

70 years of Scouting in and around Cambridge. 1908-1978

Introduction

I decided some while ago that when I retired from managing the Cambridge Scout Shop I would turn my time to writing a booklet on the early days of Scouting here. I would not have attempted to do this but for the fact that about fifteen years ago, before Howard Mallett moved from Histon Road, he gave me his personal "Scrap Book of Scouting" which covers many events from 1908 to 1929. When I looked at this again, I found it was just 70 Years since "B.P." first came here, hence the title. I have purposely concentrated on details of the early years as many of our present Leaders were scouting during World War II. I joined the Scouts on my 11th birthday in 1923, nearly 55 years ago so from then on I have added my own memories also. Virtually all my Boy Scout service was with the 13th (St Philip's) Troop so I hope I may be forgiven if at some points I have put emphasis on their activities.

April 1978

Kenneth P.G. North

The Beginning

"A public meeting was held at the Perse School in March 1908 when Sir Robert Baden-Powell was present and gave an address on the aims and methods of Scouting. The meeting was well attended by some of the most influential people in Cambridge, and the direct result of it was the formation of several isolated units scattered about the town, chiefly in the form of "monkey patrols"; i.e. small parties of boys who banded themselves together and played at scouting without being under any proper control. As time went on gentlemen took these patrols in hand, and several larger troops were formed, on a more secure basis, in central Cambridge, Cherry Hinton and Chesterton, at the Perse and Higher Grade Schools and in connection with the Boys' Brigade Company. During this period Dr W.H.D. Rouse of the Perse School and the Rev. A.S. Duncan Jones, Dean of Caius College successively acted as chairmen." November 16th 1908. According to Mr Mallett the first Minute Book had the heading "Boy Scout Organisation Committee". Dr Rouse was appointed Chairman. proposed "That those present form the Committee with power to co-opt." A further meeting was held on December 7th. At this meeting a sub-committee was formed to enquire into the opinion "that some of the Boy Scouts are doing harm to certain companies of the Boys' Brigade."

A Field Day was arranged for "Boxing Day" for the Local Patrols. At a meeting held on February 15th 1909 when a report regarding Scouts belonging to the Boys' Brigade and vice versa was made, regulations upon transfers were agreed. Camping Rules were formulated. An age limit was adopted "from 10 years upwards and no maximum age." A meeting hold on March 29th passed a regulation "that no scout be allowed to parade in uniform without the consent of his Scoutmaster", on July 12th "agreed that 28 boys from Cambridge would attend a camp at Hartford. £2 profit from a Promenade Concert was given towards the camp funds." July 26th, "Decided to take a room in Guildhall Place as headquarters of Cambridge Boy Scouts and that 8d a month be subscribed by each troop towards maintenance".

The District was registered at I.H.Q. on June 4th 1910. One of the first printed reports of the District dated November 1910 shows the number of scouts as: Cambridge troops 244, District troops 138, total 382. Another report of the same date shows 10 town troops and 7 district troops, the latter including New Cherry Hinton (Blinco Grove), Newnham, Ely, Sutton, Longstanton, Trumpington and Grantchester. Of the 10 town troops only two are still in existence under the same numbers; they are the 5th (Perse School) and the 13th (St Phillip's). In both cases the scarf colours have changed, purple being shown as the colour of the 5th in 1911. The 13th was brown until about 1916, their flag (still in use) being that colour. It is now over 60 years old; in my day in the 1920's it was showing signs of wear. I have not been able to trace why they changed their scarf to the present colours at that time.

On July 4th 1910, 125 scouts from Cambridge attended a Coronation Rally at Windsor, part of 30,000 scouts drawn from all parts of the Empire, this was inspected by the King (George V).

A Rally was held on May 20th 1911 here on the C.U. O.T.C. Ground when the Chief Scout attended and gave an address. Before this there were various displays of scouting activities.

On May 11th 1912, Sports and a Rally was held with a visit from the Deputy Chief Commissioner, Colonel Ulick G.C. de Burgh. Some of the items shown were taken as part of the tests for the Silver Bugle competition for the most efficient troop of the year. This bugle is still in existence, being replaced by the Morley Trophy many years ago (taking the name of the original donor).

December 1912 shows a further increase in the number of scouts giving a total of all ranks of 502. In 1913 the totals shown give troops 30 and all ranks 701.

After this report dated January 1914, there is a gap in the "Scrap Book" from which I have worked as Howard Mallett was away on Active Service in the R.A.M.C.

