The Archaeology of Scouting

A talk on early scouting in Cambridge given to a meeting of the Cambridge Scout Fellowship at the Homerton Centre on Thursday 27th April 1978 by W.T. Thurbon.

Some years ago an American General, attached to NATO was invited to speak, on the work of NATO at a city in Georgia, one of the more violent of the Southern States of the U.S.A. Rather reluctantly he agreed, and on taking his seat on the platform he was extremely concerned to see a wild eyed gentleman seated in the front row nursing a revolver in his lap. The man looked up, and catching the General's rather apprehensive eye said reassuringly "It's all right General. This gun isn't for you, it's for the man who invited you to speak.'"

When some time ago Ted invited me to say something about early scouting I suggested a suitable title would be "the archaeology of scouting", since probably rank as an archaeological specimen myself.

May I begin, as one always must on such occasions, with B.P. and remind you of one of his famous Yarns, which shows how narrowly we missed not having a Scout Movement at all!

One night in Africa B.P. was returning from a night scouting expedition when a brief, but violent storm broke. Nearby was a deserted farmhouse, and B.P. sought shelter there. Being B.P., and in enemy country he did not go inside, but remained in the shelter of the veranda, holding the reins of his horse, ready to mount and ride away if any hostiles approached. The storm passed over, the rain ceased, the moon shone out and B.P. mounted and rode back to camp. Next day the troops advanced and passed the farmhouse. B.P. looked inside. Curled round the rafters, just inside the door was a green Mamba, one of Africa's deadliest and more aggressive snakes. Had B.P. been less watchful, and carelessly sought shelter in the house in the dark, he would almost certainly have disturbed the snake, which would have struck, and there would have been an end to B.P. and no beginning of scouting for boys.

I said early last year that scouting began as a game; after the Great War it became a Movement; after the second World War an organisation; and now is dangerously near becoming a bureacracy!

I think the first thing to realise about the birth of scouting is that it sprang up in a world entirely different from the present day, and further that it evolved during the period 1920-40 in a world different both from that of pre-1914, the period of its origin, and from the post-War period of today. Most of us here are old enough to know the origins of scouting. But it is worthwhile spending, a few moments recalling the varied strands of experience which led B.P. to write "Scouting for Boys", and thus spark off a movement far beyond his original ideas. B.P. was one of those unconventional Soldiers the British Army has so often produced; like Lawrence in the Great War and Wingate in the Second. A man of limited private means he had taken to writing to augment his income, and his name was becoming known from his writings, especially on the Ashanti and Matabele Wars. His particular forte was scouting and reconnaissance, and among other books he had written a small book for soldiers "Aids to Scouting". The 19th century had seen the expansion of the British Empire, and a number of "small wars" in which, in spite of certain "regrettable incidents", we had always come out on top in the end. This was the period of the Frontiersman, both in America, and in Africa, Asia and elsewhere. In the Nineties the British Empire was flourishing and still expanding, reaching its climax with Victorian's Diamond Jubilee - when few had taken note of the warning sounded by Kipling in his "Recessional". Fresh from the reconquest of the Sudan and Kitchener's victory of Omdurrpaam it came as a great shock when the early disasters of the Boer War occurred. To us with the memories of 1914-18 and 1939-45 behind us it is difficult to appreciate how great that shock was. B.P's successful defence, of Mafeking and his light hearted messages from it, caught the public imagination.

"Witness the hero, who with stubborn will,
Blends schoolboy humour with a veteran's skill"

wrote his old headmaster at Charterhouse School. And the rejoicing, at the relief of Mafeking added a new word "mafficking" to the English language. The enormous enthusiasm over the relief of Mafeking made B.P. a public hero, and he received much correspondence many being from boys seeking his advice.

During the siege of Mafeking B.P.'s staff had organised a cadet corps of boy messengers, who had rendered excellent service. The memory of this was one strand leading to scouting. A second was the occasion when B.P. was invited to be inspecting officer at a large gathering of the Boys Brigade, and was impressed by the number and discipline of the boys present. Then he was told by the future Lord Allenby how, riding home from Manoeuvres, he was "ambushed" by his small son, hidden in a tree with his governess. Asked to explain what they were doing she replied that teachers were using "Aids to Scouting" to teach children observation and woodcraft.

