

I continue the list of historic events all in January (from the January 2020 Newsletter).

1957 - The Elstree "Sputnik" was created by the Elstree Rover Crew. It was inspired and manufactured by **Ralph Wheeler** who was their DRSL. It was manufactured from a cistern ballcock and was mounted on a piece of varnished timber. *Only those of you "of a certain age" will remember that "Sputnik" was a Russian, man-made Earth satellite, this word meaning travelling companion.* The inscription on the Elstree Sputnik reads "This Elstree Sputnik was placed into Orbit in January 1960." The plan was to encourage other Rover Crews to meet each other and promote a spirit of friendly rivalry. The holders were open to challenges from other Rover Crews, providing the challenge had not been used previously. The last known holders were Potters Bar Rover Crew on 28 October 1962. [NOTE: This Trophy is missing and is urgently needed in the County Scout Museum. If you can help locate it please let me know.](#)

1961- Leslie George Timms, Norman Hyde, and two surveyors, spent some time at Lochearnhead Scout Station to carry out a detailed survey, negotiate with the local planning authorities and establish contact with the Perth Round Table. Plans were made to officially open the Station on 4 August 1962.

1962 – Disaster struck at the heart of the County during the worst winter since 1947. "The Graham Wallis Hut" was almost burnt to the ground. The Fire Service were unable to control the flames owing to the fierce winds that blew the flames horizontally and scorched the flagpole some meters away.

1967 – The First Apsley Rover Crew made a valiant attempt to retrieve the Elstree Sputnik Trophy. They had been challenged to a Regatta held at Marlow by the Rickmansworth & Chorleywood Crew. Six events were held including sculling, rowing and an exciting canoe race. The Apsley Crew tried hard but lost out to the deserving winners.

1968- Melville Balsillie DL, CC of Hertfordshire received an OBE for his work in Scouting that had started in North London in the 1930s. He is seen here with his son Ian and wife Bess outside Buckingham Palace.



1971 - Charles Dymoke Green, International Commissioner at HQ and former member of the Fourth St Albans Scout Group received its highest award, the Bronze Wolf from the World Scout Bureau.

1971 - Christopher Low of the First Batchworth (Second Rickmansworth Cub Pack) was awarded the Cornwell Scout Badge. This rare award for "Courage and devotion to Duty under great

suffering" was presented by **Tony Burgess CC (and later O.B.E.)** His citation read "After months of suffering, patiently and courageously borne, Christopher died on 6 December 1971. It was my very great privilege to present the Cornwell Scout Badge to him on Sunday, the day before his death. His fortitude, his courage, and above all his acceptance of life, were an inspiration to all who knew him."

1975- After 25 years, the former South West Herts District performed their final Gang Show. The founder and Producer for 20 years was "**Flight" Cracknell.** He was a personal friend of **Ralph Reader** of the London Gang Show and became his Business Manager.

1977 – In another "First for Hertfordshire," Alison Neil of the Bricket Wood Venture Unit (The Boggites") in North Watford, became the first Venture Scout in the UK to achieve both the Queen Scout and the Queens Guide Badges. This was also reported in *Scouting Magazine* in April 1978. Her Leader was **Joan Jay** under whose leadership the Unit flourished.

1985- Another Cornwell Scout Badge was presented. This time to **Stephen Woolf** a Cub Scout from the First Buntingford Pack. He had Leukaemia and had undergone considerable unsettling and difficult treatment coming close to death many times. Although he spent many months in hospital he gained his Gold Arrow and several Proficiency Badges while undergoing treatment.

1993- The start of the European Common Market was heralded by the lighting of 1000 beacons across the 12 EC states. Hertfordshire Scout Council won second prize in the Beacon Europe Media Competition. Members of the First Welwyn, Elstree District and Muntjac VSUs simultaneously raised the EC flag from the highest peaks in England Scotland and Wales. This attracted considerable media attention and resulted in 3 Radio reports and at least 14 newspaper reports. As a lasting memorial in Hertfordshire, 12 trees were planted in a 20 mile radius circle around the County symbolising the EU flag. The First Hatfield Scout Group also planted 12 trees at Lemsford.

(Should we be doing anything about this now we are leaving the EU? HA.HA!)

1998 – Dr Winn Everett the only daughter of Sir Percy Everett died at the age of 93. When he started the First Elstree Troop in 1908, **Winn Everett** and her brother **Varley** became members. Varley was the first boy in the World to take the Scout Oath and Winn was the first girl to do the same. A tree was planted in her memory in the Memorial Field at Phasels Wood Activity Centre. This was propagated from the original Oak, planted by her father at the opening of the Campsite in 1937.

2002- Chief Scout George Purdy attended the Harpenden Gang Show in its 53rd year. Under the careful eye of the Producer **Marilyn Hudson**, George ventured backstage to meet the cast, proved himself an able user of an iron, make-up brush and in washing up.

