

SEA SCOUT STORY

By CHARLES BRUNDRETT



Charles Brundrett, founder of
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INTRODUCTION

Living as we do on an island with a maximum distance from the sea of about seventy miles, there can be few people to whom the sea is a completely strange element in which they have no possible interest. We are frequently told that the sea is in our blood and we are as much at home afloat as we are ashore. Well, that is as may be, but it is a fact that most young people are naturally drawn to the water and those who are fortunate enough to have access to boats benefit greatly from its teachings. In the words of the Water Rat in Kenneth Graham's "Wind in the Willows" - "There is nothing - absolutely nothing - half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats".

Admiral Sir William James in his introduction to "The Trade Winds" says "An elementary knowledge of the sea and its history would be far more profitable than much that is taught in our schools and universities". After twenty years of Sea Scouting, during which time over 250 boys have passed through my troop, I can testify to the development of the senses, self reliance and physical well-being of those who spend part of a few youthful years "Messing about in boats".

The stories and incidents in this little book are all true to fact and are taken from the history of a small Sea Scout Group on Chichester Harbour. I have tried to tell them with a minimum of both Scout and sea terms in the hope that they will appeal to the laymen as well as to the members of the Scout movement. If what they read here suggests to some men that they too might introduce boys to the pleasures and benefits of tidal waters, my efforts will be amply rewarded.

BEGINNINGS

*Let me today do something that shall take
A little sadness from the world's vast store:
And may I be so favoured as to make
Of Joy's too scanty store a little more.*

The small audience clapped without any great show of enthusiasm and the Scouter, who had just finished speaking by saying "My loss is your gain", sat down. The stage manager made conventional remarks concerning the sublime and the ridiculous and the show continued to its appointed end.

The occasion was a concert, staged by an actor friend, and given with the dual object of publicising the fact that I was prepared to run a local Sea Scout Troop and also to raise funds for the same purpose. The speaker was the Group Scoutmaster of a troop of some 6 or 7 miles away where I had recently been Assistant Scoutmaster and where, in three years, I had picked up all the Scouting I knew.

There was no rush of lads to enter their names - two said they would probably join - and the net receipts amounted to seventeen shillings! Not a very promising start. However, a few days later three big lads were looking for me and one of their parents had a hut in the garden which we could use for meetings for one evening each week, paying eighteen pence to cover lighting and fuel. So the first meeting of the Group was held one evening in May 1933 with six boys, a "Scouting for Boys", a few lengths of line and a handful of clothes pegs - these last for a game. From that time to the present day there have been very few weeks when there was no meeting for the boys to

come to. For the most part there have been several, and to many the Scout headquarters has been a second home - a place where a boy was almost certain of finding some of his pals and something interesting to do with his spare time. True, a boy's idea of something interesting to do did not always tally with that of his Scoutmaster who often had quite a different name for it, and such activities as football in H/Q had to be discouraged. But on the whole they have not abused their freedom too much and Scouting is a definite part of their lives.

I had entered into Sea Scouting without a great deal of thought or very much preparation and my knowledge of the sea was completely nil. My knowledge of boats was restricted to an ability to handle light river boats obtained from many happy Sunday afternoons spent on the Military Canal at Hythe in Kent in the company of school pals some ten years earlier - oh happy youth, that could cycle ten miles immediately after a Sunday lunch for the privilege of pulling a boat for two or three hours and then cycling ten miles back for late tea. In order to improve on this ignorance of seamanship I attended a short preliminary Sea Scout course held by Robert Hole at Lympington and for two days was completely mystified by strange sea terms which were meaningless to this poor landlubber. I slept in a small hike tent and one night it rained and thundered all night and I was not very happy. The last night we spent until midnight or later patrolling the sea front and reading morse messages from the signal mast. In the early hours we were called from our hard duty beds on the

floor to rescue some boys 'marooned' on a bank somewhere down river. Small wonder I fell asleep during the final lecture.

One piece of advice was given me by one of the instructors. "Always keep one step ahead of your boys". This I largely managed to do but for the first year or so we learned together though, of course, the boys were not to know this. Whatever my ability as an instructor the boys of those early years must have come to love the water for the greater number of them entered the Navy through the training establishment, St. Vincent, at 15. *S. P. 15*

About this time my search for boats was rewarded when I found a 14' sloop-rigged sailing boat and a ten foot dinghy at Bosham on Chichester Harbour. They were in fair condition and I purchased them for sixteen pounds the pair with all equipment. I must remind readers that this was in 1933. The sailing boat, called Mowgli, gave good service until she was smashed up in the gale of 1935. The dinghy was used by upwards of 200 boys and her battered hull was sold in 1948 for ten shillings to some youthful optimist who thought she still had a little life left in her. May her memory never grow dim.

My first experience of sailing was bringing Mowgli to her new home one very calm evening with the assistance of an ancient fisherman whose knowledge of the channels and creeks of Chichester Harbour must have been remarkably good. With the dinghy in tow she was brought through the dark for six miles and never did journey seem so long even with the tow we had for part of the trip from a kindly

disposed motor boat owner.

Having got her home, the first thing I did was to cut eighteen inches off the foot of her sails to bring them down to the sail area given in some Scout book. I even cut her mast down. Poor old Lady. Like Henry II she never smiled again but she was perfectly safe in half a gale of wind. In fact she needed almost that before she would sail at all. However I and many boys learned to sail in her and we most certainly learned to row in her so she served her turn.

I was wise enough not to increase on the original six boys that summer although there were a number of hangers on who wished to join. Five of them (the sixth had left the district) went to camp in Surrey with my old troop where they had the experience of a well run pioneering camp so that by the Autumn there was a reasonably experienced nucleus with two sixteen year olds ready to take over patrols and I felt justified in taking in recruits. Another six boys joined, passed through their tenderfoot tests fairly quickly, were invested and formed into two patrols. We now also left the small hut which had been our headquarters and took over a large barn which, apart from being cold in Winter, made excellent quarters. We had to share it with the farm which sometimes needed it for carpentry work but it was a great improvement and we felt the troop was now really in being.

AWASH

"I bowed my body Beholding all about me
Saw Sun and Sea And the sand of the shore."
Piers Plowman.

The troop's boats are moored in ^{PRINTED} A bay at the head of one of the creeks in Chichester Harbour which has the disadvantage of drying right out at low tide with the nearest water about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile away down channel. There are large areas of mud flats on every side and what is a very large area of water at high tide, dwindles to the main channels and a few narrow creeks when the water is out. To the stranger all this is rather confusing and it is very easy to sail a boat onto a hidden gravel bank or collection of broken off stumps - the relic of sea defences of other days - or to find oneself stranded in the middle of acres and acres of mud with the water fast receding on all sides. There you will remain for eight hours or so unless you are prepared to remove your clothing and mud crawl to the nearest shore - maybe $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ mile away. As the mud can be two, three or more feet deep and also varies in consistency from fairly solid stuff where, if one moves quickly it is possible to make fair progress, not sinking in more than 4 or 6 inches, to soft, oozy, black, stinking stuff where every dragging step will go down over the knee and there is real danger of sticking altogether, this is not to be undertaken without due consideration and a good knowledge of the area. To be stranded out in the mud in a small open boat can be bearable in fine, warm weather with the bright sunlight bringing out wonderful colours on the distant shores, amongst the trees and the far away hills; and

possibly there is considerable bird life, herons, gulls or tern in which to interest oneself. But should it be late evening with a cool wind blowing and an overcast sky then everything takes on a more sinister aspect. The fading land looks a long way off and the world of mud all around cold and desolate in the extreme. The sense of loneliness is overpowering and even the call of the gulls, wheeling close round the boat with their cold, calculating eyes ever watchful, sounds menacing and eerie. Truly, out on the mud one's imagination can play strange tricks. It is a primitive world and the gods and terrors of early man seem to be around one. The surroundings are exactly as they were then.

In our first year of Sea Scouting the geography of the harbour was a closed book to us and we became the world's most expert mud crawlers! We soon discovered which parts to avoid; round 'Dead Cat Alley' for instance; and for the rest, the boys used to go into it for fun, tummy sliding down the steep banks into the water until they looked like a bunch of seals tumbling about on the waters edge. Their mothers most certainly would not have recognised their own offspring and would have been highly shocked had they been told that those black, gesticulating, naked creatures were their sons. However it was clean mud and washed off easily enough and no one was ever the worse for it.

Those two boats were well used during the first year and it was not long before another 16' sailing craft was added to the fleet

through the good offices of the mother of an old Scout who had joined the troop as Assistant Scoutmaster. She lent the £10 which was paid for this old boat and after a little work had been put into her she gave many years of training and enjoyment to the boys. This time we did not cut down the sail area.

We sailed these two boats about Chichester Harbour whenever time permitted. The favourite run was to Pilsey Island - little more than a sandbank now - which was about three miles down Channel. Here we spent many a happy Sunday bathing and playing on shore or sailing the broader waters of this part of the Harbour. Here was the place for fire-lighting and cooking tests, working on the Oarsman and Boatmans badges and for boys from a variety of homes to mix together thoroughly as free and unrestricted as the gulls that flew over those sparkling waters. Sometimes other people landed on the island for a while and there was always a passing panorama of vessels and boats of all descriptions on the water, coming and going between the open sea and those pleasant little places, Bosham, Itchenor and Dell Quay. There came a time when all this multitude of craft vanished completely and we sailed lonely sunlit waters usually without another sail in sight but more of that anon.

Like the French of Paris of Chaucer's Prioress, tides and tide tables were to us things unknown and it was only from long experience that we learned to use the tides to assist our goings out and our comings in instead of ignoring their existence. It very

frequently happened that we would set off on the return trip to home and supper only to find the Summer evening was quite innocent of any breeze and the tide was in full ebb against us. Out would come the oars, four to a boat, and we would settle down to the long weary pull up channel for three miles against the current. Then it would be "In: out. In. out. In: out. Keep to the side of the channel Dick, there is less current there." - "Pull up, Ian, you lazy blighter, pull up." - "A little harder you chaps, we're not making much headway." And so on; encouraging and bullying and giving each a turn at the helm for a rest from the oar. The skipper of each boat would keep the tiring arms and bodies at work until the home shore was reached where, maybe, an odd parent or relative was patiently waiting. If, by the time we arrived at the upper reaches of the channel, the tide had nearly run out, the boats would be stowed and anchored when they had been brought up as far as possible and their crews, each carrying a small load, would wade up the bed of the channel with many cries from those without plimsols when they stepped onto an extra sharp stone or a small crab was brushed against their unprotected feet by the hurrying waters. A pause to put on shoes and stockings after first removing the inevitable mud from feet and legs in a nearby pool and then across the marshes and fields to the 'Barn' where gear would be left and so to home, supper and bed.

So far as I could gather they never told their parents much of how they had spent the day.

CAMPS AND CAMPERS

"Oh, what see you from your grey hill?
The sun is low, the air all gold,
Warm lies the slumbrous land and still"

Song of the Plough. Maurice Hewlett.

As is fitting for a Sea Scout troop our camps have been either on or near the water. That fine old relict of Nelson's day, the Implacable, which together with the not quite so old Froudeyont, lay in the upper reaches of Portsmouth Harbour, gave many of the pre-war members of our group several happy holidays in most interesting surroundings. Under the care of Colonel Harold Wyllie, that fine artist and lover of old ships, the Implacable did a splendid job in giving, annually, many hundreds of boys and girls from various youth movements an experience of a kind of life and under such romantic and interesting conditions that the majority could never have found anywhere else. It would be a dull boy indeed who would not get a thrill from living on board a vessel which actually fought as the Duguay Trouin and on the French side, at Trafalgar and which, when again brought to action a few days later, fought so well that when she did haul down her colours her senior surviving officer was a midshipman - little more than a boy himself.