B.P. "thought on these things", held his experimental camp at Brownsea Island, and sat down in that famous windmill- to write "Scouting for Boys". It is believed that it was on 15 January 1908 that boys on their way to school or work, in their Eton collars, or Norfolk jackets, buttoned knee breeches and long, black stockings saw in the shops the first weekly part of "Scouting for Boys" by Lieut-General Baden Powell. On its cover a picture in dark blue of a small boy wearing a hat such as B.P. had worn in Africa, lying on some rocks, looking at a ship on the horizon. As the fortnightly parts came, and then the complete book, boys seized on it eagerly, and went out to put in practice the things they read.

This was still the age of Empire; of Empire Day celebrations in schools, still of the frontiersman. Men were around who had served in the Sudan, on the N.W. frontier of Indian, and particular in Africa who had fought the Zulus, who had recently opened up the land we know as Rhodesia. The period of the stories of Rider Haggard. The Legion of Frontiersmen, a volunteer unit formed from men who had served on the frontiers of half the world had been formed. I remember in 1913 hearing their band, dressed in tunics and riding breeches, with much gold lace, and with B.P. hats, playing in the old bandstand on Christs Piece. This was still the age of the horse. There were few motor cars about, and it was only five years since the Wright Brothers had flown at Kittyhawk. (Yet so up to date was B.P. that by 1911 he was designing an Airman's badge for scouts). One of my most vivid memories of those days is the sound of hoofs and wheels, and the jingle of harness, around 7 o'clock in the morning as the horse cabs went past my home on their way to the station to meet the early trains, "going up for the Draw" for position in the cab rank. A few years later a very popular set of cigarette cards was called "Riders of the World".

Into this age came scouting. An age when patriotism was still a virtue; when few realised that the high noon of Empire was already passing into decline. And scouting was a wonderful thing; this was an age when shorts were rarely worn, and activities, for boys limited. The uniform, the open air life, camping, signalling, and particularly firelighting and cooking over wood fires. "Who had smelt wood smoke at twilight!" B.P. had followed up "Scouting for Boys" by arranging for the launching of the weekly paper "The Scout". Incidentally in the first few numbers the Movement is referred to as "The Legion of Boy Scouts"! For the first issues of "The Scout" B.P. asked E. Le Breton Martin, a writer of boys' stories, to write a scouting serial. Martin went away with a copy of S for B, and wrote "The Boys of the Otter Patrol"; but Martin himself was caught up by scouting and became an early Commissioner. Perhaps, however, the effect of scouting on boys of the early period is captured most fully in Bernard Weatherall's "The Gardens of Paradise Alley". Let me read one paragraph. (*passage not included in transcript*) All the attractive activities, together with the knightly ideals of service were caught by B.P. in the Scout Promise and Law, and brilliantly encapsulated in the Good Turn.

While Scouting appealed to boys, and many of them had gone out and press ganged men into being scoutmasters, it had its critics. B.P had hoped that bodies like the B.B. and the C.L.B. would take up scouting as an activity and organise it in their ranks. But their response was half hearted. Boys were forming patrols, sometimes recruiting leaders, not always the most suitable. Unofficial organisations were springing up; the British Boy Scouts, London Diocesan Association, Salvation Army scouts. So it became necessary to form an Association, with local advisory councils, soon to become local associations. There were their objectors; pacifists thought it too military. Military men thought it not military enough, Socialists objected to the clause in the 2nd Scout Law "a scout is loyal--to His employers". Anti-socialists suggested on the other hand that scouting was encouraging "the essence of socialism" by the 4th Law "A brother to every other scout no matter to what social class he belongs". All these cancelled each other out. The Irish nationalists put up posters in Dublin "B.P Scouts are tempting Irish boys to betray their country by swearing to be loyal to England's King" - with the typical Irish result that boys who had not heard about scouting before flocked to join scout troops. A more important criticism was the supposed lack of a religious purpose: since about every previous boys' movement had the backing of some religious Body. B.P. met this more cogent criticism at the rally of scoutmasters in