The War Years

Although I have limited details of these years, I know that the Nott brothers who were running the 13th troop were in camp at Clayhithe when they were called up as officers. Both were killed in action, they left a legacy of £200 to the troop, a large sum in those days. About 1916 the troop took the title "The Nott's Own"; at this time many troops had similar titles but I think the 13th is the only one to still retain this after 60 years. The following points, I feel, can only be a sample of activities which took place. District camps are shown as having taken place on two occasions, one where 35 boys spent 3 weeks picking fruit (8 hours a day)

for Chivers and the other where 70 boys camped for 5 weeks picking flax for the Government at Fotheringhay, in all 100 boys shared in this activity. Mention is also made of the fact that about 20 boys took part in Coast Guarding operations, some in Devonshire. Also a Cyclist Corps was formed.

In March 1917 a leaflet of information for Scoutmasters was published giving details of heights and areas of various buildings and grounds. Also a set of rules regarding the ownership of badges and scarves. This endorses the point that Scouting was still very active. On June 13th 1917, B.P. visited a Rally held on Sheep's Green. A bomb was dropped by the Germans in front of his train at Liverpool Street Station which resulted in his arrival being three hours late. A good programme of the usual activities is detailed. He also addressed a meeting of P.L.'s in the evening. In 1917 there is mention of Wolf Cubs here; I am sure they must have been active before this however. Most troops listed appear to be attached to Churches, College Choirs and Schools. A number would appear to have a nominal local Scoutmaster with the undergraduates doing most of the practical scouting.

From 1918 badges were supplied by Miss Laidlaw from 12:30 to 1 p.m. each Saturday from St Columba's Hall and this continued until 1926 when we took over Grafton Street headquarters. At this time 25 town troops and 12 Wolf Cub packs are recorded. On June 17th 1920 there was a Jamboree held entitled "Stourbridge Fair" based on historical points of this earlier national event "in an attempt to show how the Middle Ages contributed to the Scout Spirit". There were various booths also displays in three arenas. 26 troops took part. Mr E.H. Church is shown as District President and Chairman, the D.C. being Rev. C.T. Wood and the D.S.M. Mr G.M. Macfarlane-Grieve.

1920. The Cambridge University Rover Scout Group was formed. Over the following years they made a large useful contribution to Scouting in Cambridge. The Chief Scout was their official Scoutmaster. It is recorded that he attended a special meeting on 17th October. The troop were enrolled en..bloc. after some "fun show" had taken place. At various meetings at later dates they had Senior I.H.Q. speakers down. Scouters and Rovers were invited to attend these meetings, an opportunity they would not have otherwise had. This continued until Rover Scouts were disbanded. I personally attended a number of meetings after 1930 when I became warranted. There was always a very good relationship between the Crew and local troops and Scouters, where "Town and Gown" really kept the Scout spirit. This was not the case of many other sections of the town in general in the 1920's. On 29th May 1920 the Proctors agreed that undergraduates in Scout uniform were exempt from wearing the official Cap and Gown after dark. Things have changed considerably in this direction since then - not always for the better in my opinion. Many Senior Members of the University hold Scout appointments as C.C., A.C.C., D.C. and A.D.C.'s, also quite a few served on I.H.Q. committees and played a part in national policy formation over many years.

1920 appears to be a time when Scouting really got under way after the war. There is a note of advance arrangements being made for a party to take part in the National Jamboree to be held at Olympia from 30th July to 7th August. I have no details of a party attending, but feel sure that we must have been represented.

During this year a Club was being formed for Scoutmasters and Assistants. I note that Mr A. Hutchinson is shown as S.M. of the 13th. "Hutch" is still with us, being made an honorary S.M. of the troop when he returned to Cambridge some years ago. He also served on the Executive for some years. It is interesting to note that considerable details were still being laid down regarding various proficiency badges, particularly the Ambulance badge; this continued for many years I know from personal experience in 1926. Cubs were getting well under way at this time, there was a district Cub magazine, published for some months called the Yelp, by the District Cubmaster.

There was a Rally at Queens' College on 26th June, 1922 when the Chief Scout attended, The Rally started with the Chief being escorted by King's Scouts, this was followed by displays, one in the uses of the Scout staff (the local by-law that these should be carried on all occasions apart from Church Parades had been, and still was, official). At 5.35 p.m. there was a "Combined Scenic Display," the details appear to me a bit fantastic, but bringing in a number of skills like First Aid, making a shelter, lighting a fire by rubbing wood, are included. At 6.30 all scouts paraded to be addressed by the Chief Scout.