2004- George Purdy retired as Chief Scout and was replaced by **Peter Duncan**. In the same year **Betty Clay** the youngest daughter of B-P died.

2005- Brigadier Freddie de Butts who was our sixth CC from 1967 – 1981 died at the age of 89.

2006- Tony Fitzjohn a former member of the Second Cockfosters Scout Group who left the UK at the age of 18 to work for **George Adamson** and whose wife **Joy** wrote the book *Born Free*, was awarded an OBE in the New Year Honours.

2007- At the age of 14 Michael Perham who was a PL with the Fifth Potters Bar Scout Group, became the youngest person ever to sail across the Atlantic single handed. He was later awarded the Chief Scouts Medal for Meritorious Conduct.

2007- I held an exhibition “Memories of Rover Scouting” in the County Heritage Centre on the fortieth anniversary of the phasing out of the Section in 1967. *(I have heard rumours that they may be making a comeback!)* Nearly 50 people attended over the weekend. Some travelling from as far as Wales. A Rovers Own Service was held on the Saturday morning conducted by **Colin Limming** and **Trevor Guiver**.

2012- The first Queen Scout in Hertfordshire, John Austin who was also holder of a Gilt Cross for bravery and was a Vice President of Stevenage District, died. John was a man who commanded great respect in the County and was MD of the oldest family Funeral Directors in the UK. He was always very proud of his links with Scouting and his framed Queen Scout certificate was always on show in the waiting area. He founded and managed the Crematorium, Harwood Park, to which he gave his name. The collection from his Funeral was donated to the Stevenage branch of the RNLi.

2012- As part of Her Diamond Jubilee Tour, HM The Queen planted an Oak tree during a visit to Hatfield House. **CC Rikki Harrington**, and County Vice President **Roger Sands** attended.

2013- Liz Jack, SL of the Twelfth Harpenden Scout Group and Member of the County Heritage Team was awarded an “Inspiring People Award.” This was made possible by the *St Albans & Harpenden Review Newspaper* and Debenhams Ottaway Solicitors and was presented by **Louise Attrup**.

END

I was pleased to receive my regular copy of Woodsmoke. This was the 237th edition of the Newsletter of the Abbots Langley Scout Group. It was first published in 1954 and is the longest continually published *Scout Newsletter* in the UK.

The Round Table of Harpenden made a generous financial donation to Hertfordshire Scouts (via **Liz Jack**). This is to be only used for the benefit of the County Heritage Team.

I attended the St Albans Gang Show. This has greatly improved in recent years and in my opinion as a seasoned performer, back-stager and Lighting Director for many years of different shows I was most impressed!

In February I also attended the Funeral of Charles Murkin, our former and long serving County



Secretary, (1969 – 1986). He is seen here with his wife Connie in 2012 at his last County AGM when he received a well-deserved Silver Wolf Award. His Funeral was a very sad occasion and understandably was attended by former very senior members of the County Team including former CCs. Charles's Funeral was held at All Saints Church, Hertford. I had worked closely with Charles during my time as County Training Administrator (1968 -2003). The Service was well attended and the Hertford Active Support Unit took a leading part. Charles was also a Vice President of Hertford District.

Charles was County Secretary prior to the age of the Internet, but had retired as a former Senior Manager at County Hall so he knew a thing or two about pen-pushing. Charles had joined **Bert Akers** a former colleague of his at County Hall who was then Scout County Office Manager. This was then located in Fore Street, Hertford and had been opened in 1969. (It was relocated to Well End in 1997 under the new **CC Roger Sands** and the first Administrator there was **Rosemary Charsley**). Well End therefore became and remains the County HQ. When **Louis Coombs** retired as Head of Financial Services at County Hall, he was also recruited as County Scout Treasurer, serving 18 years from 1971 and managing to save the County from bankruptcy. I have many memories of Charles who worked tirelessly, firstly under **CC Melville Balsillie**, whom he had helped to continue the development of the Scout County. Following the death of Melville in 1973, **Charles and Connie** and several others attended the unveiling of Melville's Window at Lochearnhead in 1975. In 1984 they helped organise the Handicapped Section's trip to Gibraltar under **Ted and Noreen Ansell**; Charles retired as County Secretary in 1986; in 2005 he attended the celebrations in Whitehall for the 60-years commemorations since the end of WW2 together with several others from Hertfordshire Scouting who had served. In 2012 he was presented with a rare 70-year service award, (only the fourth to be presented) in the County by **CC Rikki Harrington**.

Charles was also presented with many other awards during his time in Scouting. He had started his Scouting life in the First Hertford Group in 1941 – 1961 before becoming District then County Secretary 1969-1986; Treasurer of Tolmers Activity Centre 1988 – 1996 and a County Vice President from 1996.

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