conference that followed the Crystal Palace Rally of 1909. Geoffrey Elwes had attended a scout camp held at Buckler's Hard shortly before the Rally as the Archbishop of York's representative to report on whether the Scout Movement was worthy of the support of the Church of England Men's Society. Buckler's Hard converted Elwes to scouting and ultimately to the editorship of the headquarters Gazette, which in due time became first "The Scouter" and now "Scouting". At the Conference B.P. called on Elwes to speak. Then a resolution was put to the meeting "That the leading representatives of the various denominations should be invited to a Conference to discuss methods by which a common and practical religious ideal should be imparted to the Movement". The motion was carried, and thus our religious policy was formed. There were later troubles I might mention now. In 1916 a group of leaders, including Ernest Westlake, a Cambridge Natural Scientist, and his son, who had been a scoutmaster while an undergraduate at Trinity, thought scouting "too military" (the same old criticism) and broke away to form the order of Woodcraft Chivalry; after a somewhat chequered career it split up and still existed a few years ago about 400 members. In the early 1920's, John Margraves, who was H.Q. Commissioner for Camping and woodcraft, and who in the second decade of the century had been responsible for the craze for "Red Indians" in the Movement, decided that scouting had "lost the trail" and went off to form the Kibbo Kift, a melange of Tribalism, left wing politics, some Wellsian utopian socialism, etc. Hargreaves tended to go more and more his own way, developing "a language of occult symbolism" (to quote one historian) and then tied up with the Canadian Social Credit movement. This movement also broke up.

Meanwhile scouting went on in its usual sane way, avoiding excesses of either tribalism or militarism. The idea spread abroad, notably to America, where the good turn of an unknown London scout to an American visitor led to the formation of the American Scout Movement. More badges were introduced, handbooks began to appear. Incidentally, again, there is a story or legend that in his first draft of the tests for the First Class Badge B.P. included "the ability to read and write". Many times in my long career as secretary I have thought, and said bitterly, that such a test should have been applied to Scouters especially at Census time.

In 1908 the "Scout" ran a competition for its readers, the 30 winners camping with B.P. at Humshaugh (Humz-off) near the Roman Wall. In 1909 it ran another competition, this time 100 boys camped with B.P., 50 on the training ship "Mercury", recently established by C.B. Fry the famous cricketer, the other 50 at Buckler's Hard. A few weeks later on 4 September 1909 a highly successful rally was held at the Crystal Palace, attended by scouts in their thousands, and by some typical B.P. weather. Here, also, for the first time B.P. met girl scouts: why shouldn't they be scouts like their brothers a radical idea for the still stuffy Edwardian England. B.P. told then to go away; scouting was for boys. But they wouldn't go. So he sought the aid of his sister Agnes to form a girl's counterpart of the scout movement and to adapt S for B into the Girl Guide Handbook. B.P. himself giving them the name "Guides" from a famous Indian Cavalry Regiment. Then the small boys wanted scouting. So B.P. took the idea of the Wolf Cubs from Kipling's "Jungle Books", and by 1916 Cubbing was launched. Then came the War, and scouts were active in many ways. Guarding Railway lines at the beginning of the war, coast watching with the Coastguard; gathering flax for making aircraft coverings, while London Scout buglers sounded the "all clear" after air raid. Within a month of the Crystal Palace Rally B.P. was invited to stay with the Ring, Edward VII, at Balmoral. There, before Dinner on the first night of his stay, he was invited into the King's presence, and the King told him that for his past services, and especially for his present one of raising the Boy Scouts for the Country he was conferring on him a knighthood as Knight Commander of the Victorian Order.

