

HERITAGE THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY (January 2017)

29th January 2017

Fifty years ago, 1967 was the *Diamond Jubilee Year of Scouting*. In commemoration, a book was produced of the same name. This featured photos of Scouts from Hertfordshire carrying out a mountain rescue off Ben Lawes near Lochearnhead Scout Station and an example of how to conduct an investiture, by Scouts from Cockfosters (also in Hertfordshire at that time). Later that year it was announced the Movement had reached its highest membership total of 557,918 in all Sections. (Membership continued to grow, reaching its maximum of 676,988 in 1989).

On 29 January 2006, Hertfordshire lost one of its most well-known female Scout Leaders, **May Allison Bennett**. She was one of a handful of influential female Leaders on the County Team and was spurred on by her enthusiastic husband **John**, who was CC. I interviewed **May** in 2001 after she had given up as Registrar to the Lochearnhead, Orchard Farm and Coetmor Mill Activity Centers, appointments she had held for 30 years. **May** also played an active part in raising money in 1977 for the purchase of Lochearnhead Scout Station. She hand-wrote hundreds of letters to industry and private individuals, this was a mammoth task. Copies of every letter sent and received are held in the Heritage Archive Facility. Her efforts were a great success resulting in nearly double the aimed amount being raised.

May Bennett was part of the search team to find a new activity center in the Peak District. Having visited several possibilities, Orchard Farm in Staffordshire was selected. She was involved in the refurbishment and became Registrar. In 1988, when her husband had completed this term as CC, she accompanied him on a tour of Japan with the National Scout and Guide Concert Band. The tour had been organised by **Peter Ingram** the Activities Adviser at TSA and former Hertfordshire Scout. In 1995, **May and John** undertook a project for TSA to reintroduce Scouting to the Seychelles. This involved several trips until 1997.

May was an accomplished and prolific watercolour artist and one of her paintings hangs in the County Scout Heritage Centre at Well End. She was awarded the Bar to the Silver Acorn in 1998. May passed away after losing her fight against lung cancer.

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