Unhappily the Implacable is no more. She was used as a training ship during the war, deteriorated badly and had to be scrapped as the cost of re-conditioning her could not be met. She met an honourable end by sinking in the Channel.

Scouting

Usually we went to the Implecable by boat through the network of channels running through Chichester, Langstone and Upper Portsmouth Harbours. It could be a long tiring trip with a great deal of oar work in the narrow channels and long waits for the tides if we struck dead low water at Langstone Bridge or round Horsey Island. Since then our boats have been to Portsmouth and beyond many times by the outside passage through the Solent but in the early days we lacked the experience to brave the open water. We often found the more open parts of Chichester Harbour and Sinah Lake beyond Langstone bridges could give us all the excitement we needed.

Going down channel to camp near Itchenor one Whitsun we struck rough water and it was a very tired and wet party which ultimately landed on a rather inhospitable shore with a half mile portage before them to the camp site. Rain and spray had wet much of the camping gear and while some of it dried before night fall, much of it did not and many slept rough that night. Perhaps that was why, when I awoke between three and four in the morning to a suspiciously silent camp, investigation discovered not a soul in camp other than myself. They were ultimately found in a neighbouring wood endeavouring to shoot birds with an airgun. One excited youth told me that he had shot the leg off one bird. He knew this because after he had fired the bird was still there but standing on one leg only! This tall story gave him the nickname of Bird-eye Lindley. He certainly had wonderful eyesight and it was he who was

always despatched to find lost anchors in the mud. Later that day of the airgun episode we all went to the little village church for the morning service and I think every single one of the boys went to sleep. It was most embarrassing particularly so as I had the greatest difficulty in keeping awake myself.

Another Whitsun, many years later, the seniors with their Scouters embarked at midnight after being delayed for many hours by bad weather, and sailed down harbour by the light of the moon. Finding the open sea still mighty rough they landed on the south-east corner of Hayling Island in the early morning hours and, improvising a tent from the sails, settled down to some much needed sleep only to be disturbed an hour or so later by two men inquiring what they thought they were doing there. The extremely incoherent answers were of no great help and with a muttered 'Matelots' they were left in peace. Later they continued their voyage to Portsmouth Harbour where they spent four delightful days on board an ex M.T.B. belonging to local Sea Scouts.

Camping on Southampton Water was farther afield than the troop had been and the Sea Scout Committee was not too happy about the long sea trip in small boats. A powerful Motor Yacht belonging to a member of the Committee did escort duty and saw the boats safely round. Actually the difficulty was too little wind; not too much; and tents had to be erected in the dusk and we went rather hungrily to bed. That was a camp of late nights. About midnight of the second

12.

day, our 2½ ton yacht 'Larry' arrived with three more campers and extra gear. This was the year of the Jamboree at Moisson on the 1947 Seine and 'Larry' had been across and had only returned the previous day.

On another day two boats endeavoured to make Cowes in the Isle of Wight but winds were light and one turned back. The second boat finally made her destination but at the expense of a midnight return. And then another day some of us sailed up the winding Beaulieu River to Buckler's Hard - a hard toilsome trip and when we finally arrived and tried for tea at the only place, the old Master Carpenter's House, there was nothing to be had except lemonade and a few windfall apples. Oh, the moanings and lamentations! The long trip home on empty stomachs was not looked upon with any favour at all and I was most grateful to the two ladies who presently came with a gift of apples and pears. After these and a bathe things were a little more cheerful and a start back was made. Dusk was falling and a strong breeze had risen by the time we got to the long Eastward reach at Oarpoint. Then it was tack, tack, tack for it seemed endless hours and at the end of every tack was the same desolate grey mud, cold and most inhospitable. At long last the change in course to the Southward and into the Solent, an equally cold and grey looking stretch of water and plenty choppy enough for our little boats. Lights were showing on the few yachts about and these were mostly over on the Island side. The boys huddled well down in the boats and were cheerful

13.

enough, talking quietly among themselves with occasional snatches of song or comment on anything in sight. Where we had drifted westward in the morning with the two boats locked together, eating our lunch, we now scudded along at a spanking pace with occasional spray coming over the bows. I was happier now - I never did like tacking in rough water - and the two boats were keeping within sight of each other in the gloom and I thought we should make camp at a reasonable hour but by Calshott Castle the wind lessened and by the time we were half way across Southampton Water, dropped altogether so we had to take ¹⁵ oars but leaving our sails up so that other craft might spot us. We reached camp about 11 o'clock. The whaler, which had been up the Hamble River, had returned long since and supper was waiting. We ate with great content by lantern light in the grub tent.

During the day the camp had been invaded by cows which had eaten several dozen cakes and nine loaves of bread. With a mental note to move and fence the grub tent we went to bed but next morning "Sadie" milked one of the cows. He thought it a reasonable thing to do, considering.

It was on the return trip from this camp that the boats ran into real difficulty. I came back by land with the non swimmers in the car and much of the gear in the trailer. The rest went into 'Larry' except some hired stuff which was put on rail. The boats sailed about 1 a.m. in fair weather and all was well until they reached Gilkicker point where a strong north easter caught them and a head tide. They

literally spent hours trying to round this point in very rough water. The escort motor yacht which should have met them failed to contact them and things were not at all happy.

About 5 o'clock I was worried and phoned the Coastguards at Bembridge and Hayling Island but they had not seen the Scouts. Shortly after this the Senior in charge of 'Idler' phoned to say they had ultimately got a tow from Gilkicker to Portsmouth where they had beached their craft near Southsea Castle; pulled her above high water mark and left her in the care of some sailors stationed near-by. A wise and resourceful lad. Having insufficient money to get his crew home, he raced to Portsmouth Town station, met the local train of which his father was guard and borrowed the money for tickets.

The whaler's crew turned up at 6.30 having trained from Gosport. A boy of 17 was in charge of this boat. Keeping too close in shore he was finally blown ashore at Stokes Bay where he secured his boat, stowed its gear with more kindly sailors and made his way to the nearest station. The S/M (Seniors), being of the Bulldog type, persevered and finally made Langstone Harbour; very nearly getting swamped when crossing the bar between Portsmouth and Hayling Island. He and his crew landed in comfort at Emsworth.

Of 'Larry' there was no news and although she was more of a sea boat than the others and very much larger, we were worried because she was weighed with considerable gear which would make her sluggish and she also had the younger boys on board. The Coastguards could

Sorry page 15 missing

other scares he anchored and refused to budge again that day. The boys returned home but embarked by motor boat the next day. The weather was still poor when the order was given to raise the anchor. The slack came in quickly enough but the anchor very slowly and laboriously which was not really surprising seeing that she had collected a complete aeroplane engine! It was then the Captain swore never to enter Chichester Harbour again and the Mate's language was something to marvel at. It was removed with considerable trouble and the 'Lexamine' finally got away towing two sailing boats and carrying a dinghy on her deck. Outside the water was very rough and off the Isle of Wight one towed boat was swamped. The prompt action of a S/M saved the actual boat but she was badly strained and much of her gear was lost. The 'Lexamine' anchored on the island side of the channel, not daring to come in closer to the shallows off Lepe. It was too rough for the small boats to cross so after waiting two hours for the weather to moderate and a vain attempt to communicate with Scouts on shore, the 'Lexamine' departed for Calshott leaving a lonely and disconsolate shore party stranded with stacks of food, one large tent without poles and odds and ends of gear. The tent was satisfactorily erected by means of a rope over a branch, gear was stowed and all made safe for the night when the whaler arrived with an A/S/M and Seniors. A crowded but moderately comfortable night in the one tent had its counterpart on board the 'Lexamine' where twenty or so boys slept wherever they could find space in the main cabin, in the

few bunks available below and on the open deck. They lived on ship's biscuits and were delivered to camp next day by R.A.F. lorry perfectly happy and full of their adventures.

The 'Lexamine' was not available for the return trip so the smaller boats were sailed to Portsmouth and left for later collection. Larry and the whaler went straight home and the bulk of the boys and gear returned by lorry.

This was not the last we saw of the 'Lexamine' for on the last day of camp we received a request for a party of scouts to go on board for a passage to Belgium the next day. This was impossible but about three days later a party of seven made its way to Southampton where, together with a Belgian boy, Christian, they boarded 'Lexamine' and were soon dropping down Southampton Water to St. Helen's roads where the yacht, an ex Motor Fishing Vessel, was anchored for the night. The Scouts each took a turn at watchkeeping - a new experience alone on deck trying to keep a check on all the various lights of the eastern Solent, and there seemed such a confusion of them. It was a calm quiet night with some cloud and a slight swell which gave that up and down motion to the anchored vessel which tells some of us we were never meant for the sea. One felt very lonely and small on that quiet deck, the sea so vast and mysterious and the stars and lights so cold and impersonally staring.

Early next morning we sailed for Newhaven but the weather worsened again and the Captain decided to carry right on to Dover.

Arriving off the harbour mouth at 11 p.m. we had to wait for the cross Channel packet to come out as the entrance was still restricted by war defences. The vessel pitched and tossed appallingly and some of us were very unwell and extremely unhappy. We eventually entered the harbour about midnight and for a while were easier, but later the wind increased to nearly gale force and we were in a worse state than ever. Finally the anchor came up again and we tied up at a coal wharf in the inner harbour. Filthy but blessed peace except for the vibration of the engine charging accumulators. The storm kept us in harbour all next day but cleared for an excellent crossing on the third day.

Much of the North Sea was still mined and our vessel had to keep to a marked channel. There were wrecked vessels on the Goodwin Sands and many showed up in the shallows off the mouth of the River Scheldt - a sad reminder to us that we were entering a land not so very long since occupied by an all powerful foe.

A long and tiring punching of the current through flat, uninteresting country finally brought us to Antwerp where we tied up in an inner basin. Here we stayed for three days and were very well looked after by the Belgium Shipping Company who had apparently undertaken our entertainment while in their country. The Scout son of the Superintendant had crossed with us from Southampton and he helped escort our party round many places of great interest as well as entertaining us all to tea in his parents' delightful home outside

Antwerp. The wonderful Congo Museum at Tervuren; a delightful Japanese house and the great National Park near Brussels. The old Flemish stronghold on the Scheldt known as the Steen and its more modern but even more grisly counterpart at Breen Donk, a place of horror indeed and a lasting record of Teutonic frightfulness, were all seen.

The wonderful buildings and the great broad roads and squares in Brussels and Antwerp impressed us almost as much as did the rushing lines of fast new cars which seemed to us to avoid smashing each other to atoms only by a continuous miracle. In contrast to the sparsely filled shops of food rationed England, the shops here were filled to overflowing - often with English foods quite unprocurable in their country of origin.

We purchased luxuries unseen for years at home at 9 o'clock at night to take back with us on the morrow.

The boys spent their evenings mostly at the Seamen's Mission where they could play games. Their Scouters explored the city sometimes conducted by 'Pierre' an older Belgium Scout who was with us whenever his studies permitted.

A peaceful crossing to Dover and a very unpleasant passage from Dover to Southampton completed a most interesting trip.

