

## Heritage Thoughts for the Month (October 2019)

In 1914, two Hertfordshire personalities were invited to draft proposals for setting up the national organisation to be known as **Wolf Cubs** (now known as Cub Scouts). This was to be the junior section to Boy Scouts and was to be aimed at boys aged 8-10 years. The Principal appointed to carry this out was **Percy Everett (PWE)**. He was the right-hand man to **B-P** and County Commissioner for Hertfordshire. He was also a Director of Pearson's, the publisher who printed *Scouting for Boys*. For the Wolf Cub project, he chose an assistant, **Vera Barclay**, the daughter of Novelist **Florence Barclay**. Vera was Scoutmaster of the Hertford Heath Troop from 1912 and was County Secretary 1916 – 1918. She also became the first Akela Leader of Hertfordshire and is credited with the research to start the Wolf Cub section from 1914. Vera had already written several books about Scouting (which are held in the County Scout Archives) and believed strongly in the progressive training of younger Scouts. It was at the request of B-P that Vera should compile *The Wolf Cubs Handbook*, (this was originally published in chapters), although her name did not appear. Vera died in 1989 aged 96 and is buried at Sheringham, Norfolk.



We are coming up to Gang Show time again and I was recently invited to the 40<sup>th</sup> Reunion of the St Albans Gang Show at Aldwickbury Golf Club. St Albans held its first show in 1939 at Culver Hall and had it been able to continue during WW2, it would have been the longest running show in the UK. However, the Show did not restart until 1979 and this was long after the Harpenden Gang Show became established, who now hold this record. The St Albans Scout & Guide Gang Show has performed with considerable distinction at a number of national Scouting and other commercial events. Amongst many others, in 2009 the show was presented the first of many awards from NODA (National Operatic and Dramatic Association) and in April 2010 it was featured at length in *Scouting Magazine*. Over 150 former performers, admin, backstage staff, Directors, Producers, sound staff etc., attended this Reunion for a superb and outstanding presentation, compared mainly by **Peter & David**, the **Barker Twins**. I arrived early to savour the setting up and to take several images of preparatory work. The large reception area was soon buzzing with arrivals, there was lots of excitement including a few tears of emotion! There was an audio-visual system in every corner with gigantic screens giving a timeline of the history of the Show, accompanied by images of the many places the Show had performed including Gilwell Park, the Albert Hall, B-P House and many others over the 40 years. This timeline included the mention of **Ray Welch** (centre of photo) who performed in the first St Albans Gang Show at Culver Hall in 1939 and attended a rehearsal of the 2009 Show at the Alban Arena, before 'Going Home' in 2014.

On 10 October, I attended the funeral of **Nancy Margaret Banner Ayley** at St Joseph and the English Martyrs Church, Wild Hill, Bishops Stortford. Nancy died aged 97 after being in poor health for some years, (below she is pictured with **Ted Ansell**).



Nancy took many young people with disabilities to Gilwell Park for camps. The Requiem Mass and celebration of her life was planned by her nephew **Mark** and niece **Anne-Marie**. It was a very moving service.

Nancy was 18 at the outbreak of WW2 when she served as a Air Raid Warden. In 1966 when her father became ill, she returned to Bishops Stortford, after a career in teaching, to look after her parents and started work at the St Elizabeth's School and Care Home for children & adults with epilepsy and other complex needs. She retired from there three times, finally leaving in 1991. Nancy first enrolled as a Guide Leader in 1941 and founded several Guide Companies and Cub Scout Packs. She joined the then named 'County Handicapped Team' set up by **Ted** and **Noreen Ansell** and took 50 Scouts with disabilities to Gibraltar in 1984. Nancy became an ADC for a time and she and her sister were also members of a number of Catering Teams that I used for Leader Training Courses during my time as County Training Administrator. Nancy Ayley was laid to rest in Bishop's Stortford Cemetery. *Taps* was sung at her graveside, first played on a cornet by Lucy, a Guide and Nancy's Great Niece who is a member of the 3<sup>rd</sup> West Oxford unit.

**Bear Grylls**, the Chief Scout and Chief Ambassador of World Scouting was recently awarded an OBE for "Services to young people, the media and charity.". Sporting a new moustache, he confessed to *The Daily Telegraph* that **the Queen** had struggled to recognise him when presenting the Award. Bear has also written the foreword to a new book about Scouting history *Scouts: The stories that built a movement*, which is available in the County Scout Archives. This new book is in 12 chapters with many good quality photographs, including two of Cubs from Hertfordshire with an extra two smaller images. One of these is on the front cover and one on the inside frontispiece. The main images are on pages 42 and 180. There is also a chapter about Vera Barclay (see first paragraph of this document).

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