

HERITAGE THOUGHTS FOR THE MONTH OF April 2020

Owing to the outbreak of *Coronavirus*, that has affected most countries in the World, complete isolation for the UK started in March. This required many thousands of people to change their habits. A walk and essential shopping was possible but all Churches, most shops, Museums, Cinemas, Schools, *Scout meetings*, open spaces, visits to family etc. were banned for the foreseeable future. In general people are expected to isolate at home. Having experienced the Asian flu epidemic in 1957 and the more recent SARS problem in 2000, I knew it was important to keep busy. I was most interested to read the excellent letter in *Headlines Express*, giving advice from the County Commissioner.

Although I and my Team are currently unable to attend the County Heritage and Archive Centres at Well End, this has little effect on my researches which proceed more or less as normal. My day starts with an early energetic morning walk for about an hour getting back home around 0800hrs with a copy of *The Daily Telegraph*. This holds my interest for the next two hours including careful scrutiny of the Obit columns where there is always mention of a mixture of people – sometimes who I know; mentions of *Scouting* in the deceased life; the great and the good etc. I then spend several hours (with a break for lunch) carrying out research, writing up this newsletter, making a point of keeping in touch with my Team, other members of Hertfordshire Scouting, or Scouts around the UK by phone or e-mail.

I watched an interesting film about the design and development of the Spitfire Fighter Aeroplane. This was the brainchild of **R. J. Mitchell CBE**. The film reminded me (although he was not a Scout), that his name was symbolised by the inclusion of a new Senior Scout Patrol - **(Mitchell)** at the end of WW2. The square Patrol shoulder patch included the silhouette of the fighter. The Patrol colours were light blue and gold for the sun and sky with the fighter superimposed in black in plan elevation view. This new Patrol name was added at the end of the War, and the remarkable history written up by his son **Gordon** in *The Scouter* (now *Scouting Magazine*) in July 1947. His father had died from Tuberculosis brought on by overwork on 11 June 1937.

The Daily Mail Newspaper carried an article that should give ideas to all parents who currently have bored young people at home. The Scout Association have come up with a list of 150 activities – **The Great Indoors**. The aim is to give children inspired activity ideas. This is to keep them learning new skills and having fun. The full list can be found at www.scouts.org.uk/the-great-indoors. I have had a good look through these activities that are mostly aimed at the under 18s. Full directions are given including all materials required. It reminded me of the best-selling Training Aid that TSA ever produced, - *District Training Guidelines*.

The forced isolation we are currently adhering to reminded me of my kindergarten and infancy years. As I was born in the year that the Second World War started, and during these bleak years, many nights and some daylight hours were spent in an *Anderson Shelter*. This was named after a Minister for War who thought up the idea. Following delivery, my father constructed the shelter from the kit supplied following an application to the local War Office. As an Engineer at John Dickinson's and driving to work each day to their Tottenham Factory, he was able to help out with some of our neighbours' constructions. He first got them to do the digging out of the base which was about 3ft (1 metre) deep and 4ft x 6ft long. This spoil was then put onto the roof and sides of the shelter when finished, to allow the grass to grow and some people would grow vegetables on it. Our family Shelter was positioned on the verge opposite our house in Bramley Road, Cockfosters on a triangle of land used for about 80 allotments. My parents had moved into this new house in 1938. They found it was unfortunately located in a direct line between Southgate Underground Station and the 440 acre Trent Park Estate, Cockfosters. This had a large mansion that was commandeered by the Army and was where all captured German pilots were taken for interrogation. (See the film starring **Henry Kruger**

who was "*The One That Got Away*"). The local Broadfields Garage was closed but housed two Mosquito biplanes in the workshop ready for take-off should there be an invasion and to evacuate the senior officers at Trent Park.

This former Hunting Lodge of Henry VIII was ideal for the purpose of interrogation and all rooms were wired with microphones before the pilots arrived! **Kruger** spotted the one in his room almost immediately. The German Pilots who were still flying, became intent on destroying this substantial remote building in the middle of a large Park but weren't too fussy about where they released their bombs. Consequently they seemed to fall all over the place and on occasion blew in all our south facing leaded light windows. Later in the War my sister and I were treated to a *Morrison* (indoor shelter, also named after a Minister for War) that could also serve as a dining room table. Trent Park was originally the home of the **Sassoon family** but was later the home of the **Bevan family** who laid the foundation stone for Cockfosters Church where I was a Wolf Cub, Boy and Senior Scout and a Church Sidesman for many years.

The Herts Advertiser Newspaper reported at some length that Beaver Colonies, Cub Packs, Scout Troops and Explorer Units from nine St Albans Groups have planted over 3,000 trees around the banks of the Willows Lakes between the M25 and the A1. This was the third round of planting organised by **Ian Burnett** from the First London Colney Scout Group and the total planting is now over 5,000. This is the biggest and cheapest way of taking CO2 out of the atmosphere and to tackle the climate crisis. This work was completed prior to the Coronavirus lockdown.

In another edition of the County Newspaper, there was an article written by the County Scout President, and Lord Lieutenant, **Robert Voss C.B.E.** He wrote at some length a stimulating article to offer support to all members of the County of Hertfordshire in this time of crisis.

On 5 April on and the TV channel - Yesterday, in a 1965 recording of Sunday Night at the London Palladium, Jimmy Tarbuck the compare, and former Boy Scout, introduced some of the audience prior to the performance. One of these was **Ralph Reader** of Gang Show Fame, who in 1954 had received a Chief Scout's Commissioners hat plume from Lord Rowallan at the National Commissioners Conference at Filey Holiday Camp. In 1957 **Ralph** had been appointed C.B.E. **Jimmy Tarbuck** also announced that to date, **Ralph** had raised over five million pounds for the Boy Scout Movement. The final curtain of the London Gang Show was in 1974 which my wife and I attended. Our guest was **Len Spikesley ACC (Leader Training)**. Gang Shows have continued throughout the world. The longest continuously running Gang Show in the UK is held at Harpenden, Hertfordshire.

On another TV programme **ITN (News at 10) on 7 April, the Chief Scout Bear Grylls** appeared, in uniform, to give encouragement to everyone in these times of crisis.

Mid Herts Scout District of which I am a member, have announced their plans for a "virtual" St Georges Day Service that will take place on "Zoom". Full instructions have been given on how to participate. I look forward to this new experience.

The latest copy of Scouting Magazine was delivered during the month. I was a little a concerned that this was the Summer Term edition delivered in April! However, diligent reading found the issue packed full of interesting ideas and suggestions, giving months of programme ideas for young people of all ages although it was a bit thin on ideas for the over 18s.

My contribution for the County Review has been written and sent off with photographs before the deadline. This document is compiled throughout the year recording individual events and then edited.

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