

## Heritage Thoughts for the Month (April 2019)

*In case you have not had this before, this is a monthly newsletter from the County Heritage Team. Please use whatever you can into your weekly programmes for young people. If you have any questions about your Group or District history, please ask and I will do my best to find the answers.*

**NANCY AYLEY:** Nancy Ayley was a busy school teacher in Bishop's Stortford for children with epilepsy as well as a Scouter in Bishop's Stortford District. She was also a valued member of the specialist County Team that looked after the many Scouts with additional needs in the County. When her health deteriorated, Nancy went into a care home in St Albans where I visited her from time to time. When this closed in January 2014 she moved to another home in Chelsea, London (St Wilfred's).

This home is now also closing, and her new home is quite close to Gilwell Park where she used to attend and run camps for disabled Scouts. She is now 97 and her birthday is 27 June! If you would like to keep in touch, her please contact me for her new address.

**BILL VEYSEY:** I am sorry to report the death of **Bill Veysey**. Bill unintentionally rose to fame when in 1952 he became 18 and as a member of the 39 South West Herts / First Croxley Green Scout Group, he obtained his last qualifying proficiency (Rescuer) Badge towards his King's Scout Award. His certificate is dated St George's Day, 1952 and he was the last person in Hertfordshire to attain that award as the King had died on 6 June. A year later in 1953, five more Scouts from his Group were awarded their Queen's Scout Awards in the year of the Coronation. Bill was by then a Rover Scout and his warrant as an ASM was presented to him by **Alan Emery** (his District Commissioner) during the St George's Day celebrations. Until recently, Bill continued to give outstanding service in his Group and District. He held a number of appointments in the B-P Scout Guild and the 79th Bushey & Oxhey Scout Group. He was also Chairman of the District Appointments Committee for many years. He was awarded one of the highest awards of Merit, the Bar to the Silver Acorn.

Bill was a frequent contributor and visitor to the County Heritage Team at Well End Activity Centre. He remained in contact with me as recent as March this year. The funeral was held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> May at Garston Crematorium at 13.20hrs.

**AN EVENT: TO REMEMBER ALAN EMERY:** Alan Emery's life was significant in the history of Hertfordshire. He was the first Scout to take the Scout Promise (or Oath as it was known in 1908). He later became District Commissioner for South West Herts District. To mark this event and after some 5 years of research, I engaged a team to organise a reunion that was held on 1 March 2019. I was assisted by members of the Heritage Team and other specialists. These included - **Roger & Janet Sands, Liz Jack** and **Peter Hadwin**. A search was made to include of many of the people in Hertfordshire Scouting who knew and worked with Alan, also his many family descendants, and we included civic dignitaries, all of whom were enthusiastic and helpful to assist.

The event started at the location where he lived in 1908. This was 128 Estcourt Road, Watford, and a commemorative blue plaque was unveiled on the property to mark this important 1908 event in the history of Hertfordshire and Watford Scouting. Scouts from his original Group, the First South West Herts Scout Group were given time off school and invited to unveil the plaque. It was also noted that this was the first Scout Group in Hertfordshire. Their Scout HQ is in Durban Road, Watford.

We then retired to the conference room at the adjacent Holiday Inn in Clarence Road where speeches were made by myself and local civic dignitaries of Watford. Later, lunch was served, and an exhibition of Alan's rich life attracted significant interest.

A number of organisations showed interest in having the exhibition displayed at their own local events later in the year.

**VISIT TO CHERRY GREEN TREES CAMPSITE:** Through my contacts with the County of Greater London North, I was recently invited to attend one of their 'Bluebell Days'. Cherry Green Trees is a 9-acre Campsite belonging to Finchley, Friern Barnet and Southgate Division Guides in North London. Its location is in Hertfordshire not far from where I live in St Albans and this was the first time I had visited. Its location is at the back of beyond but the view at the end of a long winding one-track driveway is breath-taking.

The site has a significant history. It was donated to the Guides of the North Middlesex Division by **Herminie Eckstein** in March 1934 when it became known as Cherry Green Trees. There is a full and detailed history available on their website, and in more recent years, thanks to significant and frequent bequests by the Jack Petchey Leader Awards Foundation, considerable improvements have been made to the main building, the woodland and to the Wardens bungalow. Over 2000 trees were donated by the Woodland Trust

One of the great assets of the site are the Bluebells in the woods and at the time of my visit there were at their best and I had not seen any so prolific.

**ST. ALBANS TRIBUTE TO OUR PATRON ST. GEORGE:** I was also pleased to receive an invitation from St. Albans District for their Parade and celebrations to mark this event. This year it was held in a different location in Verulamium Park, and well over 1000 members and parents attended in the chilly air but sometimes bright sunshine that brought a hint of warmth. The event was, as always, well organised with the Groups walking down from the City centre headed by a band. The event was impressively stewarded and compared by the younger members of the local Unit who are shortly to attend the World Scout Jamboree in North America.

Upon arrival of the District, Sections from the Assembly each mounted the stage to reaffirm their respective Scout Promise over the excellent PA system. This was followed by the National Anthem. The Assembly was then briefed at some length regarding their part in an attempt to get an entry into the Guinness Book of Records. Officials from the publication

were present and on hand to see that the strict rules were enforced before, during and after this record attempt to display the largest shape of a Scout Arrowhead. To meet the regulations the 934 young people all had to be logged through a gate with mechanical counters and were all dressed in blue plastic coats with armholes and hoods. Then, with the help of adult stewards, were positioned appropriately to take their place in the formation on the previously lined out area. This took some time and was watched by the official scrutinisers, a Deputy Lord Lieutenant **Akhtar Zaman** and the Mayor of St Albans **Cllr Rosemary Farmer**. They were both sat next to me on the VIP rostrum. Upon a command from the Director, everyone had to stand still for a full 5 minutes to qualify. After the Assembly were dismissed, the Guinness Book's scrutinisers needed forms to be completed in detail. There is a 3-4 month wait now to see if this attempt on the record will be accepted at head office. The previous attempt by another Scout District / County was with only about 450 people.

**COUNTY CYCLE MARATHON:** This was established over the weekend of 25/26 September 1926, following an initiative by the County of Kent. In the following years and decades of the 1930s/40/50&60s Hertfordshire County Scout Competitions included a County Cycle Marathon that usually started in Letchworth and traced a circular route around the County boundaries. Adjustments had to be made to the route over time owing to the introduction of more major roads. At a recent National Badgers Club meeting I purchased an original chrome plated "HERTS" cycle badge that would have been bolted to a lamp bracket of a cycle. This will shortly be on display in the County Heritage Centre at Well End Activity Centre.

**FRANK BRITTAIN**

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