

Round and about in the Parish.....

I have been continuing with research about the Danehill Scouts. The Scout Master, Ronald Hardy, was always keen to make things as interesting as possible for the Scouts and one of the highlights was Scout Camp in the summer.

On 30th June 1930 the weather was pretty hot and to cool down the Scouts "migrated" to Nutley to bathe and make a real effort to try and swim.



This photo from Peter Kirby's collection is entitled "Scouts Ley Nutley". (Millbrook). Peter told me the Scouts went swimming near to Pippingford Park. (The swimming pool at the Isle of Thorns was not then in operation, hence the reason they went to Nutley).

However, the swimming efforts were not too good and the Scouts were told

they had to be take it more seriously. Scout Master Hardy informed them that Mr Marsh (who lived at Ardens, Nutley) had offered to take any of the troop, who Mr Hardy considered suitable, to the sea for Camp. The camp was to be held in Norfolk(although this changed to Suffolk) near a coast guard station and John Marsh had hired two big boats. His rule was that the scouts must be able to swim 50 yards with their clothes on. Mr Hardy told the boys, it was up to them - they had to be able to swim by the 1st August, which was when they would leave, to return on the 9th August. The cost would be 12/6d each, plus extras of 2/6d, making 15/- total.

On 7th July they all went over to Millbrook (Nutley) again, and Major Bates (I think he came from Danehill) was there to help. Scouts Cliff, Punch, Tom, Charles Trounce and Les Lucas could all swim, so there would be 5 for camp. A few days later Mr Bird (Headmaster of Danehill Primary School) also came and helped a lot.

On 14th July they all tried swimming again, bearing in mind the new Headquarters' rule which insisted on Scouts being able to swim, or else no bathing out of depth. That evening the Scouts finished up with a demonstration of revival from drowning.



Mr Marsh

At first sight it might seem somewhat draconian to insist scouts swim for 50 yards fully clothed. But there was an event known as the Leysdown Tragedy which occurred on the 4th August 1912. Mr Marsh who was taking Danehill Scouts to the coast had been involved in that tragedy. He had taken the Walworth Scout Troop

comprising 5 adults and 24 young scouts on a camp outing, and they sailed from Southwark down the River Thames starting at 5pm and rowing the first two and a half miles, then they hoisted the sail and set off downstream in a strong breeze between cargo ships, tugs and sailing barges. They settled for the night at Erith at 9pm. At 1.30pm. The next day, the coastguard recorded seeing the cutter rounding Warden Point near Leysdown. The ex-naval 32 ft cutter was two miles out, turning for the shore, when there was a sudden squall which hit the boat's mainsail and capsized it causing the occupants to be flung into the sea. The coastguard was waiting for their arrival and through his binoculars he saw the boat capsize and immediately sent out the Lifeboat but nine scouts died. Mr Marsh was completely exonerated. This no doubt accounts for his insistence that scouts must be able to swim fully clothed.



Mr Hardy in the boat



Whilst Ronald Hardy was not looking the boys got hold of his camera and took this photo of him assisting other scouts. Both Ronald Hardy and Mr Marsh had been in the Royal Navy.

The boys obviously had a mischievous nature as they took a photo of Mr Hardy undressed. He was totally unaware he was being snapped but with good humour he displayed the photo with the caption "Must this sort of thing always be snapped and booked?"

My thanks to Laurence Hardy for loaning me his father's diary and photo album and to Mollie Smith of the Nutley Historical Society for the research about the Leysdown Tragedy and to the late Peter Kirby.

Jill Rolfe