

HERITAGE THOUGHTS FOR THE MONTH OF January 2020.

As I start to compile this newsletter on the first day of the New Year, I am reminded that in Scouting, many historic events started in January during the past 112 years. I list those up to 1957.

1908 – Sir Arthur Pearson (the blind MD of Pearson the Publishers) lent **B-P** premises in Henrietta Street WC2 to facilitate use as a headquarters to run Scouting. Many Historians consider this to be the birth date of Scouting.

1910 - B-P wrote in his "Outlook" column in Headquarters Gazette – "I received many nice presents during Christmas, but the most pleasing of them all was sent by one of my County Commissioners. He is **Percy Everett** of Hertfordshire. He sent a map of his County marked off into sixteen clearly defined Sub-Districts, each listing its own President, Secretary and executive Committee. These Committees are all now at work selecting their Scoutmasters and setting up Troops for their respective areas. Following this systematic approach in every County, will enable us to develop on a really large scale. The boys will come fast enough". **B.P** encouraged all CCs to follow this lead and method.

1914 – The first Kings Langley Troop helped the Civic authorities in the search for a lady who had gone missing from a Nursing Home. The Troop visited over 50 farmhouses before they found the lady.

1923 – B-P was created a Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order in the New Year Honours.

1927 – A new Scout HQ funded entirely by public subscription was opened by **Percy Everett (CC)** for the Second Elstree Scout Troop in Allum Lane, Elstree. The ceremony was held in the presence of many friends and supporters and the District Commissioner for Radlett **P. W. Kent** presided. The main benefactor was **Mr. G. W. Atkins** who had donated the land.

1928 – The opening of a new Scout Headquarters for the First Rickmansworth (Lady Ebury's Own) Group was performed by the President of Hertfordshire Scouts the **Rt. Hon Viscount Hampden**. The County Commissioner **Percy Everett** was in attendance.

1930 – The Scouter (now Scouting Magazine) reported that the First High Barnet Scout Group celebrated their coming of age in December 1929. (Barnet District was part of Hertfordshire until 1964). In the evening they had a cold supper for 100 past and present members. On Sunday morning, a wreath was laid at the Barnet war memorial to the memory of the 14 Scouts from the Troop who lost their lives in the Great War. The speaker at the Scouts Own was **Roland Richardson** the Founder of the Troop 1908.

1930- Percy Everett was knighted in the New Year Honours.

1931 – The Third St Albans Rover Crew started a Crew Logbook and **George Burrell** was invited to write his memories. This took the first five pages of clear handwritten script.

1936 – The death of **King George V**. He was succeeded by **Edward VIII**. This was reported in The Scouter of February 1936. "We mourn the loss of our Patron and we recall with happy memory the constant approval, encouragement and many kindly and gracious acts throughout his long reign." There were four pages of tributes to the way in which the King had helped Scouting since 1911.

1940 – **Second Lieutenant Ellis Edward Talbot**, previously a Scout with the First Elstree School Troop, was awarded the Medal of the Order of the British Empire for Gallantry. His bomb disposal

team was called to a device that had fallen at Loughor railway station in Wales. The bomb had penetrated so deeply it took twelve and a half hours of digging to reach it. They had no way of knowing if it had a delayed action timer fitted. These were known to activate from 5 minutes to 40 hours after contact with land. Talbot put a rope around this relatively lightweight bomb and hoisted it carefully to ground level. Upon examination it was found to have a fuse, but it was new to him. Calling to his men to take cover he hoisted the bomb onto his shoulder and carried it to waste ground where he covered it with sandbags and detonated it. He was later killed in action in 1942. There were 152 holders of this award that was introduced in 1922. This and other relative awards for gallantry were renamed as The George Cross that was introduced in 1940.

1941- B-P, Chief Scout of the World, who was now living in his beloved South Africa, died at the age of 84. He was buried in St Peter's churchyard, Nyeri, Kenya, with full military honours. **Lady B-P** braved the U-boats and returned home to the UK.

1945- The 59th South West Herts Scout Group was founded. (During a District reorganisation in 1964, they later changed to the Sixth North Watford Scout Group). Their original scarves were made from blackout material and were edged with dark blue to signify clear blue skies following the blackout. On instruction from the War Office, this material was originally used by householders to pin up at their windows to prevent any stray interior lighting giving away housing to bombers. Air Raid Wardens patrolled the streets and if there was a chink of light they would hammer and shout through the letter-plate, "Put that light out!"

1945- The War had caused many problems with scouting in particular with the Rover Section. Not only were they the first to be called up but they suffered the greatest loss of life. Many Crews were suspended during the duration of the War and some never reopened. In the UK numbers of Rovers slumped from a pre-war high of 38,000 down to 7,291.

1946 – Melville Balsillie as yet not known in Hertfordshire, was appointed the first London Assistant County Commissioner for the new Senior Scout Section. He had served on a committee of three as part of the Post War Commission that recommended this new Section and in October, he organised the first ever Senior Scout gathering in the Rudolph Stiner Hall in London.

