureship 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 one 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 Akele 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 Akele 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 called "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.