The King agreed to B.P's suggestion, that scouts who had passed special tests should be given the rank of King's Scouts, and that a rally should be held in the following year at Windsor, when the King himself would be present But before that rally could be held Edward VII had died, and the royal review, which had been fixed for 10 June had to be cancelled. A year later George V, who like his father had become patron of the Movement, agreed to carry out the review. On 4 July 1911 the largest gathering of boys that England had ever seen assembled in Windsor Great Park. Some 30,000 scouts from every county in England, from Scotland, Ireland, Wales, with detachments from Malta, Gibraltar and Canada assembled in three great semi-circles. At 3 o'clock B.P. mounted on a black horse raised his hand. The rally came to the alert and George V, with his attendant Princes and generals, among them the Duke of Connaught and Lord Roberts, rode into the circle; followed by a carriage in which were Queen Mary, the Prince of Wales and the royal princesses. For half an hour the King, accompanied by B.P., and attended by his staff rode round to inspect the Rally. Then he took his place at the saluting base, under the royal standard. Then followed the most spectacular point of

the rally. The whole circles of scouts rushed forward, shouting their patrol calls. Then, at a predetermined line, they stopped. B.P. called for three cheers for the king; up went a forest of hats on staves and a chorus of' “God Save the King”. This was indeed a great day for B.P. and the Scouts.

In 1910 B.P. after much careful thought, and consultation, decided that the scout movement was growing so fast that it would be advisable for him to retire from the Army and devote his time to Scouting. Among those whose advice he sought were Lord Roberts, and Haldane, Secretary of State for War. Haldane wrote “I feel that this organisation of yours has so important a bearing upon the future that probably the greatest service you can render to the Country is to devote yourself to it.” And when the King learned of B.P.'s decision he gave his approval. By a curious coincidence B.P.'s resignation took effect on the very day that Edward VII died.

Before the war some scouts become adult and for them B.P. first formed the Scout Friendly Society (This was still the Age of the Friendly Societies, before the Welfare State). Something more was needed, and B.P. wrote “Rovering to Success”, the book he probably regarded as second only to S for B. For some twenty years or more we tried to make the Rover Ideal into a reality. In the 1930's we also formed Old Scout braches, but this is getting into the Neolithic period, and I will leave the general for the particular. Jamborees began with the World Jamboree of 1920, which proclaimed B.P Chief Scout of the World, and training began at Gilwell and other centres for the Wood Badge. But now to local affairs.

My own connection with scouting began in 1913 when for a short while, I together with a few other ten and eleven year olds, living around my home in Sturton Street were tacked on as an unofficial patrol to a Troop formed by “Taffy” Gray at Ditton. We met in a large room at my home which covered the back portion of two houses, which had originally been built in the 1860's for a College laundress. There was “Taffy’s” battered copy of “Scouting for Boys”. In spare moments I read this, and was fascinated by the description of a “star fire”. I went into the garden, found some odd pieces of wood (part of an old, discarded sofa if my memory serves me right). I carefully laid the fire, and lit it. It worked! That fire, long ago in 1913, has led me through paths in scouting, to great friendships, to a silver wolf, and here tonight. There is something about fire that appealed to the primitive in us. I have as you all must, many memories of camp fires - the smell of smoke from cooking fires or camp fires; of Abington Camp site and E.H. Lewis coming across to greet us; camp fires have light the paths of pioneers, explorers, in the words of a writer of the early 1900's, like lamps of progress in the wilderness. I read the “Scout” for years, and when in 1917 the 23rd Troop was formed joined within a few weeks of its formation. We usually met one night a week, I think Tuesday and scouted on Saturday afternoons; often in the summer walking out to Ditton Woods or Byrons Pool. We got our uniforms, our purple and. white 23rd scarves. We carried whistles on lanyards, and our knives, two blades and the famous “spike to take stones out of horses hoofs”. I well remember mine; My uncle had used it in the army, it was large and heavy, and as I ran it would swing on its swivel and crump my elbow. And we had our staves. At first the broomsticks, later as we caught “White Fox's” woodcraft ideas rough staves, on which we carvers our patrol animals, and various Indian signs. Claud Walker said once that staves, (I think he was speaking of pre-1914), cost 2d. I quote now from a notice by the D.C. “Charlie” Wood, of 1922

“Urgent. The District Commissioner wishes to announce that after the end of this month- (October 1922) all scouts in the Cambridge and District area must carry Scout Staves as prescribed by Headquarters Regulations and must be drilled in the use of them. An ordinary broomstick (price 4d) is quite sufficient to comply with the Regulations, as long as it is marked in feet and inches, or scouts may cut their own stave from a growing tree as long as they have secured the owner's permission.”