The Cambridge Scout Club was re-organised in December 1922, this in turn was open to both town and University Rovers as well as to Scouters. It is interesting to note that Mr C.J. Walker (our District President now in 1978) is shown as a member of their committee. In the reports for 1921-22 17 troops are shown as having held camps of a week or more duration, money being raised to meet the cost by concerts, sales, jumble sales, etc., of course, this was at a time before wireless. 10 troops possessed all or part of their own equipment, the remainder had to hire bell tents, etc, very expensive. I remember this was the case during most of my Boy Scout service in the 1920's.

A Conference was held on March 23rd-25th 1923 when 200 delegates, Lord Hampton and other officials attended (the Chief was away in Canada), finishing with a Scouts Own in the Central Cinema followed by tea in Queens' College Hall. Two P.L.'s from each troop were invited to attend. C.T. Wood was D.C. at this time; he held this office for some time.

The Scout Boat Club was formed in 1923. I think I am right in saying that they started at the bottom of the boats and eventually reached the position of "Head of the River" after some years without being bumped; either making a bump or rowing over each night.

January 1924 Rev. C.T. Wood retired as D.C. and Brig. General P.A. Bainbridge took over. In a Retiring Message "C.T.W." refers to Capt. Briscoe being awarded the Medal for Gallantry; at this time he was S.M. of the Longstowe Scouts, also an M.P. He was always keenly interested in Scouting although there was a period when other duties such as Lord Lieutenant etc., meant he was not able to take an active part. Scouts were always welcomed to camp at Longstowe Hall. Many years later, after the second war, he was "roped in" as County President. I remember having time off from work on Saturday morning to fit him out with a new uniform from the Shop. He officially opened the Perne Road Headquarters on May 11th 1957.

During 1924 Rev. C.T. Wood was appointed County Commissioner. Association Sports, boxing and swimming took place and the rifle range was still operative. C.J. Walker was the D.S.M., and the Scout Boat Club was still doing well.

In 1925 an interesting letter was sent to Mr Walker, as S.M. of the 22nd troop, from the Chief Constable of Cambridge for the valuable services rendered by the three Barlow brothers, who were members of his troop, at a fire on 5th November at Kidman's Wood Store, Abbey Walk. A copy of this was sent to B.P. who personally replied with congratulations. I remember this fire and the three brothers were all friends of mine. It is jobs like this, though generally never publicised, that have happened in the past and still often occur, that give our Movement its Good Name.

On July 4th 1925, there was a County Rally held on a meadow near Owlstone Croft, just above Sheep's Green. I well remember this as it was the first Rally I attended. Sir. Alfred Pickford, the Chief Scout's Commissioner for Overseas and Migration, was the inspecting officer. There were many demonstrations including life saving, bridge building and fire fighting. A derrick was constructed by the 5th troop and I remember Sir Alfred being pulled up this by block and tackle; he was a tall well-built man. The 13th performed the Kirby Sword Dance. Cubs also performed and displayed various activities. Over 700 boys attended. Mr C.J. Walker, as D.S.M., was in central of the arrangements. On the next day (Sunday) there was a "Scouts Own" in the morning held on the C.U. Rifle Range. Fortunately it was fine on both occasions.

During the same summer athletic and swimming sports and a boxing competition were held. On Remembrance Day a party of 18 scouts went to London and laid a wreath on the Cenotaph after the two minutes silence. The arrangements for this were made by the District P.L.'s council. In November also a joint Church Parade was held with the Boys Brigade and Church Lads Brigade. The numbers attending being 232 scouts plus 15 Scouters from 12 troops (against 2 B.B. companies and one C.L.B.).

This year there was a Pilgrimage to Rome by Catholics and a contingent of 600 British Scouts attended. Among those nine from Cambridge. A detailed report of this was written by Father Webb, the S.M. of the 17th (Catholic) troop.

In the Annual Report for 1924-5, again among the Miscellaneous appears "All Scouts must carry Scout Staves and be drilled in the use of them." A list of A.D.C.'s is included with the units to which they were attached. Our A.D.C. was Mr T.M. Cherry, a Fellow of Trinity College; he was also S.M. of the 7th (County School) troop. I always remember him for the fact that he would visit our troop about every six weeks or so and always suggested we should have a few quiet games, this meant "British Bulldog"

In 1926 a separate list of Bye-laws was published, those were to be rigidly enforced; some were previously recorded like "Scouts are not allowed to visit members of the University in statu pupillari (i.e. undergraduates) except with special consent of the D.C." Also "No Troop or Pack would be registered unless it had at least one Resident Officer." This was done to stop troops just being run during Term time by undergraduates as had been, to my knowledge, in quite a few places in the past.