1948 – Sir Percy Everett donated a Boomerang which had been presented to him during a recent tour of Australia. He thought it would suit as a trophy and created the Everett Boomerang competition for the new Section of Senior Scouts. It can now be viewed in the County Scout Museum.

1950 – Three Scouts from the Third Boxmoor Scout Troop appeared on the front cover of *The Scouter*. They were **Derek Sayell and Frank & Terry Dellamuro**. The photo was taken by **George Starr** just where a footpath crosses Rucklers Lane near to Phasels Wood Campsite.

1951 – A 24 – page booklet *Senior Scout Training in Hertfordshire* was published by **Melville Balsillie**, the new ACC (SS). He had been concerned about "leakage" after boys transferred after the age of 15. He knew that Scouting had to be radically different for this age group, with different aims, values, and objectives. The result of Senior Scout Leaders reading and acting on this booklet was startling and numbers grew quickly as the census figures showed.

1952 – Sir Percy Everett, the longest serving Scout in the world, died at the age of 81. From a standing start he led our County of Hertfordshire, making it the first organised Scout County in the World. In 1907 he met with **B-P** on Brownsea Island and was so impressed with his work he became his right-hand man. He was Senior Literary Manager for the publisher, Pearson's who printed many

books on Scouting. Items from his uniform were initially distributed amongst his fellow Group Scouters but over the years have found their way back to Well End and are now dressed on a manikin.

1957 – The national celebration to mark centenary of the birth of **B-P** was held on **22 February 1957** in Westminster Abbey. This was his actual birth date and is now known as Founders Day. Representatives from thirteen Districts in Hertfordshire attended this packed Service plus four from the County Team including the **CC Graham Wallis**. Almost every County in the UK was invited and most held their own individual Services of Remembrance during the year

1957– The World Jamboree was held in the UK at Sutton Park in Warwickshire. This was the third World Jamboree to be held in the UK since 1920. There was a large contingent from Hertfordshire of Scouts and with the Moot for Rover Scouts and the Indaba for Leaders this brought the total to 213.

1957 – A special Training Course No 256/7 was held at Gilwell Park for Deputy Camp Chiefs (DCC). Amongst those from Hertfordshire were **Derek Turner and Dr Leslie Pears**. In the four weeks following the World Jamboree 672 Scouters from 73 nations attended Wood Badge Courses at Gilwell Park. On one remarkable weekend. Nine Wood Badge Courses were running simultaneously.

I am sorry to report the “Going Home” of Audrey Barbara Smith who died recently on Christmas Day. **Audrey** was previously an Assistant Leader Trainer with the County Training Team, and was during my 35 years as County Training Administrator. **Audrey** had been in poor health for some years following the death of her husband **Denis**. Formally he had been ACC(C) in Hertfordshire and latterly County Secretary in Somerset. He died in 2006. They had moved from Bishops Stortford to Wiviliscombe in 2004 to be nearer members of the **Baden-Powell** family. **Sylvia & I** were fortunate to be invited to stay with **Audrey & Denis** on a number of occasions and to take them to events and locations. In more recent years **Audrey** lived in Care Homes where I had also visited. The funeral took place on Monday 20 January to which I was given an invitation by the family. This took place in Thatcham, Berkshire and was well attended by both family and her many friends. There were several attenders who wore Scout uniform. A number of people attended from Hertfordshire including **Nigel Read** from Audrey's former District (Bishop's Stortford). **Nigel** is also a member of the County Executive. I have known and kept in touch with family members over the years and the County Scout Museum has benefitted from the many donations from **Audrey**. Her son **Nigel** gave me another bag of unique items at the reception. Her sister **Pam Burnand** had died a few weeks previously. **Audrey's** sons were also former Hertfordshire Scouts and the wider family are all keen that our Scout Museum should benefit from her legacy. I worked with **Audrey** for many years and remember her as having extremely high moral and professional standards. This did not suit all those who had to work with her! **Audrey** worked professionally as the Head Teachers' Secretary at the Bishops Stortford High School for Girls, an appointment she carried out with great efficiency. I also met with her former Head, a lady of 95 who had planned to travel from Bishops Stortford by public transport but accepted a lift from someone instead. The service was held at the West Berkshire Crematorium and conducted by the **Reverend David R. Witts**. The eulogy was read by her son **Christopher**. Copies of The Order of Service were in very short supply so there were no spares available but it contained several images of **Audrey** in Scout uniform and included one of her and **Denis** together. Both Orders carried identical “Gone Home” symbols and I have placed both their Obituaries together in the same file.

The fires in Australia are of great concern. I am relieved to get a reply from members of the **Baden-Powell Family** who live not far from this raging devastation. They are safe for the time being but are concerned. My wife has relations in Sydney. It has been impossible to contact them by telephone or e-mail for some weeks as all these services are down. I have written to them with hope they will reply.