AFRINA

"Build me straight, O worthy Master,
 Staunch and strong, a goodly vessel,
 That shall laugh at all disaster,
 And with wave and whirlwind wrestle."
 Longfellow.

A Colchester Oyster Smack converted into a yacht, Afrina for many years sailed the boisterous waters of the East coast. Much of her story can be found in that very interesting sailing book "Ten Small Yachts and Others" where Maurice Griffiths tells how he sailed her single handed, day and night, off the East coast and of hair raising adventures like creeping out along her ten foot bowsprit one dark and stormy night with the boat pitching heavily and no-one else on board, to free her jammed outer jib traveller. Griffiths found her 12 tons too much for single handed work and sold her to a yachtman in Chichester harbour. This gentleman with his two sons sailed Afrina in southern waters until 1935, then, in September of that year, she was lying at Emsworth being fitted with an engine when a great south easterly gale, coinciding with Spring tides, wrought much damage all over this part of the country. A great volume of water, shepherded by the high wind, overflowed the sea walls like water being poured out of a jug and filled some of the Marsh lands until they were level with the sea in one vast sheet of water. Sea defences were destroyed, shingle banks moved to new positions at right angles to their norm and the high tide mark was hundreds of yards in land, in gardens, roads and fields. Scores of boats were smashed beyond hope of repair but some anchorages held long enough for the water to

reach sufficient height to float their craft clean over the sea walls into the Marsh lands in some places, into fields and gardens in others. One motorboat at least was left quite undamaged perched precariously on top of the sea wall. Some of these craft presented difficult problems to get them refloated. Many a once proud owner was to be seen sadly pushing the battered remnants of his boat home or gathering odd bits and pieces off the shore; all that remained of a possibly costly plaything.

Afrina, alongside a quay, was used as a fender by two timber barges and her port quarter smashed in. Her owner had her roughly repaired and brought her home to Bosham. She was an old vessel and with the battering she had received it was not considered justified to spend the money necessary to make her seaworthy for the hard sailing he would require of her. So he bought a fine new yacht, the 'Swan', and gave 'Afrina' to the Scouts for the cost of her repairs. Needless to say the Scouts were delighted. A party went to Bosham the next Saturday to scrape and tar her bottom and later she was towed round to her new home to be rigged.

There were now two problems to be solved. Firstly a suitable mooring and second a suit of sails with the necessary spars as she was stripped to her mast. The moorings were fairly easy. A 40 gallon oil drum and the necessary ingredients for cement were taken out to 'Afrina' in the bay; the cement was mixed on her deck; the drum filled with a ring shaft bedded in the centre and, after a day

or two, pushed over the side into the mud at the side of the channel. That, we said, would hold a house.

The question of sails was a different matter over which we worried until someone had a very bright thought. He remembered seeing stowed away in the old 'Implacable' a suit of brown sails. The thought was quickly father to the deed and we approached Colonel Wyllie. He spoke to the 'Implacable' Committee and they made us a present of a complete suit of five sails and two spars with only one condition attached - that they be made good use of. We did not think there would be any difficulty about this.

With the kindly assistance of her late owner 'Afrina' was duly rigged and though the sails were not a perfect fit they served their purpose and with the great loose footed mainsail and two for'd of the mast she looked quite well and, what was more important, went quite well.

After a few practice runs 'Afrina' was sailed to Bosham where we were taking part in Association Swimming Sports. We won the sports and that night slept ten in 'Afrina' though she was only bunked for five. The bunks amidships were very wide and easily took two boys each. The rest were accommodated quite comfortably on the cabin floor.

It was too late that year to do much with 'Afrina' but in the Summer of the following year the G/S/M and five older boys spent a week sailing her about Chichester Harbour with the idea of getting experience in handling a twelve ton craft where nothing larger than

sixteen footer had been sailed before. On the second day out the late owner, Mr. Paxton, came aboard with the intention of piloting the Scouts round to Portsmouth but the weather was most unkind - strong winds and rain all afternoon - and after tacking from Bosham nearly to Hayling Island, the attempt was given up and the rest of the day was spent just sailing about. In the evening we hove to to drop Mr. Paxton on to his yacht, 'Swan', and it was while we were waiting for the dinghy to return that the tide, which runs very strong in these channels, swept 'Afrina' down towards the 'Swan' and before sailing way could be got on her, she brushed against 'Swan's' bowsprit doing a little damage. The dinghy was picked up and a start made to beat up stream. The first tack took us towards 'Swan' again and Mr. Paxton literally danced on deck in an agony of mind that we should again run into his vessel. But, having full way on 'Afrina', she came round well clear of the 'Swan' and the next tack took us well ^{clear} ~~away~~ ^{away} from her. After a long tack, shelter was reached in the lee of Thorney Island where we anchored for the night, donned dry clothes and prepared tea. The first attempt at tea had unfortunately left the cabin table for the floor when the vessel was brought hard round near 'Swan', much to the detriment of the crockery..

The next day, being calmer, a start was made for Emsworth and all went well until the channel between Pilsey Island and the "winner" sand bank was reached. These channels were not clearly marked and what few buoys there are are confusing until one knows

them well. 'Afrina's' crew didn't and the winner lived up to its name, the receding tide leaving yet another victim on its inhospitable sands. We had most of the day to learn the position of those buoys and I do not think we have ever been caught again. With the returning tide came the wind; straight through the harbour mouth abeam, cold and strong. How that boat rocked as she began to be water borne. Flip flop: flip flop, one side to the other. It was a marvel she did not fall to pieces - we on board nearly did and nothing we could do would stop her, as the water deepened so the rolling lessened and the dinghy broke away. Unnoticed, her painter had chafed through with the constant rubbing and there was our precious dinghy rapidly drifting away. Quickly the best swimmer on board took his clothes off and was over the side after her. He caught her up and climbed aboard about fifty yards or so away and soon brought her back to 'Afrina'. He was shivering with cold but we soon had him rubbed down and dry again. The dinghy was secured with a brand new 2" rope. We were taking no chances.

At long last 'Afrina' was fully afloat. We waited a while in case some of the sand was higher than it was where we were and then up sail and away through the gloom covering the two miles back to our haven under the trees of Thorney at a spanking pace. Here the anchors were dropped, sails stowed and supper got under way. After the turmoil of the wind and sea outside here was perfect peace with just the quiet swish of the tide against the boat's sides to accentuate it. The boys

who had been very quiet and quick to obey as is their way when danger threatens, were now chattering like a lot of magpies as they prepared the supper and got the sleeping places ready for the night. All was right with their world.

Next day in beautiful weather we made an easy passage to Emsworth and collected some badly needed provisions and refilled our water jars. Satisfying the inner man was becoming a major difficulty for appetites were becoming almighty big and we had not yet discovered what a boon to small boat sailers the tin opener is. Our catering was rather after the ordinary camp manner. From Emsworth we passed without incident to Dell Quay where we anchored at low tide in just enough water to float us and no more. The wind being in a favourable quarter we had passed through the mass of anchored craft off Itchenor without difficulty and beyond found comparatively empty water with the room to swing in which we liked for our peace of mind. It was here our cook, Ken, being short of fresh water tried sea water for cooking a spotted Dick. The experiment was most definitely not a success. We hoped the fishes liked it but the several dead seagulls we saw during the next few days were regarded not without some sense of guilt. We were incredibly happy-go-lucky in those early days but we did not have the equipment that was accumulated in later years and I still regard the mountain of equipment which is considered essential by the present day scout and his scoutmaster with a rather jaundiced eye. Anyway, never cook spotted Dick in sea water.

The early morning tide, receding further than that of the night before, caused 'Afrina' to heel over, throwing the sleepers in the starboard bunks violently onto the floor, and their lamentations were great. The cook came off best because he slept in a slung hammock in the galley.

Returning, the wind was against us and we dared not tack the 12 ton 'Afrina' with her great 10' bowsprit sticking out in front through all those pretty boats off Itchenor so we got a tow from the ship-yard.

It cost us ten shillings.

After discovering the difficulties of working a comparatively large craft in narrow waters it was decided to install a small engine and this was done largely by the Rovers and a local engineer. Much of the spade work had been done when the 'Afrina' was at Emsworth and the engine bed and prop casing were already in being. The motor installed was a four cylinder Morris car engine and the prop was connected direct. It was never the intention to use it a great deal but it would make us independent of the wind when there was none or it was dead ahead in a narrow channel. Although slow and unreliable it served its purpose on one occasion. Going to Portsmouth the wind proved light and the engine was used most of the way. We passed pleasantly enough down harbour and westward through the Solent about a mile off Hayling Island shore to the submarine barrier which stretches out from the Southsea shore to Horse Sand Fort. We passed through the Dolphins,

the opening in the barrier, and were approaching Spit Sand Fort off Portsmouth Harbour entrance, when the engine failed. Basil, our ^{ADRY} engineer, reported the plugs would have to be cleaned which would take a little time so, as we appeared to be drifting in shore and there was no wind, the order was given to lower anchor. I should say here that the anchor had a long length of chain but to allow for the deeper waters round Portsmouth this had been lengthened by rope. The wind, perverse as ever, presently rose and became quite fresh so the sail was hoisted and an attempt was made to raise the anchor. The slack came in but then pull as we might no further progress was made. Pull as we would, it would not shift. The members of the crew below were called to help and the whole crew pulled for all they were worth while the great mainsail flapped violently and the boat yawed to and fro. Presently, the rope added to the anchor chain, which could not have been too sound, gave way and 'Afrina's' whole crew fell over backwards in a struggling heap and no doubt the chain fell to join the anchor caught in some cable or wreckage on the sea floor. Presumably it is there still. The flurry of wind soon dropped again but the engine came to life and took us up harbour to the 'Implacable' where we borrowed a nearby Naval mooring for the night. Next morning we tied up alongside 'Froudroyant'.

'Afrina' gave the Scouts several years of excellent fun. She was an ideal boat for Sea Scouts being rough and roomy but she was an old boat and the batterings she received at various times did her no

Good. She came ashore once in a gale similar to that of 1935 but not quite so bad. By ill chance her mooring chain had been shortened by a local yachtsman - and member of the Sea Scout Committee - because she had swung across the narrow channel and impeded passage. The gale came next night and 'Afrina' just picked up her mooring and carried it ashore. She was left high and dry well above the reach of any normal tide and the only way to get her back into the water was by making a heavy wooden cradle under her; removing the shingle and pulling it down with a traction engine. This great work was done mainly by two fathers of the Group. Also the fact that she was moored where the water went right out meant that she was alternately drying out in the sun and then getting wet again which did her no good. She leaked badly and her mast was showing signs of rot. We removed it and for two years she did duty as a floating raft for swimming and such like activities and then, in another gale, she came ashore for the last time. This was in winter 1944 and Scoutmasters were few and far between. She was left on shore with the vague idea that something would have to be done with her sometime when time and assistance permitted and then, weeks afterwards, it was noticed that she was gradually disappearing. Every time one saw her there was a little less of her than the previous time. It was seldom that anyone was seen near her but she was definitely fading away. It was most uncanny. In the end I gave some Scouts a cart and horse to break up and collect what was left which they did with great gusto, bringing in two loads.

Victory celebrations accounted for a lot of things! Poor 'Afrina'. She had been a fine boat and no doubt with better care she would be floating yet but I know some members of the Committee sighed with relief at her passing. I don't think they considered her really seaworthy.

Much of her ballast was made up of old time cannon balls.

