

Heritage Thoughts for the Month (July 2019)

In July, my wife and I spent a week on the Isle of Wight looking up old friends, including a member of the **Baden-Powell** family and **Sally Grylls**, the mother of **Bear Grylls** (Chief Scout). Bear and his family were sailing so we did not see them, but **Imogen Baden-Powell** and Sally (both pictured) joined us for breakfast at our hotel to catch up.



Later in the day we visited Osborne House (the former holiday home of Queen Victoria). Unfortunately, I fell ill with the heat much to my embarrassment! First Aiders quickly attended, and I recovered sufficiently to drive back our hotel. This rather threw our plans out of sequence until we returned home. As the I.O.W has many connections to Hertfordshire Scouting, we had hoped to meet with several other people while we were there.

The Heritage Team were invited to attend a special event at Gilwell Park as Hertfordshire is a frequent contributor to the *Promise Pathway*. Over 100 contributors were invited but only 12 people attended for the excellent afternoon tea and talks by the Pathway staff. We were also treated to a display by a member of the Heritage Team from the Gilwell Archives, of items that belonged to **B-P**. Also accompanying me at the event were **Freddy & Jennie O'Hare**.



The **First Berkhamsted Scout Group** celebrated their 110th anniversary at their AGM in the Afon Conquest Building at Phasels Wood Activity Centre. As we were invited to attend, I put on a display about the Group from its foundation. They are one of only a handful of Groups in the County to have been continually in operation for 110 years, and this Group have also met in the same Scout HQ for 100 years. Over 5 years ago, I borrowed an engraved Scout Bugle from this Group that

had been donated by the Britton Family. The Bugle carried a date of 1919. I returned it at the AGM having used it on the many talks we gave around the County on '*What the Scouts of Hertfordshire did in WW1*'. There was always a tussle by Scouts to have their turn at trying to get a tune out of it. Some were reasonably successful!

The Tolmers Tea party at CTT (Come to Tolmers) is always an event to look forward to and I was also invited to be a member of the Team to serve in the shop. I survived my first and later second, third and fourth busy mornings without undue distress and was gratified to experience almost total good manners and politeness from all customers. My counter was snacks and bottled drinks from the fridge. The shop was often packed to capacity with the 4 counters all staffed from 9.30am – 1.00pm with a break for lunch following. We were all provided with a Tolmers Activity Centre smart green top and a Service Team necker.



Getting back to the Tea Party, this is a Hertfordshire Scouts event held in the Jo's Joint Marquee. Following my morning session in the shop, I changed into full uniform to meet with the invited guests that included Mayoral dignitaries from the surrounding Scout Districts. Several other Scout dignitaries were present including the County Chairman **Michael Shurety**, and County Vice Presidents **Roger Sands** and **Colin McIntyre**. The CC was busy at the World Scout Jamboree in West Virginia!

The copy of *Scouting Magazine* received as the Autumn Term edition was really interesting. Almost every page contained programme ideas to see leaders through the winter regardless of section. What a fantastic resource this magazine has become. Another uniform review is on the cards - see page 98 for more information.

On 20 July, the **Hertfordshire Units** bound for the 24th World Jamboree in North America left from Heathrow Airport. I headed straight for the airport armed with departure times provided by the Unit Leaders and arrived at Terminal 3 only to find I had missed two of the Units by a few minutes after heading through early to the Departure Lounge. There were many other Units to choose from all over the South of England, so firstly I introduced myself to the leaders of Avon & Somerset County, and then to others who seemed not to have such a good send off as Hertfordshire. They all seemed to be very keen, excited and looking forward to what had been explained to them as a life changing experience. No one I spoke to had been to a WSJ previously and I embraced their enthusiasm and shared my previous experiences of attending several World Jamborees over the past 60 +years.



I was able to meet with a dedicated Heathrow staff member who, armed with the full list of Scout departures, was able to guide me between T2 & T3 to meet with departing Units from all over the South of England. I met with **Larry Eeles** a Unit Leader from the Sixth Royston Air Scouts in Hertfordshire with the all-important joint mixed Unit 17 (Busby Bears), consisting of representatives from Hertfordshire, Essex, Cambridgeshire and Anglia Guides. They were not leaving until 2.10pm but had to be at Heathrow by 7.30am! The whole experience (meeting Units from other Counties) was well worthwhile - living less than an hour from Heathrow made the journey a pleasant and rewarding experience.

Right at the end of the month I visited Poole in Dorset. This included one of my regular and frequent visits (since 1964) to Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour. My first trip there in 1964 involved being transported from Sandbanks Pier to the Island in a rowing boat! On this visit, we were recommended to stay at the RNLI College Hotel by one of the Heritage Team, **Peter Hadwin**. We usually stay at either the Travelodge or the Premier Inn that were also local but not so close to the Quay as the RNLI College. They have their National HQ in West Quay Road, less than a mile from the Quay, the statue of **B-P** and the Ferry to Brownsea Island. Now we have stayed there it is strongly recommended.