A meeting of Scouters was held in February when the Deputy Camp Chief P.D. Power, spoke on "the training of Scouters." He had held a course here the previous summer. I think this was a Wood Badge, part 2 course spread over some week-ends held at General Bainbridge's grounds at Trumpington. I know my S.M. attended a course and passed about this time.. At this meeting Mr Power gave an outline of the "Wood Badge" and ended this talk by saying "Scouting is the greatest movement of modern times, and it is the, duty of Scouters to be as efficient as possible."

A District week-end camp was held in July at Trumpington Hall. It was successful but the numbers attending was not very many. Another high light of 1926 was the renting of what was known as the "Albert Institute" in Grafton Street from 29th September as the District Headquarters. The Shop was opened on Monday, 13th December, at first in what was the old Rifle Range. I well remember this time though I little dreamt the part I was destined to play in the years to come at this building and later on at Perne Road with the Shop. A report of our troop camp at Snettisham is recorded. It was at this camp I had my first insight to Storekeeping when as a 14 year old P.L. I was made Camp Quartermaster also running the camp Tuck Shop...

P.L.'s Meetings were started up on Saturday evenings at monthly intervals. I attended these when work permitted and made some good friends from other troops. I remember that when Mr E.H Church (the District President) celebrated his 60th birthday, he gave us P.L.'s a party with a sit down meal. This was followed by a singsong, when he sung, and accompanied himself on the piano, "He left the baby on the shore" to much applause from us P.L.'s.

Statistics show "steady but quiet" increases in numbers for the four years 1923-26 inclusive. On Saturday, 3rd March 1928 a Jamboree was held at the Guildhall when B.P. attended and addressed us all. Also there was a speech by Dr Eastman, the Chief of the Sioux Indians, who accompanied the Chief Scout. Dr Eastman appeared in full Indian dress. This was a wonderful occasion for all who attended, never to be forgotten. Local troops put up boys from other parts of the County. It was an evening meeting. I think the Chief Scout and party attended a Girl Guides Rally in the afternoon. Our troop put up boys from the 1st Ely troop for the night. I had a P.L. stay with me and. We went to Cambridge railway station to meet a party of their boys who were coming in by train to attend the Sunday "Scouts own". By coincidence, also waiting for the same train, was B.P. and the Indian Chief with the C.C., to take them back to London. The C.C. called, he to go to the bookstall and get newspapers for the Chief to read on the train. Needless to say I was thrilled to do this and get so near to the Chief Scout.

In 1929 some of our scouts attended the Jamboree held at Arrowe Park, Birkenhead. I understand it was rough weatherwise, Arrowe mud often being mentioned afterwards! At this time scouts gave Id. a head towards the cost of purchasing a Rolls Royce and Caravan for the Chief and Lady B.P ; it was referred to as the "Jam Rolls".

In 1931 a local Wood Badge course was held at Trumpington Hall, spread over five week ends during May and June, under the leadership of E.E. (Josh) Reynolds, assisted by the A.C.C. for Training, Rev. Michael Gresford Jones. Our numbers only amounted to 16 and this included three leaders from Bury St Edmunds. It was a good course. (I was on the "sick list" for the Whitsun week-end and did not pass the test!)

Also in 1931 B.P. had the Honorary Degree of LL.D. conferred on him by the University. Many will have seen the photograph in the Cambridge Daily News of him on the steps of the Senate House with the C.C., Rev. C.T. Wood, in the background holding his Scout Hat etc. In the afternoon we had a Rally in the Examination Schools when I remember we all chanted "B.P., B.P., Hon. LL.D. CAMBRIDGE" to the chimes of Great St Mary's, this, of course, being the same as Big Ben.

In 1932 on 4th June, Abington Camp Site was opened, a wooden hut was given from Upend, near Newmarket. I was - not at the actual opening but attended a Leaders Course the following week-end (I have a photograph taken of our "kit inspection".) I think "Tiny" Chamberlain, then known as "Travelling Commissioner" lodged near by I attended some useful instructive courses under his training there. In those days it was cycle over with kit (after working until 7 p.m. on the Saturday, going home and changing into uniform), so we only arrived in time for a good "Camp Fire" on the Saturday. The site was soon put to good use at week-ends by troops. The Town Rovers did a big job in getting things "ship shape" before and after the opening. More recently in 1976, history repeated itself when new buildings were erected (officially opened by Sir William Gladstone, June 1976), this time, former Rovers under the leadership of the A.C.C. in charge (John Chambers), did a similar job. He was the Rover Mate of the 13th before Rovers were disbanded.