VARIOUS OCCASIONS

"Dear Lovely Bowers of Innocence and Ease;
 Seats of my youth when every sport could please."

Goldsmith.

As a group we do not seem to have mixed very much with other

Groups although we have always made a point of attending all our local Association functions in force and having at least a representative party at other Scout activities which are within reasonable distance.

The "Victory" week-ends on board the old 'Implacable' with a service on board H.M.S. 'Victory' were popular before the war. Here we used to join forces with some 200 other Sea Scouts from a wide area and have an enjoyable time under the benign leadership of Admiral Thesiger. The first of these was particularly memorable because it was entirely new to everyone and obviously experience was lacking as to how a large number of boys, mostly strangers to each other and under a very loose discipline, would react to such completely novel surroundings.

Admiral Thesiger took sole charge and during the Saturday afternoon and evening the ship's company was assembled at rather frequent intervals to his little trumpet's call, fallen in on deck, given their orders - often of the negative type - and dismissed. Orders were that the boys would sling their hammocks on the main deck and Scoutmasters and Rovers away in the Orlop deck below. Naturally the boys and most of the Scouters had never seen a hammock before, never mind slung one, so cheerful chaos reigned for some time before all the hammocks were slung and the boys had finished experimenting at getting in and rolling out. At long last all was quiet - but not for long. All Scoutmasters knew

what tenderfeet are like the first night in camp and here we had two hundred tenderfeet so far as these sleeping conditions were concerned. No one had very much sleep that night; the Admiral least of all. A murmur would gradually swell to general chatter and soon to uproar and then a blast on the trumpet and a stentorian roar with a flow of nautical comments would bring silence again. This happened on several occasions. It was most unfortunate that just after they were silenced on one occasion and the Admiral hardly back in his bunk, the ship's cat had to mi-ow from some point below the hammocks. This was naturally greeted with loud applause. - Boys can be horrid little beasts on occasion.

Apart from some caustic comments little was said next morning and to the trumpet's call we spent a pleasant lazy morning and the Admiral played tag with the boys. After dinner the steam launch took 'Implacable's' temporary crew down harbour to the dockyard where we boarded Nelson's 'Victory' and squatted on the upper deck for an address by Admiral the Earl of Cork and Orrery and a service and renewal of the Scout Promise led by Admiral Thesiger who was a Scout and County Commissioner for Hampshire. Then a march to the Naval Cantonment at the Barracks, with the Admiral optimistically endeavouring to keep the boys in step with his "Now you've got it, mind you keep it, don't you lose it, left." Tea and we dispersed our various ways. Owing to insistent demands that we should stop for ice creams we missed two trains and it was an exceedingly tired party of Scouts who in due

course found their homes and told their parents of all the new and interesting things they had done.

It was while waiting for our third train - safely in the waiting room this time - that I discussed with the older boys the formation of a Rover crew. I was so tired I was anxious to get rid of some of them.

I think it was after the second of these week-ends that certain members of our troop purchased a Marks and Spencers' tin bugle and sent it to Admiral Thesiger with their love. In his reply he thanked them but thought he would continue to use his own as it was very efficient. He sent his signed photograph which still holds an honoured place in the troop Log.

These 'Victory' week-ends, as they came to be called, were at first simple affairs and most of the boys attending spent the previous night on the 'Implacable' as described and the service was held under the tall masts of the upper deck; all comfortably seated round the quarterdeck with the principals grouped aft. Later it was more highly organised and ever changing time took the 'Implacable' and high costs reduced the number of those who took advantage of spending the week-end on her sister ship, the 'Foudroyant'. The Scouts now rally in St. George's Square and march to the 'Victory' behind a Naval band. With them a large body of Rangers also attend and Commissioners and their wives and others making up a large company who are seated in the lower Gun deck. The service is taken by the Port

Chaplain and attended by the C. in C. Portsmouth, who reads the Lesson. It is now a minor Naval Occasion but in those wonderful surroundings, in the unaccustomed company of large numbers of their fellows and addressed by travelled, understanding men, many of whom have themselves a distant Scout background, it can be a stirring and memorable occasion to the individual boy. - *Associated*

In June 1937, through the kind offices of our good friend Col. Harold Wyllie, Commandant of the 'Implacable', ten members of the troop had the honour of being present at the Review of the Fleet at Spithead. Travelling to Portsmouth in two cars the previous afternoon, we boarded the 'Implacable's' launch in the dockyard and duly arrived at that grand old ship to find that apart from a small party of boys from Manchester, of all places, we were the only Scouts. There were a number of Sea Cadets. Perhaps there were fifty of us all told. 'Implacable' provided supper and breakfast and we had brought, as directed, a packed lunch to take out with us on the morrow.

Leaving 'Implacable' after breakfast, a Naval Trawler took the party down harbour and out to Spithead. A whistle, which we had been hearing all the morning was explained when we approached the Royal Yacht and had to stand to attention for the space between two points. How Their Majesties must have wearied of that incessant whistle for the harbour was very crowded and there was a continual stream of vessels passing and re-passing. Reaching Spithead we were transferred, by means of a launch and in choppy water, from the Trawler to the veteran

Battleship 'Iron Duke' and joined her company, already swollen with R.N. Cadets from Dartmouth, for the day. We had not been on board so very long when a request came from the bridge that the Scout sitting on the Quarterdeck be removed. Robin was duly removed to his more humble station forward.

In addition to housing us the Navy apparently considered it its duty to feed us for at midday we were bidden to an excellent meal of roast beef and vegetables. Actually the food we brought with us and that which the 'Implacable' unexpectedly issued was appreciated later on because we did not leave the ship until gone midnight.

Came the afternoon and the Scouts manned ship with the other members of the ship's company. Spithead was filled with scores of Warships, big and small, including representatives of foreign navies, all anchored in long lines. A truly wonderful sight. About 3 o'clock a great procession started headed by the Royal Yacht, the 'Victoria and Albert', and her attendant craft which passed up and down the long lines of vessels to the accompaniment of vigorous cheers from each ship she passed. After the Royal Yacht came a pause when the Ship's company was stood at ease for a short while until the next group of vessels came in sight when we would be called to attention and led in further cheers for the unknown Dignitaries of State, Officials or Foreign Embassies who happened to be passing. So it went on for some two hours while group after group of vessels passed along the lines each to be received with due respect and loud hurrahs until we at least were hoarse

ROYAL YACHT IS PRECEDED BY TWENTY HO. VESSELS ALWAYS.

and weary and very glad of the interspersed short rests. There were quite a number of casualties but the Scout party stood the strain to a man. After the official ships came scores of cross Channel steamers and such, all packed solid with people - scores of ships of all shapes and sizes; hundreds and hundreds of people taking this unique opportunity of seeing their Navy en masse and at such close quarters. It was a wonderful sight but not so wonderful as when the flood gates were really opened and, one would have thought, all the smaller ships of the world came by in a great procession; a really wonderful panorama of colour and movement, of dignity and impudence, passing through the lines of manned but now silent, grey Warships. Stately yachts and small motor boats, dinghies with outboards, dinghies under oars and even canoes, came by in an unending flow until the evening was well advanced and then it stopped as suddenly as it had started just as though someone had turned off a tap. In a sense someone presumably had. Never could one imagine such a review without actually seeing it and we were in the stalls.

After dusk the firework display was a truly wonderful sight and a remarkable piece of organisation considering the number of vessels from which the fireworks were released and the symmetry of the effort. In only one ship was the timing at fault. In the Russian cruiser every discharge would come a few ^{seconds} minutes late. So regular was this that it would appear as though it was done intentionally. The sailors became noisy as the proceedings progressed and after each fresh

discharge of fireworks would come, not only from our ship but apparently from all the assembled Fleet, a yell of "Come on Trotsky" and as though in answer to the call the Russian fireworks would go up to be greeted with delighted cheering from all directions. They were definitely one of the high lights of the evening.

After a long wait, when we ate the last of our spare lunches, a launch collected our party but in the multitude of ships and lights it lost its bearings and we wandered about for some time before we were finally dumped on board some silent vessel, the outermost of three lying alongside some quay in the dockyard. After a scramble we got on shore, formed up and marched, glad of the exercise, at a fine pace through a silent, deserted dockyard at one o'clock in the morning. Our car, which we had hopefully left in an odd corner the day previous was found safe. As we had but the one, the boys sat round on the lowered hood and so with ten up and to the astonished glares of the innumerable police on the route, we joined the head to tail procession of cars which was making its slow way home from Southsea beach and so to bed.

Hiking forms a large part of the outdoor side of Scouting even in a Sea Scout troop and living within a few miles of that wonderful range of low hills, peculiarly known as the Downs, our boys spend several long week-ends most years in travelling over them on foot, feeling the charm and the wonder of this unique part of our country; visiting the lovely downland villages, attending their

churches and meeting a type of people less urbanised than those they are accustomed to. In these open spaces they learn to fend for themselves, cooking their own food, sleeping in tent or barn or even under the wide expanse of Heaven; discover the friendliness and helpfulness of the real countryman, living away from towns and usually ready to assist a traveller even, or perhaps particularly, when he comes in the form of a lad clad in the blue or khaki of a Scout.

On one Easter hike four pairs of Scouts were dropped by bus at various points near the hills north of Chichester. Each pair collected their sealed instructions from some point or cottage previously given and proceeded as directed, noting times, weather, mileage and anything else of interest for their log. In addition their instructions would tell them to watch for some things in particular or find and explore some point of interest such as ^{an} historic site, a ^{hilly} ~~hilly~~ or even just a peculiar name taken from the map. All they having to go on being, perhaps, a reference number. On this particular occasion some of the boys were not very experienced at being entirely on their own for the greater part of two days and a night so each pair were, quite accidentally of course, met at various points by a Scoutmaster on cycle or motorcycle just to make sure all was well. Sometimes the Scoutmaster kept in the background and his presence was not known to the boys. When the time table slipped and the boys could not be found where they were supposed to be, some detective work had to be done to discover what had happened to them but they usually turned up sooner or

later. On one occasion difficulty was caused by a local Commissioner coming along in his car and, in all innocence, offering a lift which was too much for any tired boy with a heavy load to refuse. The cycling shadower did catch a glimpse of his jubilant charges disappearing into the distance at many miles per hour. They forgot to mention it in their log!

This type of hike usually ran to the same pattern. On the Saturday each pair of Scouts would walk 6-8 miles from their bus, head to where sleeping arrangements had been made, if it ~~was~~^{was} early in the year, or where they could find pitching ground if Summer. On the Sunday they would attend Divine Service at the local church, cook their meal and then across country again to the general meeting place, usually on Linch Down near Midhurst, where the Group had a pied-a-terre. Another one or two days camp would be followed by a twelve mile cross-country hike home. This time all together.

Let us look at some extracts from one of the logs:-

"17.00. Walked across the field to Calloway's Farm. A lady in one of the cottages told us that the lady next door had a tent for us. You should have seen Tiddle's face drop for I had been telling him about a smashing little room we had slept in on our Christmas hike. Went next door and were given tent. They were very nice people indeed and we asked if there ~~was~~^{was} any suitable place to pitch it. He told us that all the land round was very boggy but said ~~we~~^{we} could have the little room we had at Christmas. Tiddle's face lit up.

17.30. Collected some wood for the fire. It was mainly hawthorn ---- we soon had our fire going and tea ready.

18.00 Had tea consisting of tomato soup, baked beans and cocoa, biscuits, cake and half tin of rhubarb ---- went to collect straw for our beds.