In those days bicycles were at a premium and many of us marched quite long distances on scouting occasions. Scouters originally wore tunics and slacks or Norfolk suits; then in the 1920's, as the influence of Gilwell spread, first scouters adopted shorts, and then abandoned tunics. Back to 1917 when we passed our tenderfoot tests and tied our six knots, then our second class. Signalled, very badly, I got involved in First Aid and gained the ambulance badge; to set me off on another trail that led to command of a Red Cross Detachment. In 1918 we held an Association “Field Day” (long before we called them wide games and marched to Babraham. In 1919 we went to Quy, and ran, “gold dust” though Quy Water. I think the 23rd were on the bushrangers side! By 1919 the 23rd had a new scoutmaster; Fred Feary who has given over fifty years devoted service to the Movement. Memories come crowding in; rallies, visits of the Chief

Scout, “Stourbridge Fair” at the back of King's around 1920; a guard of honour for the Prince of Wales later Duke of Windsor. Church parades, sometimes with the Boys Bridge and the Church Lads’ Bridgade. Camp Fires; Abington Camp Site. These were the days of patrol signs, calls and shoulder knots. Then as woodcraft ideas spread we gave up exotic patrol names and used those of native birds and spread whose calls would be “natural”, we thought, so Lions became Owls; Wolves became Pewits and the rattlesnake call (“rattle a pebble in a potted meat tin”) vanished in-to history. In the early days of scouting Cub Packs, Scout Troops and Rover Crews were listed separately. In 1927 the Group system was adopted, theoretically a boy would join as a cub and remain until he had completed rover training. But the group system did not end, the problem of leakage that has been with us; and it later proved to be one source of weakness in rover scouting. Group Scout Leaders were reluctant to see their older boys go to another unit, with the result that many rover crews were too small to run a really good programme. The Guides, more sensibly, had district Ranger Units. At long last the District has adopted this idea of area units for the Venture Scout section.

Still more memories come crowding in. As Gilwell training came down to the Troop level the importance of the Court of Honour of P.L.’s and Seconds became greater. Training courses developed that we eagerly took up and practised. We made camp fire robes with decorated blankets. We made Arab robes and head-dresses (Agal and Kafia) Eskimo’s Tunics, Sandals Poncho’s etc. I recall trying to convert a bullock’s horn into a bugle horn. We practised rope spinning, a favourite display item; some old 23rds may recall Reg Eaden or Jim Samsom and others spinning crinolines and other fancy roping items; and another favourite, we made fire by friction with bow and drill. We practised trekking and made plaster casts of human and animal footprints. We played Kim’s game etc. And we raised funds, mainly in the 23rd by Concerts – no old 23rd can forget the “opera”. And, to go rather further forward, since our promise of duty to God was no empty thing; one abiding memory of the 23rd for me, is the Corporate Communion at St. Matthew’s, at 8am on the first Sunday of each month, when older scouts, scouters and rovers knelt at the Alter rails as a corporate, uniformed body.

In due courses with a change of outlook, the title scoutmaster was dropped for that of leader. Personally I have always regretted this. For the title “Scoutmaster” is a peculiarly English one with a long history. B.P. returning from one of his trips abroad was reading “Ivanhoe” when he came across a passage “Bid Hugh Baron, our scoutmaster, come hither”, Scott, in fact, had got his history wrong, as he did quite a lot in “Ivanhoe”. Scoutmaster was not a known rank in medieval armies, but in English Armies of the 16th and 17th Century it was well known. Slackness of Charles It’s scoutmaster at Nosey and of Montrose's at Philiphaugh led to royalist disasters on both occasions. It seems to have been a peculiar English title. Firth in “Cromwell's Army” quotes from Sir James Turner's Pallas Armata “The English have one General Officer whom they qualifie with the Title of Scoutmaster General. I have known none of them abroad”. There are other references, both in Firth and other writers. Incidentally we have a precedent for the Parson scouter. Cromwell's Scoutmaster General in Ireland was Bishop of the Irish Church. The earliest reference known to the rank is in an Harlein Mss of 1518 setting out the duties of the Scoutmaster General.

