

<i>Month &amp; Year of Topic</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Written &amp; Spoken Presenters</i>
November 2007	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Oatley Bay Sea Scouts</b>	Original the late Joyce Cowell. Updated Alec Leach Speakers: Brian Saunders Bruce Gordon

**Copyright** Except where material is attributed to an earlier creator, you may copy, distribute, display, download and otherwise freely deal with this work for any purpose, provided that you attribute Oatley Heritage Group as the owner. However, you must obtain permission if you wish to (a) charge others for access to the work or (b) include the work in advertising or a product for sale, or (c) modify the work.

**Disclaimer:** Some material prepared by the Oatley Heritage Group is based on information provided by its members or others and is intended to be for general information purposes; as to its accuracy, therefore, no warranty is given or implied.

**OATLEY HERITAGE GROUP**

**MEETING DATE: 29<sup>th</sup> November 2007**

**TOPIC: 1<sup>st</sup> Oatley Bay Sea Scouts**

---

**PAPERS BY:** Stephen Gard

Alec Leach

Peter Eden

In attendance & spoke –

Brian Saunders

Bruce Gordon

Geoff Cook

Provided photos –

Arthur England

Margaret Rudd

Glen Stevens

Geoff Richardson

## Queen's Scout Award

### Ceremony No 35 - 9 November, 1968

DOBLE, Kenneth      1st Oatley Bay  
Norman

FIELD, Phillip Roy   1st Oatley Bay

HOOPER, Bruce      1st Oatley Bay  
Raymond

MANLEY, Owen      1st Oatley Bay  
John

**THE OATLEY HERITAGE GROUP  
OATLEY BAY SEA SCOUTS**

***Presented to the Oatley Heritage Group's quarterly meeting. Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2007***

*The leading section of this report was compiled by the late Joyce Cowell, for the Group's inaugural topic "Aspects of Oatley Bay" on the 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1995.*

*Her report has been updated by Alec Leach for the night's topic "1<sup>st</sup> Oatley Bay Sea Scouts"*

The following account of the beginnings of the Oatley Bay Sea Scouts was compiled from the recollections of three very senior Scouts:

Mr. Brian Saunders	523 5681
Mr. Fred Dawes	524 5952
Mr. Bruce Gordon	590 0490

The Mortdale Scout Group was commenced in about 1938 by Cyril Staples. A year later a break-away group was formed – a Sea Scout Patrol, lead by Fred Dawes. This new group continued to meet in the Mortdale Scout Hall. By 1940 the group left Mortdale and met in a boatshed on the premises of Arthur England in Kitchener St., Oatley. The leader "Skip" was David Lenehan and a new member was Brian Saunders. Several friends of the older members joined the group. Some of these were Harry Forbes, Frank Ricketts, Keith Garthon, Tommy Harmer, Tony & Reg Lenehan, John, Bob and Cal Birtles, Lloyd Brown and young Arthur England. This very successful group received a certificate from Scout Headquarters in 1941 as follows; "Group registered as a formation of the Scout Association of Australia, August 21, 1941, No 090706.

The numbers however, declined in the War years. David Lenehan was killed in action and most of the older group members left. The young fellows including Brian Saunders were left with no leaders and their activities were restricted when their boat was confiscated and towed away with all the other boats on the river when a Japanese invasion was feared. This boat was a 30ft life boat obtained for the scouts by David Lenehan from Burns Philp. It had been fitted with a motor and was used on river patrols during the weekends. This loss was a sad blow to the boys.

Young Brian Saunders became the leader of the young people who carried on as best they could in the Band Hall in Mortdale, then followed a period when they met in Oatley School of Arts, before being made redundant by the newly formed R.S.L. For a time they met in the open in Oatley Park and then were offered a temporary home in St. Paul's C. of E. Hall. The members were getting smaller and smaller. Brian Saunders was asked to try and combine Oatley Scouts and the Oatley Sea Scouts. This proved to be impossible – the Oatley Scouts did not want to change, Brian Saunders closed down the Sea Scouts and became Oatley Scout Leader 1945 – 1950.

Oatley Rover Scouts was formed by ex-members of the first group. Brian Saunders went to Narwee Rovers to become invested as a Rover in which pursuit he was encouraged by Bill Bringle. Fred Dawes was already a Rover in the Hurstville Rover crew. There were some 48 members of the new Rover Crew who met in Hurstville Grove in a shed in Les Murphy's yard. When this was needed to garage a car, they met in Hurstville Grove Scout Hall. By now they were all becoming too old to be Rovers. They turned themselves into a bushwalking club in 1950 and as such it still exists today.

Bruce Gordon describes his recollections of the early days with the Group.

Ken Northwood was the real founder of the present day Oatley Bay Sea Scouts. His son was a Cub in Brian Saunders Scout Group, but he wanted to be a Scout. So his father started a Sea Scout Troop, meeting in his garage in Letitia St., Oatley. This group prospered and had moved to Oatley Masonic Hall when my son joined in 1956. The Group then moved to meet in the West Oatley Church Hall. But they

were about to stop this nomadic existence. Plans were afoot to build themselves a permanent home in Oatley Bay Pleasure Grounds.

**Bruce Gordon** became a very active member of the Group; he designed the new Hall and later became Group Leader. He initiated many activities that have carried on today. These included the annual family camp and the monthly Group Council meeting. These meetings bring together all the Leaders to discuss the overall running of the Group.

**Peter Eden.**(This is a condensed account of Peter's memories with the Group. His report is attached at the end of this review.)