---- Tiddles snores and whistles.

04.30. Woke up. It was very cold and Tiddles, who was already awake, agreed we should relight the fire.

04.45. Had a fire going.

05.00. Had a lovely cup of warm cocoa and decided we should take turns to keep fire in.

05.10. My watch began.

05.40. Tiddles' watch began ----.

06.30. Got up and cooked breakfast. Had bacon and egg, cereals and cocoa.

07.00. ---- Made Samwiches (~~and~~^s) for dinner, put them in billy with half tin of rhubarb.

07.45. ---- emptied straw and took sacks back ---- borrowed broom ---- had good wash in hot water ---- took broom back and thanked them very much for everything.

10.20. Arrived at Graffham ---- went into church. The Vicar was a Scoutmaster. They first tolled a deep bell, then a high bell. The Vicar came and spoke to us. It was a lovely service. Took down numbers of hymns and lessons as instructed.

12.50. ---- we saw a rabbit which had been snared. Tiddles said that I could have the rabbit if he could have the snare so that was settled.

And so on over Heyshott Down and above Cocking village with rather heavy going until they arrived at Linch Down and met the other wayfarers at 15.45. "

Not bad for boys of 14-15 years.

Another Whitsun Adventure was run on much the same lines though they joined in a District game on the Friday and slept that night in tents near that ancient home of Neolithic man, Kingley Vale and Bow hill, north west of Chichester. Next day they went their various ways in pairs and sleeping according to their luck; some in comfortable buildings and some in ghostly, creaking old barns with moonlight fingers stabbing through chinks in the walls. One pair were invited to a fine tea in the farmer's house and watched television afterwards. Another pair were offered an uncleaned bull box which they rightly declined and, late as it was, continued their journey to Linch Down where some Scouters were already in camp. On Sunday a Scouts Own Service was held in that wonderfully ancient little church of Didling, isolated among the hills and far from any dwelling. The Lesson was read by a Schoolmaster from Somerset who had been a scout in the group years previous and the Group Scoutmaster spoke of appreciation of the wonderful country in which the Group had its being and over which it could roam and of the pleasant waters of Chichester Harbour and the Solent on which they could sail: of the kindness and friendliness of

most people if they are approached in the right manner and of their willingness to co-operate with Scouts - even if sometimes only to the extent of uncleaned Bull pens.

SCOUTS OF ALL AGES

"On parent knees, a naked newborn child,
weeping thou sat'st while all around thee smiled:
So live that, sinking to thy life's last sleep,
Calm thou may'st smile while all around thee weep."
From the Persian.
? SA Wm. Jones 1746-1774

In any community of human beings there will be a large range of character and possibly in a Scout Group this is likely to be more evident than in most because of the freer and self expressive nature of the organisation. All ranks intermingle and express their opinions and ideas so freely that any latent trait of character is more likely to develop and express itself than be suppressed.

Possibly this has something to do with the fact that with us the majority of what we call "Birds of passage", that is boys who join but after a few months or perhaps even a year, will; usually gradually but sometimes suddenly, stop coming, are usually boys of subdued and colourless nature. Be that as it may, it is my experience that the majority and I repeat, the majority, of boys who stay in the troop for four or five years are of fairly strong character.

Brian was an evacuee from Southampton who came to us a pale faced, quiet lad of twelve who, outwardly, was of the wouldn't-say-boo-to-a-geese type. The first time he came down channel in the boats he fell on landing and badly injured his arm so that it was in a sling for weeks. During the next two years this lad became a Patrol Leader of fair ability; would perform some foolish stunt before his fellows at camp fires and was a good seaman. In wide games, if closely pursued by his opponents he would often take to the mud or water, carrying his

clothes, if he had time to remove them, and from a safe distance would stand in a freezing cold evening and jeer at his baffled enemies, yapping like a lot of hounds at the water's edge. If some of them braved the cold and waded after him he would go right in and swim well out and there wait until they tired and departed for easier quarry.

^{Joe} Cyril was the scapegoat of his family. His father, impressed by the manners and bearing of a Sea Scout he had met, brought the boy along in the hope that the troop could cope with him. His elder brother was doing well in a secondary school but ^{Joe} Cyril, started in an elementary school, showed such poor promise that the father did not feel himself justified in going to the expense of the better education until there was sign of improvement. As a cure for that old failing of boys, an untidy bedroom, father had tried Naval discipline. Early each morning he would enter his son's bedroom and, rather as though the boy was a ship's company and addressing him by his surname, he would call him to attention and with the boy standing strictly to attention, would inspect first the boy himself and then his room. If all was well the parade was dismissed. If all was not well then there was trouble. It must have been a cheerful household on such mornings.

^{Joe} Cyril had more than six miles to cycle to come to troop meetings and come wet or fine he very seldom failed to turn up. Many a time he arrived soaked through and would spend the evening in odds and ends of garments while his own clothes dried. He always arrived 15-20 minutes early and his favourite occupation until the meeting

started was to 'scrap' with anyone willing to oblige. If the Scoutmaster was willing to join in so much the better and ^{Joe} ~~Carl~~ would employ his very effective tackle of throwing himself on the floor and wrapping himself round his senior's leg or legs and clinging on like a blood-sucker.

^{Joe} ~~Carl~~ had an extraordinary influence on his fellows and, for good or bad, even those older than he was would follow him like a flock of sheep.

It was he who was mainly responsible for the minor revolt which occurred one Saturday afternoon when the Scouters were absent and headquarters more or less wrecked. His disgrace lasted some six months and when he returned his father celebrated by providing all the provisions for the New Year party with apples and oranges for everyone.

He was a likeable lad but with him we failed. We lacked experience for handling such and probably the Navy, to which he ultimately went, was the best place for him.

A.C.2. White came to us with some knowledge of Scouting from a nearby aerodrome and was an Assistant Scoutmaster for two to three years. He was a great burly fellow with the kindest of hearts who would put up with any amount of ragging - which he often got. For a time during the war he was my only assistant and so was doubly welcome. Quite early on he attended a Rover Moot in Scotland from which he returned with a kilt and a broad Scotch accent both of which he retained for the whole of his time with us which was unusual for he seldom kept

anything for very long; not even his rank which seemed to fluctuate A.C.2., Corporal and Sergeant. One was never quite sure which he would be when next we met and the alteration would not necessarily be upward. For some reason he was always known locally as Major White. He was an excellent camp cook and we greatly missed him when he was posted elsewhere.

Long after leaving us he appeared at my door one warm Summer day, very hot, very dusty and very weary. He was a Sergeant again and had grown a shaggy moustache and behind him, on a string, trailed a small dejected puppy! I never saw him again.

It must be unusual to have among a collection of boys one who is completely and universally unpopular; yet Alfred was such a one. He joined when fifteen years old - much older than is usual - and he was old both in actual years and in manner. Being the only son of comparatively elderly parents and being in daily contact with them had made him both in outlook and speech beyond his years. He was no stranger to the majority of the boys, attending, as he did, the same school in a nearby town. In those days the troop was small in numbers but made up for that by being extremely tough. They rebelled against law and order one day and wrecked the headquarters. The two ring-leaders had to be dismissed and they departed rejoicing. Months later two penitent boys asked to be taken back as they "Could not find anything to do". They returned with loss of their seniority and one was a good Scout and one was not.

When Alfred was made Patrol Leader there was nearly another rebellion and it was only with difficulty a patrol was formed.

Gradually, as some of the older boys passed into the Navy (which 75% of them did pre-war) and younger ones came, things settled down and Alfred became Troop Leader and Assistant Scoutmaster and a very tough Sergeant Instructor in the Home Guard in the gentle art of self

defence. Later still he was our first Scoutmaster for Senior Scouts; efficient and popular. He took his boys rough sailing and to Jamborees and they were well content.

Pindy was a very different kettle of fish. He was an ex Army man of some rank and P.T. Instructor to boot and, although he now held a lowly position in life, had an exaggerated opinion of his own importance and an extremely pompous manner. He was a fine gymnast and used to help with the boys for tumbling. One evening I had to leave them entirely to his tender mercies and next morning I was greeted with "Good morning. I am extremely sorry to have to inform you that you now have no troop." I never got the full story but the boys had apparently departed somewhat hurriedly and held a laud and uncomplimentary protest meeting in the middle of the road.

On another occasion a boy with hands in pockets and cap on head passed him and wished him good morning. His cap was violently removed and he was told to "Raise your cap when you speak to a gentleman."

Pindy's son was in the Scouts and whenever he came to the door

*Much later a
Scout Commissioner
in Somerset*

would ask in a high pitched 'superior' voice "Is my Scoutmaster in?". By chance a stranger to the village asked him if he knew where the Scoutmaster lived and Junior expressed in no uncertain manner his astonishment that anyone should be so ignorant as not to know where his Scoutmaster lived.

In the course of time Mr. Pindy departed but sometime later he turned up during a troop meeting and asked to speak with me. He had joined the Oxford Group Movement and for reasons connected with this he was going round all the people whom he considered he had wronged and making his apologies. With me he had apparently been insubordinate - "For the first time in my life". He had just come from a man whom he had, on some occasion, knocked down so I thought I had got off rather lightly.

These notes on personalities of Scout life would not be complete without some reference to those men whose lives have been spent in very different spheres of activities but who come forward in their retirement, cheerfully don a type of garment they probably have not worn for forty years and manfully wrestle with the problems of a new generation. That grand old man Colonel W.J. Keen, sometime County Commissioner for Sussex, though past his three score years and ten, would come during the war years forty or fifty miles on the top of a bus to visit an outlying troop and give, with his happy face and cheerful word, encouragement to those who were doing what they could for the country's youth. He was interested in everything, even

climbing a ladder to inspect a Scouts' lookout in a tree thirty feet above the ground. I shall always recall him perched precariously on the step of a moving bus, shorts and coat blowing in the wind, waving, to us, his last farewell. To such men as he; and there are many of them; Scouting owes much and I for one give them my homage.

WAR EXPERIENCE

"When the blast of war blows in our ears"

A country troop is unlikely to have the experiences of thrill and terror of its urban counterpart; even when placed, as we are, near a major Naval base, very close to an airfield and on one of the enemy's regular air routes into this country. An old lady told me at the commencement of the war that our village was quite safe and would not suffer from enemy action and she was perfectly correct. We had our share of alarms and excitements but our only bombs all failed to explode and a cascade of incendiaries missed all our thatched roofs in an incredible manner and did no harm. Falling planes almost skimmed our roof tops but always hit the earth at least half a mile away. Indeed the hail of shell splinters from our own guns was probably our greatest real danger.

When the Home Guard was formed the Scouts were asked to provide a "Rousing party" which they did very successfully. The Commander would rouse two boys living near him. They would rouse another four in various directions and then each boy would call out the men in his allotted section radiating from H/Q about 1½ miles or perhaps a little more. Their lists of names were brought up to date each month and the scheme worked very well. There were a number of practice runs and one genuine call out during the invasion scare. This was about eleven o'clock on a very dark night, during an air raid and heavy gunfire. The boys then had not been issued with tin hats as they were

later. The men were quickly assembled and the only casualty was Ian's cycle which hit something or as he insisted, was hit by a heavy piece of splinter. Anyway the front wheel was smashed and Ian landed in the road rather violently. He picked himself up and with great presence of mind, commandeered a cycle from someone who went to assist him and finished his round. His cycle was "officially" repaired for him.