It has always seemed a weakness in the Movement to me that more importance has not been attached to Group Secretaries. B.P, was used to the army hierarchy of C.O. and Adjutant, and there war, a general failure to recognise the value of the Croup secretary as a link between unit and District. This was perhaps not too serious in the early days of the Movement when Troops and Packs were separate units, and District officers fewer. It was easier then for D.C. and District Secretary to correspond direct with the unit leader. I always think the Advance Party's Report would have been much more useful if the Party had included an experienced District Secretary. On the other hand Cambridge has been lucky in its District Secretaries. In Howard Mallett we had for many years probably the best District Secretary the Movement has known. It was hearing Fred Feary's admiration of Mallett as Secretary around 1929 that fired me with the ambition to copy Mallett's example. Mallett's influence carried over to his successors, Stan Roper, myself, George Tirrell, John Simpson, and the Mallett tradition is most worthily maintained today by Rosemary. Of Mallett I would say, in Kipling's praise of famous men

“For their work continueth,
Broad and deep continueth,
Greater than their knowing”.

And before I leave the subject let me add that if Mallett showed me what a good secretary should beg Patrick Duff taught me the equally valuable lesson to be unobtrusively efficient.

And now to still more local archaeology. A few months after the issue of S. for B. B.P. addressed a meeting at the Perse School in March 1908. As a result some isolated patrols were formed and in time these were organised into troops in Cambridge Cherryhinton, Chesterton, and at the Perse and Higher Trade Schools. By this time the Scout Association had been formed and on 30 May 1910 Eric Walker, one of H.Q's Organising Secretaries inspected some 200 scouts in the Perse School Grounds. He later addressed a meeting in the School Hall at which the Cambridge and District Boy Scout Association was inaugurated. The Mayor (Alderman Stace) was elected President Scoutmaster H.R. Mallett was a member of the Executive. The first Secretary and Treasurer was the Rev. H.R. Baily.

I have a list of the Troops who formed that Association, which I will put on show (*not included in transciption*). Among members of the Association were Dr. W.H.D Rouse, a distinguished Headmaster of the Perse, and C.T. Wood. In 1912 E.H.Church joined the Association. E.H. Church. `Daisy" to the irreverent, took a great interest in youth movements. He entertained scout groups. “Reveille” a 1920 Scout magazine of which only one number was published, light-heartedly asked the 9th Troop “Which do you prefer, a church parade or a parade at Mr. Church's?” “Daisy”, who incidentally was the man mainly responsible for the erection of the Hobbs Pavilion on Parkers Piece, became Treasurer of the Association and in 1919 was elected President, being succeeded as Treasurer by G.M. Macfarlane Grieve, for many years scoutmaster of the Perse School, and later an Assistant County Commissioner and a one time County Treasurer. On Saturday May 20th, 1911, some 400 scouts assembled on Parkers Piece in traditional Chief Scout’s weather. “a bitterly cold wind blew across the Piece; there was a suspicion of rain in the air”. The troops marched round the town, led by the Bands of the Perse and County Schools, while cyclists and mounted scouts (how's that) brought up the rear. The rally marched to the C.U.O.T.C. ground where they were inspected by the Chief Scout. The Rally is noticeable as being the first circular rally. The circle was almost deserted when the Chief Scout arrived. A solitary bugler sounded the rally. In marched the scoutmasters from nearby cover, accompanied by their colour parties. A second bugle call, and in came the scouts at the double, saluting the chief with their staves, Zulu fashion, and shouting their patrol. When the Army Manoeuvres were held in East Anglia in 1913, attended by George 5th, there was a scout rally, if a souvenir programme of the royal visit can be trusted. Also in 1913 there was a rally in the grounds of Downing College; 1 recall seeing this and its grand finale “captured by redskins”, the captives being rescued amid a fusillade of blank cartridges. Interestingly, there was also on display a wireless transmitting and receiving apparatus set up by one of the Troops. In 1916 the wolf Cub branch was officially formed and Cambridge soon had Packs. In 1917 a rally was held on Sheep’s Green, inspected by the Chief, who arrived two hours late his train having been delayed by an air raid on Liverpool Street station, which damaged the engine. There were District Camps in 1917 and 1918, for fruit picking and flax gathering. During the war scouts held camps for refugee scouts from Belgium and Serbia, and a number of scouts took part in coast watching duties: 16 from the 1st; 6 from Balsham and 1 from the 9th. I have mentioned the “field days”. There was another rally on 26 June 1922 on Queens' Grove, when the Chief Scout was present. Being greeted with his Matabele native name. There the 23rd helped to erect a monkey bridge across the ditch. In February 1923 there was a “night attack” on the Rifle Range.