In the early 1930's our own Rover Crew (13th) built the new troop H.Q. in Marmora Road (paid for mainly by the legacy from the Nott brothers I think this was the first local troop to own its H.Q. built on land purchased by themselves, later on, about 1960, the Crew built a larger hut, the whole being replaced in 1975 by a completely new building. This was officially opened in September by Dr Nott (now aged over 80) the younger sister of the original brothers. Also present was "Billy" Baxter, the University Rover who was A.S.M. in the 1930's and did a lot of work with the administrative side of the first H.Q. they built.

District Camps were held and the usual Morley Trophy, swimming and athletic sports, I think every year during the 1930's.

About 1932 the District was divided into Cambridge, South Cambs, North Cambs. and Mid Cambs. With the exception of South Cambs. (now Grant District) this was not successful, due mainly to the lack of leaders and the fact that the spread out nature of the areas without any focal point apart from Cambridge. Very few people had cars at this time, Ely Newmarket, Wisbech and March were already separate Associations. Also about the same time the Cambridge Cub Scouters formed the "Seonee Pack", this being composed of leaders from any local (and I think some from other near-by) Packs. They met at monthly intervals to exchange ideas and also help one another with training.

January 1934 I started officially working in the Shop (known at this time as the Equipment Store). I took control later in the year and after re-organisation, I was able to turn it into a successful paying concern. Previously whilst being a valuable service to the District, it was not operating on a sound financial basis. At first this was a gradual process, but it was well worth the effort. Brig. Bainbridge died in August of this year and Mr Mallett took over as D.C. in his place.

At King George V Silver Jubilee celebrations in 1935, the 12th Group put a very good "float" in the street procession, a credit to them and a good advertisement for Scouting in the town. I was elected to the Executive Committee at a very young age (about 22) after taking control of the shop, later on being also appointed County Badge Secretary.

In 1936 the District Association purchased Grafton Street H.Q. in conjunction with Rev. C.T. Wood, for the 9th Troop (the Paradise Street end). This was done with borrowed money and there was some complications at the time. I remember the Executive meeting lasting until after mid-night!

Local Gang Shows were held in 1936 and 1937 at Houghton Hall and the Arts Theatre in 1938. W.A Mackrow took quite a big part in these shows I think.

During the 1930's I would say that less emphasis was laid on proficiency badges as far as scouts were concerned than in the 1920's, when, it must be remembered, wireless was only just reaching homes and there was more time available to spend on hobbies and also classes were held in preparation for some of the badges. Special local standards were in the 1920's, set for some badges. For instance, the Ambulance Badge, with considerable details regarding the treatment of poisons among other items, which I could never at the time (in 1926) understand, or ever since, also some of the items for the Missioner Badge (Home Nursing). Most points could only be theoretical. Anyway, I passed both of these badges and a year or two later went on to lead a team to win the Stratton Ambulance Competition (then a voucher for £5 donated by Colonel Stratton; this enabled the troop to buy a patrol tent at the time).

I think that, on the whole, more attention was paid to Public Service Badges (towards the King's Scout Badge) and other real Scouting subjects, although some troops had what we called "badge swats", statistics were the regular thing. In later years, even after the Second War some Cub Packs also followed this and I know that Bill Thurbon spent a considerable amount of time, when he was Badge Secretary before I took over, working on those, just to be presented to the Executive Committee and laid on the table! When I took over I said that if they wanted this in the future, shop profits would suffer, and the matter was dropped. However, when I returned from the forces, I found there was a shortage of examiners for, among other badges 1st Class, and I know I acted for quite a few cases, being one of the few then active members who had personally qualified in the earlier days.

To return to more important historical points in 1938 war clouds were looming with the Munich Crisis and Scouts were called upon to prepare a Cyclist Messenger Service I know when a mock Air Raid was arranged one week-end the boys turned out and gave a very good account of themselves. In fact, in 1939 at the outbreak of war, they also were in action for a time. Before this, in the summer of 1939, for a number of weeks on, a Wednesday evening, cyclist volunteers met at Grafton Street to deliver batches of letters around the town to Blood Donors. I used to help with the sorting out of these, sometimes taking any that were left over myself. When war was declared, I took over the job of "blacking out" our end of the H.Q., in the first instance, in order that the Shop could still function. We reduced the opening hours to 6.30 - 8.30 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. As far as the "black out" was concerned, fortunately we had a lot of large sheets of thick brown paper at the shop and this was a great help. The fact that I was off duty in the afternoons enabled me to deal with this job.