Those lovely days of that wonderful Summer of 1940 were frequently besmirched by enemy aircraft and the air raid warnings and the sight of planes twisting and turning high up in the blue were commonplace occurrences. So too became the sight of the local aerodrome being attacked or the distant view of Portsmouth burning and all mixed up with the roar of the guns, the ghostly light of the flares and the hum of aircraft. Sometimes planes would crash fairly close and perhaps burn for some considerable time and often several white parachutes could be seen descending against the blue of the Summer sky. Certainly we had front seats for this stage of the war. One felt very exposed when caught out in the boats by a raid. On one occasion a number of our boys were bathing when some German planes on a terror raid came over and machine gunned them. Out of the water and into the ditch behind the sea wall was the work of a moment and never have I seen boys so scared as they were when they came to tell me about it. Fortunately none ^{was} hit. We often had these terror raiders in the evenings and had reason to bless the ditches and banks. On one

occasion one of these planes was hit and crash-landed in a private park a few miles inland. People from the house rushed over to it when it exploded, killing several of them.

One evening two of our planes collided just overhead. One - a fighter - crashed about a mile away on a small open space largely surrounded by houses and a gasometer: a miraculous escape from sudden and violent death for a number of people. The other - a Hudson - broke into two and the tail piece, slowly twisting round and round, fell quite slowly, almost leisurely, into the mud of the creek one hundred or so yards off shore. The tide being out a number of us waded out and by the light of a searchlight played across the desolate mudland, endeavoured to extricate the rear gunner who we could see slumped over his weapon. It took us some while as he was trapped by the feet and none of us knew anything about aeroplanes. At last he came out minus one boot - a large and heavy young man who was half carried, half dragged, to the shore where a small crowd of civilians and service men were waiting. I shall always remember the apparently casual manner of the immaculately dressed R.A.F. doctor who lifted the man's eyelid and immediately gave his verdict and departed. To us death was more of a stranger.

In contrast to all this, sailing in the harbour was wonderfully peaceful although sometimes a plane would come right down almost to water level to have a look at us. We had permission from the Canadian Military Authorities to sail these waters and where normally there

would be scores of craft now the wide waters would usually be as innocent of sail as any uninhabited land. Occasionally a fisherman or an R.A.F. launch, and once in a while a Naval craft, would pass up channel but for the most part we had these lovely waters entirely to ourselves and the boys would play on the sands of Easthead and in and out of the water like so many mermen - and usually as innocent of clothing. Sometimes a couple of strangers would be spotted coming along from the landward side and then what a scramble for bathing slips and shorts. On one occasion ^{at East Head,} three young girls in bathing costumes were seen approaching before they got to a bend in the shore and the boys went into hiding in the rough grass and scrub above the sands. When the girls reached the firm sand below where the Scouts were hiding they started to dance and continued to do so for some ten minutes and on those yellow sands before the sparkling blue waters with a distant backcloth of Pilsey sands, trees and the far off hills, it might have been on any island in the Southern Seas. The beauty of the scene even impressed the boys and they made no sound until the girls had passed on, quite unaware that they had had an audience.

Between Pilsey Island and Hayling Island lies a large expanse of sand which is exposed at low tide. Here and elsewhere strange tubular erections grew between one visit down channel and the next. When the water was in they looked like a partly submerged forest and rather terrifying to sail near. Later on these quiet beaches were used for rehearsing 'D' day landings and many and strange

were the obstacles left behind. Twice boats were put onto hidden iron erections which made great holes in the planking which had to be stuffed with clothing to get the boats home.

The Group Scoutmaster, as A.R.P. Warden, had some amusing experiences. Late one evening I knocked on the cottage door of an old lady who was showing a light in an upstairs window. She had difficulty with the blind and would I come upstairs and put it right: so upstairs I went. The old lady had a humped back and outwardly was the personification of the fairy tale witch and as I entered the bedroom I was rather staggered to see, curled up in the middle of the bed, a black cat! I had to have a glass of her home-made wine of which she was very proud and which, for some unknown reason, she kept in her bedroom. So, sitting on her bed in that dimly lighted, eerie room and surrounded by the black cat and most intimate articles of bedroom furniture, I drank elderberry wine.

It was this old dear who, one dark night, took a basin of hot soup across to an astonished sentry on duty across the way with the request that he should take it over to Mrs. White who was unwell!

Distant gunfire can make its presence felt in vibration rather than by sound. A lady of our acquaintance, who had the peculiar habit of doing the greater part of her housework round about the witching hour, was on one occasion disturbed by her front door violently rattling at about one o'clock in the morning. She

called out but the only reply was another rattle. This went on for some time with the lady becoming more and more alarmed and quite certain some villain was endeavouring to force his way in. In desperation she rang up the police who did not take her very seriously. They were probably rather confused as the good soul, who had a genius for becoming involved, carried on a two way conversation with the police and the door for some time before they agreed to send a constable round.

An ill-fitting door could feel the air vibrations which were not audible to the human ear. It was the night of Dieppe.

Casualties among old Scouts started early with Cecil and Ted who went down in the Royal Oak in Scapa Flow. Later Brian in the Submarine Thunderer and 'Tubby' in his destroyer in the Mediterranean, Len in a tank accident and several others that we know of.

"Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day
BUT cast one longing lingering look behind"

BEING RECOGNITION

PUBLIC OCCASIONS

"God gave us memories that we might have
roses in December"

Prior to the war some scheme of Admiralty Recognition was in being under which Sea Scout Troops, inspected and approved by the Admiralty, were paid a small capita grant. This was revised at the beginning of the war when a new scheme, known as the 'Y' Scheme, came into force with the backing of Scout Headquarters and troops entering were inspected annually by a Naval Officer and, if approved, were officially 'Recognised' and accepted under the department of a gentleman known as A.C.R. - Admiral Commanding Reserver. A capita grant is paid to the Sea Scout department of Imperial Headquarters.

Boys entering the Navy from recognised groups were given the advantage of the preliminary training they had received in the Sea Scouts and so started their Naval careers a step or two up the ladder. In addition they were supposed to be favourably placed for promotion if their subsequent progress warranted it. When available - which somewhat naturally was not often in wartime - stores were to be issued on loan or outright to recognised troops.

We applied for Recognition in 1942 and in due course, and after much priming from H/Q all was set for the first inspection. A smart Scout was despatched to the station to meet the Inspecting Officer and conduct him to his lodgings and again later to escort him to our Scout Quarters. In accordance with instructions received all

the boys, about forty of them, were found split up into groups: each group under an instructor of some kind: a Patrol Leader perhaps, or a Scoutmaster or even a lay helper. To each group the I.O. went in turn, looking at their work and asking questions, perhaps telling a short yarn to illustrate a point. As there were seven or eight groups this took some time and I could see the boys condemned to do knotting or compass or such for over an hour, were getting restless but they bore up manfully and presently they were formed up outside for marching - not a very strong point with Scouts as a rule. This finished routine and the next item was at our discretion. A large mast had been erected in a nearby field and the boys did sail drill. The I.O. was very pleased. He said he had never seen sail drill done on land before! Afterwards everyone sat down while he spoke to them and spun a yarn and generally made friends. He was a fatherly soul and a good sort and he was welcomed as a friend on the next two occasions he came to us. He put in an excellent report. Indeed we were a little ungrateful in privately thinking it perhaps a little too good as he absentmindedly gave us credit for musketry and astronomy.

A few years later a younger and stricter Inspecting Officer came. Not having heard anything to the contrary we received him as usual with the boys split up into groups. Unfortunately this was not approved and he retired while the Scouts were hurriedly fallen in. He then made a second entry and was received with the dignity due to an inspecting Naval Officer. ^{holding the King's Commission.} After the Flag break ceremony and a, albeit kindly, lecture on how it should be done in proper Naval manner,

routine inspection of the boys took place and passed smoothly although an eagle eye did not miss much and rather searching questions concerning badges and the correct wearing of the same not only put the Scoutmasters on their metal but also indicated considerable study of Scout regulations on the part of the I.O. The round of instruction groups passed off without incident apart from two boys who, for lack of an instructor who had failed us, had been hurriedly set to erect a tent. This was pronounced as non-naval and looked at from a point of interest only. For the usual show piece a working Breeches Buoy was erected. This was not done as well as the boys could do it but it was accepted and he seemed pleased. After supper he returned to his lodgings which were with a brother Naval Officer and if I knew anything of that household he was well mellowed before retiring. Anyway he gave a good report. On this same gentleman's report the following year, the County Commissioner noted that it was the first inspection report he had ever seen in which every item was marked good, very good or excellent. So perhaps we did not do so badly after all.

We have always kept these occasions private to ourselves with at most one local Commissioner or, on one occasion, two Sea Scout Committee members. I believe some groups make more of a Public Occasion of the ceremony. I am told the Sea Scouts of one of our famous cities even have the Mayor and Corporation in attendance which must make it extremely difficult for the Inspecting Officer. On one occasion several of the hierarchy of Scouting in the County wished to

attend. The day was one of the wettest I have ever known. It rained incessantly and two hours before the time of the inspection a telegram was received cancelling the parade on the grounds that it was not right to ask the boys to attend in such weather. I expect it would be easier to cancel a large number of Naval personnel from attending a ceremony at very short notice. Not so forty boys scattered over several square miles of country. They arrived on time, wet but determined. The one Commissioner whom we had not been able to contact did not receive the news of the cancellation of the official parade with the pleasure the boys did. He was quite peevish although we did what we could for him.

From a Scoutmaster's point of view these Admiralty Inspections serve a purpose. It is not that they ever gave us much in a material sense. Only on one occasion did we receive stores - a very useful consignment of ropes and signalling apparatus together with six colossal great iron snatch blocks which would have held a battleship and which the average boy could lift only with the greatest difficulty. No, the real advantage lies in the opportunity and justification it presents annually to the Scoutmaster to smarten the troop up a little both in appearance and seamanship and to get in some team work which, without this object in view, might not make any great appeal to the Scout. A boy will put up with drudgery in preparation for an object which he thinks justifies it, which he would jib at if that objective was not there. Not that he holds an Inspecting Officer

in any great awe. The modern boy has not the veneration for his elders and betters that the older generations had and accepts the individual entirely on his face value. In a recent inspection afloat the Inspecting Officer said he would like to see some swimming. In a few minutes he was the rather disconsolate looking centre of some forty naked but quite unabashed boys who were joyfully making the most of an unexpected break in a tiring evening programme.

In this age of little faith and many distractions going to church is not one of the more popular activities in a Scout Group. Not many clergy have the gift of making the church service attractive or their sermon interesting to the young; and few will go to church for any reason other than a sense of duty or for an occasion of special significance. Our boys will turn out in force on two occasions in the year - St. George's Day Parade in Chichester and the Remembrance Service in our local church. For these occasions we can turn out 50 - 60 Scouts and Cubs but for the normal monthly attendance 10 - 12 is the usual muster. For the Remembrance Service we do expect all who can to come. We march to church with colours and wreath; deposit the colours near the altar; shiver round the Memorial; get a little tied up with caps and salutes during the anthem and duly return to H/Q well shepherded by the Scouters who make valiant but not very successful efforts to keep all to one step and some show of dressing in the ranks. Marching never was a very strong point among Scouts.

