

Round and about in the Parish

The earliest mention I have found of scouts/cubs in the area is a photo of Harold Awcock (1906- 1990) who lived in Danehill and Patrick Awcock has told me that Harold was a 5th cousin to him and a 2nd cousin to Alberta James.

It has been suggested to me by a former District Commissioner involved in the scouting movement that Harold, although dressed in a scout uniform, might be acting as a messenger for the post office. It's believed that the bag which is placed from shoulder to hip is one belonging to the Royal Mail. I made enquiries with the Discovery Room Manager of the Postal Museum in London and he thought it was very unlikely as it didn't look like a standard Post Office delivery bag, but nevertheless the bag is intriguing.



Peter Ford who is the Heritage Research Officer at the Scout Association thought the bag did not look like a standard knapsack, first-aid pack or similar. It appears to look more like a map case, much of the Scouts' equipment at that time was army surplus, so it's probable Harold was not acting as a messenger. Peter said that given Harold was born in 1906 he would have needed to be 11 to be a scout, which would date the photograph to around 1917 at the earliest. We don't know where Harold went to for the Scouts' meetings, but there was a Horsted Keynes Troop and in those days it would have been reasonable for a child to walk to Horsted Keynes and back.

Whilst I was making various enquiries with Laurence Hardy, he told me that his father, Ronald, who had been Assistant Scout Master of the Horsted Keynes Troop in 1922/23, started the 1st Danehill Troop in April or May 1924. Laurence has let me borrow two albums of photos/details of meetings which records that the Headquarters were at Latchetts (where Ronald lived) and had a telephone number of Danehill 17, making it amongst the earliest of properties to be connected to a phone. By 1st July of that year there were 12 scouts in the troop and some of the photos from 1925 are shown below.

Ronald said: *"The Headquarters had been turned into an excellent Gym, consisting of a rope, horizontal bar, rings and punch ball, and this has greatly improved the boys physically' - to the extent that a team was sent to Haywards Heath for the inter-Troop boxing competition for the Waugh Challenge Cup.*

The boys also took part in knot tying, paper-chasing and tracking games, as well as semaphore signalling”.

By 1925 the numbers had risen to 14 and in that year Scout Master (S.M.) Ronald Hardy took his troop to Belgium. This involved a lot of ‘War Games’. Ronald describes they had a splendid Camp near Ostend where an old German fort was occupied ‘with-

out loss of life’ and held for 10 days while different expeditions were crammed in, including trips to Bruges, Ghent, Zeebrugge and the big German gun battery. S.M. ‘heartily recommended this trip as a very good, cheap one - only 15s.9d from London to Ostend return. This photo is headed “Danehill holds the Fort.”



A young scout is being given a bunk-up on the shoulders of others. A senior scout is trying to push him up, and another scout is trying to haul him up to the top.

Photo to the right is entitled “Enemy in Sight”. Semaphore training is being put into practice whilst looking out to sea.



The photo on the next page shows a very energetic scout vigorously employing his semaphore training, whilst others enjoy the view. To me, the scout looks perilously close to the edge of the structure, but the onlooker appear unconcerned -in those days children got on and had wonderful experiences.



without 'health and safety' stepping in to dictate what can, or can't be done. Ronald notes in his diary: *"Those 15 scouts will now be able to boast that they have been 'abroad' and have actually visited the ground where their fathers' fought - and died."* He continues.... *"Then again, young though some of them are, not one of them could help feeling a little excited, and truth to tell, a little proud, as they stood on The Mole at Zeebrugge and read the words "The most eastern point gained by the British" . Many of these boys now treasure a bolt or a nut picked up on the quay which once belonged to that wonderful cruiser the 'Vindictive' .*

Ronald continues *"The boys had a fight on the roof of the old German pill-box against scouts from France, Belgium and Luxembourg. 'This old fort with its walls of concrete over 3ft thick had taken over 18 months to build and surely never thought to see British scouts defending it".*

The scouts went to many camps and practised lighting fires in competition with other troops. In 1929 Charles Trounce managed to light a fire and got a box of matches for his trouble. It was reported that *"we did not gain a place, but were nearly first in the Fire Lighting, and most important of all, we met and made many friends there"*. Each year the scouts held a Boxing Night dance to raise funds, and the proceeds of the 4th annual dance of that year were given to Cecil Awcock who had unfortunately lost a leg, but sadly the diary doesn't tell us how he lost it!



Addendum

Since publication of last month's article on Scouts, I have made further enquiries about how Cecil Awcock lost his leg (he was always known as 'Bogey' Awcock). John Butler told me that 'Bogey' was kicked in the ankle when playing football, which turned gangrenous and as a result he lost some of his leg.

Nick Turner has told me that Bogey's leg was lost below the knee so it wasn't immediately apparent in his walk but a lady nearly passed out one day whilst in Hillcrest Garage, next to the Green Man, Bogey walked in and said "Ah well, better have an 'oil up' whereupon he swung his foot up on to a bench, hoisted his trouser leg and applied oil to the bits of his artificial leg that had presumably begun to squeak.

Thanks to John Butler and Nick Turner.

Jill Rolfe