Waste paper collecting at the District level commenced and this became our main source of income throughout the war. Jack Flack, the caretaker, commenced -working on a full time paid basis, collecting with a hand-cart from many shops, colleges and other establishments and Cubs also collected and this qualified them for the National Service badge if done on a regular basis,. The paper was taken to a room at the Paradise Street end of the building where it was baled and collected at intervals. Mr Mallett handled all the business side, finance, permits to purchase, wire for baling etc.,

On 8th January 1941 B.P. died. Black bands were worn on the arm of uniforms for a period. (I was in the Services at the time, but I had received a supply of these at the shop some time before on a strictly confidential instruction.) On 26th January a Memorial Service was held. During the year a fund was started nationally, the money being invested to be used after the war to build "B.P. House". This was done in due course and I know many of our boys have, over the years, visited this building.

Lord Somers was appointed the new Chief Scout but unfortunately he died in 1944. We held a Memorial Service at Great St Mary's Church in the September. It was attended by the Mayor and other officials and filled with scouts and cubs. I remember this service as, by this time, I had been discharged from the Forces and was able to help Fred Feary as "churchwarden". For many years he always dealt with this side of Church Parades etc.

Lord Rowallan was the next Chief Scout. I remember he spoke to a gathering of University Rovers held in the Old Combination Room at Trinity College, and, as in the earlier days, local Scouters were invited. At a later date he attended a Rally held at the Guildhall; I remember he had a leg in plaster and wore his kilt. Some boys came to this Rally from Huntingdon and afterwards went on to Grafton Street where they ate the tea they had brought with them. We provided them with cups of tea and this, I think, came in themes urns thanks to the W.V.S. I know I opened the Shop for them and made myself useful.

In 1945, W.A. Mackrow presented the District with the Alert Trophy. This is still competed for; I think it has always taken the form of a "quiz" on the City, etc. I know the first time I helped Bill Thurbon organise the questions and helped with the marking.

When the war ended, the town sold up A.R.P. surplus goods and I bought quite a few useful items to re-sell through the Shop; cape groundsheets, jack knives, oil lamps, gas mask cases, etc. We were also able to buy, through Scout Shops, London, a number of Forces surplus items one particular thing being used kit-bags, in decent condition. We retailed them at 1/6 each!

About the same time, one afternoon I was at the shop having been phoned by the caretaker that a parcel had arrived split open. The telephone went and an American Services Officer was on the line. They were prepared to return home and had a quantity of sports items, would we like them? and had we transport to collect? The answer to the latter of course was no, however, he arranged to deliver those things, like baseball sticks, in a few days time. I was working at the time but Mr Mackrow dealt with this job and a notice was put in the Grafton Street Gazette; with details of items available. "Mac" also dealt with the distribution to various units who were interested.

Regular Church Parades were held at intervals, in addition to the usual St George's Day Service. The former being held at churches where Groups were attached; sometimes Scouts or Cubs alone.

The District has always sent its "quota" of boys to the various International Jamborees. I remember in 1947, I think this was the first post war one, when the area contingent was led by Maurice Howard, then S.M. of the 60th (Leys School) Troop. I had the job of seeing the boys at a week-end "get together" when we had to decide on any uniform items which were needed to bring the contingent up to a smart standard. We were allowed a special allocation of clothing coupons for the purpose. History, in a way, repeated itself before the last Jamboree, two or three years ago, but this time, Roger Woolard handled this at a similar week-end. The only difference-being that it was not clothing coupons needed; but, due to inflation, the cost was so high that the Shop supplied the requirements, which with the present day uniforms (as against khaki shorts, etc.), there was no comparison, we gave the boys a special discount.

Bob a Job Week" started soon after the war (now, of course, known as "Job Week"). This has continued regularly at Easter time, and has proved a useful form of revenue for Groups, The paying-in time for the first years was made a special occasion and this took various forms, but now this side has ceased.

At least two different Troops entered for the National "Soap Box Derby", being for pedal cars built by the boys, This took place for two or three years.

In 1954, Howard Mallett, still active with us, was made Mayor of Cambridge. He was referred to, on occasions, as the "Scouting Mayor". This was, of course, an honour for the Movement as well as himself. I heard him say on one occasion that, if it had not been for his experiences and work done with Scouting, he would never have even contemplated standing for election to the City Council.

At the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth, Scouts were given the job of selling the Souvenir Programmes on the day. Alan Mackenzie dealt with this for the City. I had the advance job of acting as County Organizer, a more difficult job than I realised at the time: It was fortunate that I did not have anything to do with the actual selling on the day as a week or so before this I was rushed into hospital for an emergency operation. I never actually saw one of these programmes.