When in camp new communicants are encouraged to attend Holy

Communion at the nearest church and a number of vicars of isolated country parishes must have been surprised to find a small number of Sea Scouts among those attending their early morning Service. Some of these clergymen stop to talk to the boys afterwards - a fact which is usually faithfully entered in their log later on; often with appreciation. The presence of the troop in a strange church is often acknowledged by the vicar who may address a few words to them from the pulpit before his sermon or meet them as they go out and have a short chat with them. I do think boys appreciate this. At Shalfleet in the Isle of Wight the vicar leaned against the old box pews in which we sat and spoke directly to the boys for fully a quarter of an hour in the middle of the Service. While the theme of his talk was covetousness he so dressed it with stories from his experience, brought in everyday and camp life that he made them laugh and held their interest in a way I have never seen done in church before. This talk was presumably entirely impromptu. There was nothing of the sermon about it and it was addressed to the boys with the main congregation temporarily ignored. Then, almost before one realised it, he was back in the service again chanting something which we could not follow for it was very High Church. We were sent out before the Communion into which the Matins was to merge and we departed content and without that feeling of relief which so often can follow a church service.

On one occasion the troop arrived late for a Cathedral Service in Chichester. We silently lined up at the back of a very

crowded nave and then, spotting a better position in the north aisle, quietly crept there where we remained, sans seats, for the rest of the service. A few days later a brand new football arrived for the boys as a gift from a lady in the congregation who had been impressed by the quiet and orderly assembly of the Scouts!

Theatricals are both fun and a headache. When we were very young we would embark on the production of a show with joyful freedom from doubt of our ability of producing something to which the public would not only come but even pay a small sum for the privilege of doing so and it must be admitted that on our home ground, be the show good or or poor, our youthful optimism was seldom disappointed. I remember the pleasure with which a newspaper cutting was received which stated that so and so had been a member of the Sea Scout Concert Party.

The advent of a talented Rover Scout Leader with his Rovers and the annual assistance of a musical and capable lady immensely improved the musical side of our performances and we began to be more ambitious and staged L. du Garde Peach's "Charcoal Burner's Son" with fair success. Later, the father of one of the Scouts arranged for four musical acquaintances to form a four piece orchestra which he conducted together with mass singing. With the tremendous fillip given by this expert assistance we staged a much improved "Charcoal Burner's Son" and also "Hearts are Trumps" by the same author. These were well received.

One of the big difficulties in staging variety shows of this nature is to avoid the gaps between acts. At the best boys are irres-

possible creatures and when this natural trait is coupled with the excitement of dressing and making up in terribly crowded conditions and a natural desire to watch what is going on on the stage, the answer can easily be chaos. To discover, after frantic search, that three 'actors' who are due to go onto the stage in a few minutes, are happily established at the back of the hall watching the performance; or to be accosted by a weird apparition for whom the audience is waiting who calmly informs you he is quite unable to find his beard or his wig or some other essential part of his make up, is guaranteed to upset the equilibrium of the most hardened and placid producer.

The chaos that can exist behind stage where, perhaps, upwards of thirty or more boys in various states of dress, undress or make up, and several helpers, are all milling round in two small changing rooms themselves littered with clothing and props, has to be seen to be believed. The occupants of these backstage changing rooms are truly cosmopolitan and usually a good cross section of the seven stages of man as well. A pleasant faced 'girl' might be having the finishing touches to her make up while close beside her a hoary ancient might be commenting with pride on the luxuriance of his facial fungus. In the further corner an all but nude piece of Greek statuary is receiving a final coat of whitening prior to public view. For marble it appears to be remarkably aware of the tickling qualities of the brush with which the whitening is being applied. Soldiers of a past but undated day rub shoulders with Kings and Queens and in that cheerful company

even ogres and villains are greeted with but grins and very Salome herself causes no more heartburn than subdued chuckles and calls of Good Old Sally.

Sometimes through the middle of this seething hive a passage will be hurriedly cleared and a continuous stream of lightly clad youth will pour unceremoniously through for the ten minutes of their tumbling act: The dressing rooms being the only means of passing from one side of the stage to the other unseen by the audience.

There was the occasion when the heavy footed but otherwise scantily dressed mock fairy was just prevented from going onto the stage with 'her' gauze dress quite transparent in the bright lights. There was the shocking occasion when two old Scouts were to put on an item which was to take place on a darkened stage. The curtain went up in complete darkness and the two performers were struck completely dumb. As they had not produced a copy of their act the curtain was duly lowered again without a word being spoken. Only on one other occasion was an act put on that had not been previously seen and that, in converse to the other, would not finish. Inane and entirely pointless cross talk went on and on until in sheer desperation the curtains were drawn - much to the indignation of the 'actors'.

One has to be very used to Scout dress rehearsals to be able to draw any hope whatever for tomorrow's First Night and not to throw one's hand in in sheer despair. They are usually of the "a bad dress rehearsal means a successful show" type and can they be bad? For

many of the items it will be the first and only rehearsal on an actual stage and the orchestra for the musical items will be there for the first time. While the unhappy producer is endeavouring to take his company through the programme, the electrician is certain to be working on the foot lights or fixing spot lights which, disturbingly flash on and off to the accompaniment of bangs and scrapes caused by the props. man doing his stuff in the wings. Boys come and go in strange and wonderful garments - usually incomplete - while mothers and fathers lend a general hand; frequently vocal; in dressing their hopes and joys. One can only do ones best and trust "it will be all right on the night", which, somehow or other, it usually is. W.A.S.

TRIALS & TRIBULATIONS OF A SCOUTMASTER

"When thou givest to thy servant to endeavour any great matter, grant us also to know that it is not the beginning but the continuing of the same until it be thoroughly finished that yieldeth the true glory."

St. Francis
→ RAKE

The Scoutmaster stands before the assembled troop at the end of the weekly meeting reading out all the things to be fitted in before next week's meeting and there can be a lot of them at a busy time of year; often something most evenings for those able and willing to take advantage of them. The response is often disappointing, for the modern boy not only has a great many distractions to occupy his time but is inclined to expect everything delivered to him on a plate, being trained that way by over lenient parents and a benevolent State. The cajoling of reluctant youth into pulling its proper weight in the manifold activities of scouting is one of the most difficult and most tiring sides of Scoutmastership. Even in something in which the Human Boy presumably finds enjoyment and satisfaction; which he joins voluntarily and can leave, if he wishes, tomorrow; his ability to hedge, to shirk his responsibilities, to play the fool and drive his overburdened senior almost to violence, is amazing. Perhaps therein lies half his charm. He is seldom dull.

Take for instance Master ~~William~~ ^{EDWARD} ~~William~~ ^{EDWARD} is fortunately a rare avis and I could never understand what he gets out of scouting for he is interested in nothing whatever that scouts do. Yet he has stayed in the troop for some four years and nothing short of National Service is going to move him. Once, amidst sighs of relief from boys and leaders alike he left - "fed up". Within three weeks he

was petitioning, through his mother, to return - even more fed up with "nothing to do". His ability to drive his leaders to violence is, indeed, amazing although his re-iterated statement that "I'm not doing anything" is largely true but none the less infuriating. Once in camp we tried responsibility and made him acting Patrol Leader with his own tent of five other lads. What a patrol! Noisy - disreputable - unreliable. He took them short cuts which traversed miry places or lost them in woods and only delivered them back in camp long after the other patrols had returned and eaten their evening meal. His uniform is invariably one or more garments missing - lost in a variety of curious ways which only ^{EDWARD} ~~William~~ is capable of. And when a line was drawn to replacements he accused his Scoutmaster of "Lack of co-operation"! ^{EDWARD} ~~William~~ is going to find life very difficult.

Sea Scouts are fond of their boats and yet remarkably callous as to what is happening to them when the wind blows strong from the South and the Spring tide carries any unsecured craft hard against the sea wall where their troubled wanderings are soon brought to an untimely finish: or a shortened mooring will gradually pull the bows under and she will settle on the bottom, perhaps quite happily, until the tide goes down. But her loose gear will strand on the Northern beach to be collected by the first beachcomber who comes along.

Even when properly secured a boat will sometimes come to grief in rough weather - a rusty link perhaps, or a frayed rope and

it is usually the Scoutmaster who comes to the rescue getting soaked easing a boat round the wall or removing his clothing to wade out with an anchor to secure a stranded craft before the tide is sufficiently high to carry her onto the wall.

On one occasion the "Larry Larmouth", a 2½ ton cabin boat, sank at her mooring in fairly deep water. She stayed on the bottom until next high Spring tides - about ten days - when a party in bathing slips boarded her at dead low water when her upper deck was just above water level. By baling furiously they managed to get her above water again but only just, for the incoming tide was already washing over her decks before sufficient water was removed to allow their combined weights along her uppermost side to swing her onto an even keel. Had the water not retreated further than usual on those particular Spring tides they should not have been able to do it.

What of the accidents inseparable from human life? There is, fortunately, a Guardian Angel told off for special duty in watching over small boys. Only occasionally is he caught napping or looking the other way. When we are young the spirit is brave and danger seldom seen or bothered about even when it exists. With us for twenty-one years that Angel has done his office right nobly. Though frequently called to be on duty he has never seriously betrayed his trust, thank God, and what mishaps there have been have been comparatively minor ones. There was once a lad who was 'hanged' in a game by means of a rope passed under his armpits and thrown over a beam. Then suspended

some ten feet above ground he managed to struggle out of the loop, and proceeded to climb down the main part of the rope. Perhaps it was because he landed partly on his head that he suffered nothing worse than concussion. Handling a large anchor caused a badly torn hand and broken glass accounted for several cut feet but a friendly motor launch took the hand case to shore and at two camps the local hospitals made excellent practice with the feet as they have done with minor fractures at other times. "Mrs Skipper" is well acquainted with the outlying portions of Boy's anatomy and gives yeoman service after the rougher games in den and camp.

Perhaps it is because I am an indifferent swimmer myself that a crowd of boys in the water always gives me an uneasy feeling of apprehension - a knowledge of how easily the shouts of joy and pleasure could be changed in a moment to tragedy and sorrow. How easy for one of the bobbing collection of heads to slip away unnoticed with the ebbing tide and passing out of vision behind the line of boats, float away down channel to the land of Dreams.

The children bathing on the shelving beach; the boys diving from their anchored craft: the sail that battles up stream in a rising wind or heels to the sudden gust of off shore wind all hold in their possibilities the grief and sorrow inseparable from human life and the peace of mind of those responsible. Blessed indeed is he, so sure of his own ability and skill, of the swimming capacity of his boys and of the excellence of their boats, who is not troubled by such unhappy fears.



RN Inspection in the barn at
Walnut Tree Farm

1973

FORTY YEARS ON.

It was in May 1933 that three fifteen year old lads came to Walnut Tree Farm, Prinsted, to form the nucleus of that Sea Scout Group which is still to-day offering the adventure, sea training and comradeship which has been welcomed by the youth of the neighbourhood over all these years.

It was in May 1973 and some 500 boys later that one of those three original boys, Leslie Tench, now a little older, presented me with a farewell trophy at a gathering of some 200 boys of the group, ranging in age from eleven to fifty six, who had come together from over much of southern England to mark the end of the first phase of the Sea Scout Story and the beginning, under the guidance of David Thompson, of the second which we all hope will last as long, as the first.