The Harpenden Gang Show is the longest continuously running Gang Show in the World. I attended their second night with great expectations and was not disappointed. This was the 71st Show. I sat with 18 members of my Active Support Unit from Mid Herts District and we were allocated excellent seats in the stalls. I met many colleagues **Tim Kidd**, the UK Chief Commissioner from Gilwell, and **CC Liz Walker**. I also met with **Martin Hart & Jackie Turberville** from my old Scout Group in Cockfosters. There were also many other old friends from around the County who were performers or supporting staff. The Producer **Ewan Murray** has been a long time member of the Show and inherited this role from **Marilyn Hudson** in 1993 when she retired after 23 years. The Gang of 2020 numbered Over 160 with about the same number of back-stage staff! The 13 presentations in two Acts were full of life, music and active interest. All the performers paid attention to their roles either as an individual or a member of the collective. As an experienced former performer and back-stager at another Gang Show, I appreciated the dedication and rehearsal time that had been involved. The next Show in 2021 will be the last and actual final booking in the present accommodation (The Eric Morecombe Memorial Hall). In 2022 a new venue that is currently under construction venue will open in Rothamstead Park.

On a short break in the Cotswolds, Sylvia and I visited Bladon Church where Winston Churchill is buried. He was a great supporter of Scouting as he had met **B-P** on a trek in India in about 1880 during which they formed a strong friendship. I am a frequent visitor to Bladon Church and a Patron of the Window to his memory. This window was dedicated in 2015 and unveiled by **The Duchess of Cornwall**. We moved on to Blenheim Palace where **Winston** was born in 1884. I am also a frequent visitor here at this time of year when cleaning and restoration projects are undertaken. These take some weeks and one learns from these activities the importance and delicate nature of the work. We had a guided (restoration themed) tour around the Palace and observed and learned how certain functions were performed. All of great interest. A BBC News Team were filming and as soon as they found out I was a regular, I was fortunate to be interviewed by the film crew for my input on the work. This interview was broadcast on the BBC (South) News the same evening. On Sunday I attended morning service at the Parish Church of St Martin, Bladon and met the new Vicar **The Reverend Jeremy Auld** and his family. He was interested in my connection to the Church and asked me to write him about these.

The County Scout Library has been given another rare book - It's Been Terrific (1953) by **Ralph Reader**. The book is signed by **Ralph** and "**All at No 1 dressing room, Gang Show 1954**". **Ralph** had connections with Hertfordshire as many of his music compositions were made on a piano in the Brynbach Hut at Phasels Wood Campsite. **Ralph** died in 1982. The book has been donated by the widow of a former Hertfordshire Scout from Mid Herts District who was in the cast of the London Gang Show until 1972.

I invited Liz Jack to accompany me to the Memorial Service of Robert, Lord Baden Powell on 15 January. This was held near to his former home in Albury, Surrey. It was spectacular in that there were over 200 people present in the Church of St Peter and St Paul, including several members of the **Baden-Powell family**, many of whom I had met previously at previous functions. I had previously met **Robert** in Westminster Abbey at a Founders Day Service and with **Patience** his wife

(a former Chief Guide) on Brownsea Island in 2009 when she opened the new Scout buildings. **Patience** died some years ago. The **Reverend Andrew Pearson** conducted the service and the Tribute was read by a neighbour, **Anthony Cassidy** who had compiled this with **Roberts'** help some weeks earlier. The tribute was expectedly quite long and was read in two parts with a hymn in between. **Edward Baden-Powell** (a descendant of **Warrington B-P** who introduced sailing to Scouting), delivered the Reading. The retiring collections were in aid of the Celia Cross Greyhound Trust and the Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice Care. **Robert** was also the Founder of Quarter Horse Racing. We all retired to the Aldbury Village Hall where I had long chats with many of the Family including **Michael B-P** who currently lives in Australia. He will inherit the title.

An exhibition has started at The Collection Exhibition in Lincoln. For the first time it features a photograph of **Wing Commander Guy Gibson VC., D.S.O., D.F.C.**, within the cockpit of a Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Lancaster Bomber that was used during the Dam Busters Raid. Not many people know that **Guy Gibson** was an enthusiastic Boy Scout with the First Tovil Group in Maidstone West District, Kent. He died on a raid over Rheydt on the night of 19 September 1944 and his death was reported in *The Scouter* (now *Scouting Magazine*) of February 1945. It included a full page Obit with a photo showed him renewing his Promise in R.A.F uniform with his left hand gripping a flag with a Scout Arrowhead finial and his right hand at the Scout half salute.



On 31 January 83 people a flight landed at Brize Norton Military Airfield. They were en-route from China and had been diverted. Two of their number were suspected of carrying the Coronavirus. The 83 were transferred to Arrowse Park Hospital to be placed in isolation as a precautionary measure. Readers may be interested to know that Arrowse Park in Birkenhead was the site of the third World Scout Jamboree in 1929. Hertfordshire sent a large contingent of 200 led by **Commander Kent**. He was assisted by **George (Jim) Dymoke Green** and the **Revd. Ernest Scott**. It was some years later, following the Jamboree that the Hospital was built. In its grounds is a significant statue of a Scout and inscription to commemorate the Jamboree.

A short walk around the corner are the main gates to the Park. .



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