Following breakfast on Thursday 1 August we made our way to catch the 10am Ferry. During the crossing of this, the second largest natural Harbour in the World, we met with the *1st Southwick Scout Troop* and the *Voyager Explorer Scout Unit* from Wiltshire. They were led by **Kevin Philips** the County SAS Manager. I asked **Kevin** if they knew the significance of the Day and if they would like a brief talk by me at the bust of B-P? Yes! They leapt at the offer.

On the inward journey I also met with a mother and daughter **Nickie Davies** and **Rebecca Hopkins** from the 1st Hemel Hempstead Scout Group. Nickie is the Group Treasurer. I offered them to join my tour of the Island as it was their first time there. Following the registration formalities upon landing, we went into the grounds of Brownsea Castle (that is halfway through a 100-year lease with John Lewis Partnership) and met **David**, the Manager who has previously helped me with tours of Scouts around the Castle. I then met the Group from Southwick by the bust of B-P and gave them insight to why the 1st August was so special, why in 1907 it was not the World's first Scout Camp, how B-P had organised the Experimental Camp and who had attended.

Peter, Nickie & Rebecca and I went on our way heading for the Church. Who should I meet just outside the church but **Janet Mellors**, an NT Guide and former Guide Leader. I have met Janet several times in the past when I was leading tours with Scout Groups. I always contact her to meet in the Church where she gives talks about the history of the Island and its owners. I persuaded **Rebecca** to “pump air” into the organ in the church for Janet.



Leaving the church, we proceeded to the Commemoration Stone that is close to the site of B-Ps Experimental camp, 1 – 12 August 1907. This camp was planned to test out his ideas while compiling his book, *Scouting for Boys*. This was first published in fortnightly parts on 16 January 1908. The 11th Purley Guides were carrying out an investiture and the 17th W.G.C. Guides were also in the area. Moving on to the Scout Outdoor Centre and Trading Post we met the 1st Boreham Scout Group from Essex, who were sitting outside having their lunch. We also met the 11th Purley Cub Scout Pack.



I had not met so many visiting Scout Groups since the Centenary Camp held there in 2007. I then escorted my party down to the original B-P Campsite which has had a new sign erected since my last visit and met the 46th Sheffield Guides who were in camp there. I then took my small party along the sandy South Shoreline, only to find the access back up to the main path had been washed away.

Prior to travelling to Poole, Sylvia and I had attended the funeral of **Joan Slow S.S.St.J** at the very recently opened Bierton Crematorium in Aylesbury. Joan had died at the age of 91. She had become the DC of Potters Bar Scout District following the death of her husband **Philip** who previously held that appointment, Joan served as DC from 1987 – 1991. When she retired from active Scouting in 1996, she moved to Leighton Buzzard and later to a care home within the town. I visited her several times there up to her death. Joan had a valuable collection of Scout memorabilia which had to be sold to pay for her care and I was pleased to purchase some items for the County Scout Museum. Joan has bequeathed the remnants of her collection to Hertfordshire Scout Archives. Joan was a senior member of St John Ambulance and the letters **S.S.St.J**. “**Serving Sister of St John**” is one of their highest awards. Several mourners attended from Hertfordshire but mainly from her ASU in Leighton Buzzard.

I read with sadness in *The Daily Telegraph* of the “Going Home” of **Gill Hancock OBE** at the age of 88. Gill was a former and impressive County Commissioner of Girlguiding Hertfordshire in the 1970/80s. During my 35 years as County Adult Training Administrator (from 1968), relationships in the County between the Scouts and Guides were very strong, (Joint County Expeditions etc, that were often initiated and led by the **CC Freddie de Butts** [see photo],



James Kingham, Len Spikesley and many Guide Leaders). Guide Leaders were always welcomed onto our very full Leader Training Courses, they were anxious to learn, and several were proud to achieve and wear the Scout Wood Badge Beads. In return, several of our leaders trained with the Guides to acquire a Guide Campers Licence to enable them to take Guides to Scout Camps.

When I was invested into the role of County Archivist by **CC Roger Sands** in 2003, I was recommended to always read the personal obituary tributes in *The Daily Telegraph* by **Bernard Smith**. He was a much-respected member and Historian of the Fourth St Albans Group, proof-reader to **F. Hadyn Dimmock** (the Editor of *The Scout* weekly newspaper) and working colleague to many famous employees of The Scout Association at that time. His advice has proved invaluable over the decades and I have learnt of the “Going Home” of many Scouts and Guides who I may have never met, but sometimes knew by correspondence. **Bernard Smith** died aged 104 on 14 March 2005 and was then Hertfordshire’s oldest Scout. I am still in touch with his son, **Peter**, also a former member of the Fourth St Albans Scout Group.

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