

George Withy Scout Leader 28th Bristol (1st Downend)

Memories 1955 – 1970

I came to Bristol from Bradford in July 1955 with one Daughter and Jean my wife expecting our second (daughter) to live on Bromley Heath Road, Downend .

I suppose Scouting was born in me , my father having been an early Scout before World War 1 and later became District Scoutmaster of Bradford West, At the age of eight in 1935 I became a Cub in the 6th Shipley Baildon Methodist Group becoming a Kings Scout in 1943 ,and then Troop Leader until 1945 when I volunteered for the Army, eventually commissioned to 4th RHA in Germany where I ran a Scout Group for married Families on the Base.

Coming home in 1948 I returned to the 6th Shipley where I acted as Senior Scout Leader in the early days of Senior Scouts. On getting married to Jean (an ex Guide) in 1952 I started a Group at Haworth Road Methodist Church in Bradford (37th Bradford West), the highlight being a joint Camp of both Scout Groups at Arnside in the Lake District in 1954.

On arriving in Bristol I attended a County Conference at Horfield in Oct / Nov 1955 in the hope it would introduce me to Scouting in Bristol and there met Eric Ivory who was manfully managing the 28th at the “ Crescent Homes” in Downend. The troop consisted of some 16 -20 boys mainly from the homes . At this time the cubs were being run from Hebron Methodist Hall in Staple Hill , by Olive Williams and Peter Lawrie . I attended my first meeting in January 1956 (after the birth of my second daughter) the meetings were quite difficult in those early days , not much equipment, no parent link ,loose patrol system , if any.

Gradually more boys were recruited from the new housing being built around Downend, and during 1955/58 and under Eric Ivory's thoughtful influence and Bill Cousins Chairmanship of a new Parents Group plans were made to purchase land at Christchurch Avenue and the Wooden Section Building from Fry's was obtained and erected on the site with all our enthusiastic support. This was the reawakening of the 28th Bristol (as it was known then), This was the start of changes in Scouting too, Floppy hats being replaced by berets , shorts by long trousers , Scout Masters become Scout Leaders and much more . The meetings were now more enjoyable with our own HQ and more equipment , ropes , staves were accumulated for pioneering and the Store Shed and Kitchen were extended. Use too was made of the Co-op Playing Fields in Fishponds Road (where the Day Centre now stands) for outside games in the evenings . the Group also participated in all the District Activities Swimming Galas , Sports Days , Cooking Competitions , and Camps at Woodhouse Park., also Bristol and Avon Jamborees at Tyntsfeld, Dyrham Park & Woodhouse .

Also remembered were the Sausage Suppers held at Scudamores Farm at the end of Bromley Heath Road in the Frome Valley by the River . Bill Cousins being the chief Cook and organiser with all parents and Cubs invited . In the 60's ,Two Gang Shows were held by the Group in the parish Hall at Downend organised entirely by the Scouters with Dennis Phelps supplying the music at the Piano . Sorry no programmes seem to exist .

The OFFICERS during this period were :-

Group - GSL - Eric Ivory

SL -George Withy

ASL's - Dennis Phelps , Tony Evans, Des Hellen, Peter Lawrie,

Richard Fox , Tony Copp.

SENIOR SL – Cliff Willis

Cubs - CL Olive Williams , Margaret Copp & !

District - DIST COMM -John Morgan , Frank Bullock

County - COMM - John Birkett - Wilf Fowler - Brian Burridge .

THE BAND - The Band was in existence when the Group met at the Crescent Homes supported by quite a few old scouts who came to support and train any boy who wished to join in . The problem had always been that we never were able to recruit a Band Master like other Bands , but was run on the experience of Eric Ivory and a few old members . The upkeep of the band equipment and the band itself was maintained throughout this period playing at occasions of St George's Day , Remembrance Day , District Events , and other groups parades .

CAMPS. - We started with Bell tents and moved gradually to Ridge tents and changing from wood fire cooking to colour gas with the changing times of wood management . The Camps for many years had been at Horner Water, Porlock but then moved to other venues. I believe we camped at Horner water again in later years but can't remember the year

1961 -- Moor Crichel - Blandford / Salisbury

1962 -- Rempstone Farm - Corfe Castle

- 1963 -- Weston under Penyard - Rosse on Wye
- 1964 -- Gilwell Park - Epping Forest
- 1965 -- LLanbedr - Crickhowell
- 1966 -- Musbury - Axminster
- 1967 - Rollington Farm - Corfe Castle
- 1968 - Visit to Schrobhausen Munich Germany

All the Camps had a day out to local places of interest, Goodrich Castle, Bradbury Rings, LLanthyony Priory, or Seaside , Exmouth ,Seaton, Swanage, sometimes as “Hikes” but other times in a hired coach.

SCHROBENHAUSEN VISIT

This was a return visit to Germany of the German Scouts who came to us in 1967 when they stayed at “ Mafeking” sleeping in the H.Q. for a week . We took them on many visits around Bristol, - Woodhouse Park ,The Zoo , The Cathedral , The Docks .

SCHROBENHAUSEN VISIT --

The party of 15 with Myself, Dennis Phelps and Tony Evans as Scouters in charge, embarked from Harwich to the Hook of Holland and by overnight sleeper train to Munich where we were met and taken to the various homes of our scout hosts in the town . Various local visits were made to places of interest. The highlight being a 3 day trip by Coach with the German Scouts to the Bavarian Alps staying at German Youth Hostels. From Munich we went the Lake Stauberger See, then to Wies (to see the Church) photo) to Garmisch and the Olympic Winter Games Stadium , The Castle at Neuschwanstein, to Oberammergau ,and an ascent by cable car of Germany’s highest mountain the Zugspitz (2966m) . finishing with a tour of the Agfa Camera Works in Munich (arranged by Fishponds Rotary International) . A football match was played England v Germany but

cannot now remember the result . The whole visit was a tremendous success and international Scouting relations gain.

Unfortunately in 1968 my business commitments was proving to onerous to give the time required to the Group and I become District Activities Advisor a new position in Scouting. In 1971 I become Bristol County Treasurer and then Avon County Treasurer ..being Awarded the Medal of Merit and later the Silver Acorn , presented by the Queen at Windsor in 1978 .

I then moved to live at Yate and in 1981 and became District Secretary of South Cotswold District , and awarded a \bar to the \Silver Acorn, retiring completely in 1995 , thereby completing 60 years of Scouting , and overjoyed that the good work now carries on , by the present generations.