As the Movement grew separate Associations were formed at Ely, Newmarket, etc. In the 1930's Cambridge District was to be further split up into South, North and West Cambs as well as the original Cambridge District.

C.T. Wood was District Scoutmaster in 1917, and Professor Stanley Gardiner District Commissioner. When Stanley Gardiner resigned C.T. Wood became District Commissioner In 1924 Brigadier Bainbridge became District Commissioner in succession to Charlie Wood who became County Commissioner. (the rumour was that Queens' College felt that Charlie was giving more time to scouting than he was to his job as Dean of Queens'). Charlie, I think always missed his job as D.C., and continued to act as acting, D.C. after Bainbridge died in the 1930's, until he was ultimately succeeded by Howard Mallett's appointment as D.C. Charlie was finally succeeded as County Commissioner early in the last War by Alan Welford, Chaplain and Junior Bursar of St. John's College. There are three particular things we owe to C.T. On his proposal the Association in 1926 took up the lease of Grafton Street as an Association. Headquarters; in 1923 he urged the formation of the Scout Boat Club, of which Fred Feary was the first Captain, and I a humble non-rowing member. And it was Charlies's efforts which, with the help of others led to the acquisition of Abington. Macfarlane Grieve and Brigadier Bainbridge were both generous benefactors to the Association. When in the late 1920's the Scout Shop was founded they for a number of years underwrote some pretty substantial losses. Ruse, Q.M. in the early 1930's was a nice chap, but his book-keeping system was terrible. I say this feelingly; for I became the honorary auditor in 1931 and regularly spent weeks trying to convert Ruse's books into some sort of orderly account. The Association owes a very great deal to Ken North, who on taking, over introduced a proper system of accounts and made the store into a profitable business. Macfarlane Grieve was a fine musician, and an organist, and very often played

at “Scouts Owns” or Church Parades. I remember one disastrous service held I think, in connection with a County Rally. This was held in the Central Cinema, the acoustics were terrible with the result that during, the singing of the hymns those seated at the back were one line behind those in front; you can imagine the result.

I have talked too long. An archaeologist digs up the past to try to construct a picture of life as it was, but often finds only fragmented remains. I have dredged up a few notes and memories. I hope to show you a few items of interest. But “old men forget and much is lost in the mists of time”. I have tried to deal with the archaeology of scouting 1 hope someone else will be our medievalist and recall the 1930 and 40's.

Let me add a few closing thoughts; I wish Jock Dawson was here -to know of a minute of the Executive Committee of November 1917: Senior Scout Club. Girl friends and relations of the members may be invited to social evenings with their mothers from time to time, but no girl shall be admitted unless accompanied by a suitable chaperone," But the permissive age crept on, and on the 27th of January, 1919 the Executive solemnly decided that “Chaperones on the social evenings are no longer required.” I dare not commence recalling names or we should never end. Let me remind you of one thing about scouting. Scouts have a great gift for deflating their leaders. When in the late 1920's William Wolfe received a warrant as A.S.M. (Assistant Scoutmaster to you moderns) I was at the 23rd H.Q. and wishing to speak to William, said to one of our younger scouts “Will you ask Mr. Wolfe if he can come and see me for a moment”. Alas for my efforts to maintain William's new dignity. The scout walked to the connecting door and shouted at the top of his voice “Clacker, Bill wants, you.”

“Those art, the times we shall dream about,
And we’ll call them the good old days”

February 1978. W.T. Thurbon

Electronic Version January 2003: Jonathan Yates