During the Whitsun week-end before this, a good contingent of Scouts from Cambridge attended a joint Rally Week-end Camp at Sandringham.

About 1954 thoughts were turned to improvements at the Grafton Street H.Q. Plans were even drawn up, but after a careful survey of the building by the D.C. and other practical members of the House Committee, it was decided to sell the building and have a new Headquarters building erected. After much consideration, the present site at Perne Road was bought from the City Council. As with buying Grafton Street H.Q., the selling was not without problems, but there is obviously no need to set these out here. Also, a few members of the Executive Committee were not in favour of moving to the then outskirts of the City in view of the fact the Shop was by this time a major source of income and it was argued that parents would not go so far from the town for uniforms. Time has told that our present location was for the best, there being no restrictions for car parking etc. In planning the present building our design and set up had to be modest, finance being limited. In fact, I can remember at one meeting of the New Buildings Sub-Committee we spent a long time to decide if we could afford to have the walls plastered or not. As it was we needed a small mortgage to complete the payments. Fortunately during the period between the commencement of building and the actual opening, the shop had a good period of trade, (for some months we operated from an old shop in Russell Street as the Co-op, who bought the buildings, wanted to get on with alterations).

The now Shop (still known as the Equipment Store), started trading in September 1956 although the building was not officially opened until Saturday, 11th May 1957 by Capt. R.G. Briscoe who was the Lord Lieutenant for Cambridgeshire and also the County Scout President. The occasion was marked by a special four page Supplement in the Cambridge Daily News and this set out details of a "Scout Week" - 9 days from 11th to 19th May. At that time C.J. Walker was District Chairman (now District President) and P.R. Arthur our D.C. (now District Chairman). This Supplement in the "News" was quite an achievement at the time; the result of a lot of hard work by two members of the B.P. Scout Guild. The cost being met by the various advertisers and quite a few of those are still either members or supporters in other ways. During the "week" various Groups invited the public to attend functions and there was also a list of the active Groups.

There was also messages from various Officers. Friday 17th to Sunday 19th, we had a "Grand Rally and Camp" in Midsummer Common. This included displays by Scouts and a Cab Pageant on the Saturday, followed by a Camp fire for Guides, Scouts and Cubs at 8 p.m. on the Sunday there was a Scouts Own Service at 11 a.m. This was a very successful "week". Later in the year we sent a contingent to the Jubilee Jamboree held at Sutton Coldfield and others went for a day excursion by train. Throughout the year most Groups hold special functions and we also had a Thanksgiving Service in Great St Mary's Church. I feel sure that Rev. Garnett Jones, our District Chaplain, was the preacher on this occasion.

Since the War, there has been more co-operation with the Girl Guides than in the earlier years. I think that in a small way it helped when I opened the Guide Section at the Shop about 1945, commencing selling their uniforms when clothes rationing ended.

Our Rover Scouts had meetings and joint camps at times with the original Rangers (the over 18 year olds). The latter were pleased to use a room at Grafton Street H.Q. for their weekly meetings for a time.

In more recent years, with the National changes in age set up, the Venture Scouts and Rangers have regularly produced annual "Gang Shows" with considerable success; reaching the standard entitling them to wear the special scarf last year, and this year they even had a visit from Ralph Reader himself.

The annual St George's Day Service since the war has generally been held at the Guildhall; each year the lack of space limiting parents attending to a minimum, and this has I feel, been most unfortunate. I remember one year we had an American Scout Unit from Alconbury attend; their banner bearer preceded our Colour parties before and after the service. I remember this particularly as one of my jobs at the time was to deal with the collections and on this occasion I had to change American coinage into sterling before banking. In 1977 the service was transferred to the Kelsey Kerridge Hall for the first time, but I must say I missed the organ for the music side. In 1978 we had the Salvation Army band from, Cottenhan to play and this was, I consider, an improvement.

To return to earlier events. Cambridge obviously has been affected by national changes. The new uniform with long trousers was, as far as the Shop was concerned, a very big headache, but one which was surmounted, although we were affected a bit on the financial side.

I am very sorry myself when Rover Scouts were disbanded. Here in Cambridge they always did a very good job, both with the various Groups and also with the University Crow where the numbers often wore over 100. Nobody can tell how much good these undergraduates have done for the Movement as a whole as after their period of residence they, of course, departed to various parts of the country and -also the world. I know personally that a number were not introduced to Scouting until they came into

residence. The present Scout and Guide Club at the University do a good job but I think I am right in saying that they cater for people already in the Movement.¹

In 1976 the Cub Scouts celebrated their 50 year Jubilee with many District and other functions including a County Week-end Camp which was visited by Lord Baden Powell, grandson of B.P.