To-day the old stable and barn are replaced by a 72'x 25' building, well sited on the sea-shore at Prinsted which is reasonably well equipped for the purpose for which ^{it} was built. The fleet has grown from the original sailing boat and dinghy to some four or five sailing boats and a like number of pulling craft as well as a number of canoes. The spartan days of having to be active to be warm are over. There are actually heaters in the headquarters. (Modern youngsters are so pampered). Few of to-day's scouts have to dig a hip-hole when they sleep on the cold cold ground or keep their day clothes on at night because their two blankets are insufficient protection against the rising chill of the early mornings.

In the early days of the troop the complete uniform cost one pound but few boy's parents could afford to buy it outright. After a little experience a small sum was insisted upon at issue and the balance was, hopefully, paid off in weekly installments. These could last many months or even years and sometimes, with replacements added, never cleared. The modern boy lives in a society of affluence never dreamed of only thirty to forty years ago.

The Sea Scout group has been accepted now for many years as part of the local scene and presumably, because it has been reasonably well behaved and reasonably capable, has received an amazing amount of goodwill and encouragement not only in the form of gifts boats but also in personal assistance from local residents. The Sea Scout Committee has usually consisted of half parents and half people interested in youth and willing to give some time to their welfare. These were frequently naval, usually retired but not always, and they provided the nautical backing so desirable. They included Captains R.H. Rayne

2.

and E.A. Blundell who both served as chairmen for many years; Comdr. F.E. Chevallier was treasurer for twenty two years and only gave up the post on being called to Higher Service. Comdr. William Willett not only served on the committee and, when available, instructed in seamanship but was instrumental in getting parties sailing in the Duke of Edinburgh's yacht Bloodhound and in the presentation of the beautiful little sailing boat originally given to the Prince of Wales by ^{Tui} New Zealand when his parents visited that country in the fifties. He and one of his crew on Bloodhound, with the well known name of Francis Drake, manned two of the cars which carried, one extremely wet autumn, a small party to stay for a few days in an isolated cottage in Snowdonia with the object of climbing Snowden. We did climb up the Watkins Pass to some 2500 feet when the mists came swirling down and a discretionary retreat had to be made. Wives did the cooking on a primitive electric cooker and we fed both well and in comfort.

Over the years many people, some of whom we had never even heard, were most generous in lending and giving craft to the group. These included Mr. Paxton of Chidham who gave the 12 tonner, Afrina, for the cost of repairs and Mrs. Larmouth who gave the 2½ ton Larry in memory of her son of that name. There were many more who gave sailing boats which provided craft for the boys which could never have been afforded out of funds.

Parents were invaluable in numerous ways. The running of fetes, displays and concerts would have been quite impossible without their help. This applied particularly in the years after the war. Until then, possibly, 'Skipper', while vaguely realising that boys in the nature of things must have parents was, with the arrogance of youth, rather inclined to ignore their existence except when mothers were required for the catering side of scout parties and the dressing of stage shows. In the early days the number of boys in the troop was about twenty with perhaps a similar number in the cub pack under the care of Miss Helen Laver and ten or twelve Rover scouts lead by Capt. Frank Bramble. We were very self-contained and perfectly happy that way. Later, parents appeared to take more interest in their sons' outside activities and gave considerable time to the scout group; particularly with such undertakings as the building of the scout hall, digging foundations, putting in electricity, making curtains and decorating, shaving and oiling the floors and providing most of the kitchen equipment. Frank Thompssett, father of two boys, raised the standards of the annual concerts to a degree we otherwise could never have aspired to.

He not only produced short plays by L. du Garde Peach but even raised a four piece orchestra which was wonderful.

The R.A.F. were always helpful when asked and the Royal Navy were almost part of the group so liberal were they in meeting our requests or, indeed, offering through Scout H/Q in London, to take sea scout personnel over craft or even out to sea in such activities as Ship Window. Boys also went to sea in the Tall Ship Race. On one occasion I went out to sea for a day on H.M.S. Devonshire, one poor lone scout in shorts among possibly 200 Home and Dominion service officers mostly in smart and even gay uniforms. Fortunately a very junior officer had been told off to look after me or I should have been completely lost. As we were leaving the ship I spotted my scouts who had been segregated on another deck and I went down to them. Status was immediately lost and 'Sir' was degraded to 'Right, lads, you can go now' from a burly P.O. when the more lordly party had finished disembarking.

Running a troop of boys in this eighth decade of the twentieth century cannot be but more difficult than in earlier years. The boys are still there and apparently just as willing to join in such activities as scouting as ever they were and they probably are in need of the various trainings indigenous to such activities as much if not more than the previous generations. But it is a difficult generation and boys are no exception to that. Leaders were always hard to find and difficult to keep. With us a few like Jim Barker and Fred Hillier lasted many years and others such as Stuart Everitt and Alan Watts grew up in the scouts and stayed on for some years as did Helen Laver, Mrs. Glass and James Barker with the cubs but only 'Skipper' was permanent. Now with so much more mobility and the draw of other attractions which comparative affluence makes possible and the general restlessness of the times, few of the capable possibles can wish to give regular hours to handling boys who, while they can be vastly rewarding at times, can also be frequently difficult and unappreciative and so opposed to their own interests as to, possibly unintentionally, try to destroy that which means so much to them. Most boys are proud of their headquarters and of their boats but it is a continuous battle to get them to look after the well being of either. Constant chivvying can be a burden to the flesh.

But after all our travail and our cost,
So He be pleased, to think no labour lost.

SEA SCOUT REGATTA

The borrowed fibre-glass gig was collected from the upper waters of Portsmouth Harbour a few days previous; re-floated at Bosham on Chichester Harbour and used for a few evening practices. After a thorough cleaning and scraping she was on her trailer at 7-30 A.M. on Saturday morning at Scout H/Q where she was filled with the personal gear of the scouts before setting off, in company with two cars and a dormobile, for the long haul to Kingston-on-Thames.

The ^{marshes} ~~heats~~ of West Sussex gave way to the mists of the Surrey uplands but at Kingston visibility was reasonably good. On arrival the river scene was already one of bustle and movement. Our tent was pitched on the river bank; meal tickets obtained for twenty two and vehicles parked. Twenty minutes panic finally produced the missing code identity labels which had to be worn by competitors in the boats. The boys began stripping down in the warm sunshine.

Racing started with commendable punctuality and though for the first hour our group was not involved, the heats were of interest in showing up the great diversity of skill of the competitors. The first round of heats weeded out the poorer performers and some were not very good with the more expert romping home with ease.

By late Saturday our boys had done pretty well when disaster struck. In the quarter final senior gig pulling event we broke an oar about one hundred yards from start. Every endeavour to get a re-row was made but to no avail and we had to accept the fact that our senior crew was out of the gig pulling event: not by being outrowed by a superior crew but by pure ill luck. Oh, the wailing and lamentations. The opponents were the Leander crew and it was generally thought that which ever crew won this heat had virtually won the event as these two crews had been the great contestants of the previous year.

Come the evening and Ron Latham undertook to show me our quarters for the night. Happy Ron! "I'll be with you in five minutes." In twenty minutes we set off in a terrifying vehicle owned by the Leander Sea Scouts and driven by a scouter obviously trained in Paris. We toured the town making several calls and ultimately changed into a land-rover-why I forget-driven by ^{the} attractive wife of someone who remarked when fishing for the gear lever among the crowded legs of the occupants "I'm not being familiar but I must get the lever." When we finally arrived at our destination, a school which we were to share with two other groups, it proved to be but five minutes walk from the river scene of activities.

The senior scouts made up their camp beds, blew up their airbeds and generally made everything ready for the night. They then departed for Wembley to watch stock car racing. The A.S.M. (assistant scout master) and I took the remaining boys to the baths only to find there were no baths open other than those being used for the swimming races so they too went off on their own devices. Richard and I watched the swimming for a while and returned to the school. Then across the river to the Sea Cadet H/Q where scouts were to meet and where we spent an interesting couple of hours and had an excellent supper before returning to our beds.

At the school our younger boys were hanging around the cars and gave evasive answers to our questions but everything appeared to be in order. Inside all was peace with a scouter in attendance. He remarked that on his return he had had to quell a riot but that now all was well. We went to bed. Within ten minutes came the patter of feet and a request to go to the bathroom. In the next half hour some dozen went to the bathroom and two had drinks. Catcalls and pig noises were only silenced by scouters parading among the boys. I was pleased that a lecture to our lot seemed to have produced the desired effect for they gave little trouble. We had had that the previous year.

About one A.M., when all was quiet, the seniors returned. They removed their shoes in the corridor and came in commendably quietly but then, for fully fifteen minutes, there were scuffling noises, much wandering about and, on one occasion a dimmed light passed down the line of sleepers. It received a peevish welcome from me and abruptly disappeared. Peace gradually reigned again and it was not until two days later that I learned that the 'juniors' had removed all the bed legs, let down the airbeds, made apple pie beds and generally upset all the senior's bedding arrangements. I thought the older boys had been very forbearing. "If only scouters had'n't been there."

Sunday came with thick mist. The versatile Ron, came with breakfast and his lady assistants cooked it for us as the kitchen were out of bounds to the scouts. Thank you Ron. and helpers.

On the river the mist was solid and craft passing quite close-in could not be distinguished. However by ten o'clock ^{the} ~~clear~~ ^{clear} started and by half past racing re-commenced although there was no wind whatever for sailing and the boats drifted endlessly. For ourselves everything went satisfactorily until, in the under fifteen quarter final gig race, our opponents, Itchen, wrenched a crutch-plate out about 100 yards from finish. An offer to re-race was refused by the judges

but half an hour or so later I was called to the judges stand and asked to re-race on the grounds that it had been discovered that the plate was loose prior to starting. The request was not popular with our boys because one member of the crew was shortly due for semi-final dinghy pulling. Never-the-less the race was re-rowed half an hour after the dinghy pulling event. Our crews won both events but it finished the gig crew who were quite worn out and were badly beaten by the Sutton Coldfield crew in the semi-final shortly afterwards.

All this caused great dis-satisfaction among our boys, particularly with the seniors whose leader had now arrived. (He had been detained at home on the Saturday) When, in the semi-final senior gig race, an oar broke and the boats were re-called and started afresh their fury knew no bounds as the judges had refused a re-start when our oar broke. As I refused to pursue the matter, they, ably aroused by their leader who is apt to let his enthusiasm get the better of discretion, stormed the judges' stand generally made a nuisance of themselves. The ever patient group scout master was, for the second time, called upon to mount the ladder to the judges' stand and bidden remove his riotous seniors and their leader forthwith and see that they kept the peace for the rest of the day. Ah well. What's a group leader for even if all his seniors are considerably larger than he is and the S.S.L. weighs seventeen stone!

For me who had been the butt of both sides for some considerable time, the finishing touch came when a number of parents assembled on the river bank, eyed the poor spineless creature more in sorrow than in anger and one mother, a very large lady, started off "Skipper, you should really stand up to them. It is grossly unfair---" Maybe but I had had enough and said so and a troubled peace reigned again; our boys cheering the Leander crew on until, to their ^{they were breathless} ~~really~~ astonishment, in the semi-final gig race.

The prizes were given out and the captains and the kings departed and, praises be, most of the boys had dispensed when the under fifteen dinghy sailing coxswain came almost in tears. On the surrey side of the river he had been proclaimed the winner of his race but the prize had gone to another and he had been dis-qualified. Inquiries led to cross river phone calls and the discovery of mis-read sail numbers--easy to do in the misty atmosphere. The challenge cup was called in from the group to which it had been presented and who were fortunately still on the river bank and our coxswain smiled again.

I was very glad that the seniors, their mentors and progenitors, were not present.