Also in 1976, Sir William Gladstone spent a week-end here, the Sunday morning with Scouts camped at Longstowe and in the afternoon going on to Abington camp site to open the new buildings and improvements. To the few older members present, what a transformation from the old wooden hut of 1932! Work is still continuing in improving the site and it is being put to greater use than over in the past. The County and District are fortunate in having John Chambers as A.C.C. in charge at the present time as not only is he a practical experienced Scouter but he also has a wide knowledge of the building site. I understand they have a problem to tackle at the present time of replacing trees affected by Dutch Elm disease among other things. For a number of years we have had visitors from abroad camping on the site.

In recent years, since the County boundary changes when our part of Cambridgeshire for Scouting and Guiding became East Cambridgeshire, it was decided that Cambridge District should be divided into North and South Districts and also Bar Hill. The old South Cambs District referred to earlier is now known as Granta District. In effect Bar Hill District is about the same as the original Mid Cambs District of the 1930's. Judging from reports produced at the last two A.G.M's this appears to be a satisfactory working arrangement, with Cambridge remaining the central point. To my mind, it will always be the point as the County is so spread out. This also applies to other Associations I believe.

It is of course, a well known fact that when B.P. wrote "Scouting for Boys" 70 years ago, many people said that his ideas would not appeal to boys and that various organisations of the day were already sufficient. The way Scouting started, not only at Cambridge, proved that B.P. was right. The principles and guidelines together with the spirit of adventure and ideals he set out are still true of our Movement. I have heard it quoted as a "School of citizenship, through woodcraft," and this has always remained the basis of our training. Really a way of life.

Although I have only been able to record from my personal experiences for 55 of the 70 Years, I consider that, as far as Cambridge District is concerned, Scouting has over the years always made healthy progress, moving with the times. Gone are rules for carrying and using the Scout staff, having a District band, boxing competitions, rifle shooting, etc., these being replaced by exploring expeditions, mountaineering and the like, but still retaining the practical training of woodcraft and pioneering. Alas, gone are the days when we had to take camp gear to and from the railway stations by hired handcarts. This is replaced by a motor coach picking up everything at a Group headquarters and transporting direct to a camp site and returning in the same way. Without progress like this we could well have petered out, as has been the case of some other organisations, whilst Scouting has gone on from strength to strength. Groups now aim to have their own headquarters (sometimes shared with the Girl Guides), own their camping gear and, in some cases, also mini busses. There has always been a shortage of Leaders and, in recent years, some units have amalgamated. A higher standard of training of leaders is now expected than in the early days. It may not be, in some respects, a bad thing to hear that Cub packs have "waiting lists." I know that the lads are always very keen to get into uniform once they have obtained a place!

As I mentioned earlier, Cambridge has played a very useful part in National and International Scouting by producing good leaders, and these not only from the University. One of the 13th "old boys" has been a Headquarters Field Commissioner for a number of years. Also many members from the District have moved on to different parts of the country and hold high offices where they have settled down. These are in addition to those of our local boys who started as Cubs working up stop by stop to Commissioner level and are now some of our essential Leaders. One must not fail to mention those who have remained loyally with the same Group, training and passing on their knowledge to the next generation. It is a case where it can truly be said "great oaks from acorns grow", both of individuals as also with the District over the years. One only needs to read the Annual General Meeting Reports for the District at the present day to realise this.

I feel sure that the Movement will continue to expand in the future as at present. There must be thousands of adults in the City today who at some time in their boyhood spent a period with Scouting. I have said on many occasions that the training received, if only for a limited period, must be of help in later years. Many parents and grandparents I have served in the Shop have confirmed this; in some cases adding "You fitted me out with my first uniform at Grafton Street".

I hope this booklet in which I have tried to set out some of the early highlights, may be of interest to present day active Scouters, if nothing else, it may possibly be useful as a stepping stone for some future work. I'm sure to have left some pieces out, but now, at the end of 70 Years Scouting in Cambridge, one cannot end without recording appreciation to the many people over this long period who have contributed in one way or another to the success of the Movement

April 1978

Kenneth P.G. North

I must place on record my thanks to Mr Roy Papworth (a lay member of the 14th Cambridge Group Committee) who has kindly arranged to deal with the actual duplicating of this on my behalf.

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¹ At least in the last decade Cambridge University Scout and Guide Club has had many members for whom it was their first contact with Scouting. Quite a few going on to take out warrants with local groups. jry