Peter, together with his brother John, joined 1<sup>st</sup> Oatley Bay Sea Scouts in 1961. Doug Woodcock was the Scout leader with Barry Fiddock his assistant. Bill Darville was Group Leader. Both boys moved through Scouts, Seniors (now Ventures) and Rovers. John became Venturer Leader and later District Venturer Leader. Peter held many positions. He began as assistant Scout Leader, moving on to Scout Leader, Venturer Leader, Group Leader and Rover Adviser.

Peter recalls names such as Rene Hodge Cub leader with assistant Mrs. Armstrong. They were followed by Audrey and Fred Ellis. Geoff Flood was Senior Scout Leader and Roy Foy was the Rover Leader. John took over the Seniors from Rick Allen to allow Rick to become Group Leader. Garry Beers and Rob Hodge were assistant Venturer Leaders.

An interesting article was submitted by Kate Foy, from The St. George Area, N.S.W., Scout News of May 1966. It details an account titled "Rafts drift down the Georges River". No doubt Peter Eden may have been on this trip. Over the Easter weekend 23 scouts of 1<sup>st</sup> Oatley Bay Sea Scout Troop with their Scoutmaster, Doug Woodcock and Boson, Barry Fiddock, drifted, paddled and sailed down the Georges River on two rafts, 20feet by 15feet, made of oil drums, poles and an elegant decking of water proof ply. Each trailed a kayak for quick trips. The trip began at Liverpool; on the way to Oatley Bay they explored some of the creeks including Mill Creek. They travelled approximately 25 miles beginning on Good Friday morning until early on the Monday. The average age of the boys was between 12 and 14 years. The complete article is attached to this report.

An annual event on the Scouting calendar is Founder's Day. This is a day to commemorate the founder of Scouting, Baden Powell. 1<sup>st</sup> Oatley Bay was fortunate to have Rex Roberts as a member throughout the 1970 & 80's.

In Rex's time he held the position of President of the Layside. He was called upon to become Scout Leader(Skip) and later became Group Leader(Cap). For years he organised Founder's Day at the Oatley Pleasure Grounds for the Georges River District. Rex became the Georges River District Activities Leader and in that capacity he worked tirelessly in an endeavour to bring Extension Scouts (developmentally disabled) from country areas to Sydney for a holiday. The old Renown Hall was partly renovated to cater for them. Finance for the project was funded from the profits of the Fun Runs. Everyone involved was disappointed when the project was stopped. The Hall which was situated behind the Duck Pond in Moore Reserve, has been demolished. In each position Rex held and for over seventeen years of his involvement with the Group, he gave his all.

**The Layside Committee** is an important part of a Scouting Group. Without it, a Group would not be able to function. They are responsible for raising funds to operate. 1<sup>st</sup> Oatley Bay's policy has been to provide equipment needed by the Scouters, organise and pay all bills. They provide Leaders with uniforms, maintain the Hall and in general remove any financial worries from the Leaders. 1<sup>st</sup> Oatley Bay has been fortunate to maintain a strong Layside Committee for many years. Today, together with 1st Oatley Scouts, they organise the Annual Market Day held in June at the 1<sup>st</sup> Oatley Scout Hall and surrounding park area.

The Georges River Annual Fun Run was organised by an Oatley Bay father, Roy Piper. He single handedly organised it for many years. The Fun Run would start in the Memorial Park near the Scout and Guide Halls make its way to Mortdale, over to Oatley Park and return down Mulga Road, a distance of nearly ten kilometers. As it was run prior to the Annual Sydney to Surf, many runners used it as a warm up run.

### THE GROUP HALL

The Group really started to prosper when Kogarah Municipal Council made it possible for the Scouts and the Leaders and parents to build a permanent home for them in the Oatley Pleasure Grounds. This was a lovely green shaded part off Annette Street and spreading down to the water of Oatley Bay. The large grassed playing area was very well maintained by the Council, there were swimming baths, children's playing equipment and toilets – altogether an ideal place for the Sea Scouts to establish their home.

A building committee consisting of parents including George Eden, Paul Melrose, Albert Webster and Jim Duckham was formed.

Peter Eden recalls the Group gained the contract to demolish a shop on the corner of Hurstville Road and King Georges Road South Hurstville. Apart from it being a fund raiser, the bricks from this project were used for the foundations of the Hall.

Plans were drawn up by Bruce Gordon. Members of the parents Group and the Scouts themselves, led by Bill Darvill, literally got stuck into digging the foundations of a boatshed in the mud at the waters edge. Slowly a large boatshed was constructed on these foundations. The boatshed became the Scout Hall and the space in the foundations underneath became the storage area for the one boat the Group owned. A plaque on the wall says that the clubroom was opened by Mr. Vincent Fairfax C.M.G. Chief Commissioner of N.S.W. on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1961. The boys moved in and used this boatshed as their Hall for many years.

A mural painted on a door became a feature of the Hall. The Aboriginal scenes and motifs were painted by Pat O'Harris, sister of well known artist Pixie O'Harris and aunt of Rolf Harris and art teacher at Danebank School at Hurstville. The doors were replaced by roller doors, the painted door was stored and eventually was disposed of due to new members not knowing the door's history.

The Master Plan called for a larger brick Hall to be built above the boatshed. Gradually this took shape and facilities such as a kitchen and toilet block were included. The main Hall was officially opened by Ald. D.D. Cross M.L.A. on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1967. A plaque denotes the occasion, with another acknowledgement to Bill Darvill which reads. *"The E.M. Darvill as a token of the esteem and affection of the First Oatley Bay Group"*

A third project was undertaken to enlarge the boatshed as the Group now possessed many boats of all shapes and sizes. The extended boatshed was completed and opened on the 6th March, 1983. For us, the families who were involved with the Group in 1980, we were saddened to learn of the death of Bruce Holden. He was a likeable young man, respected by his fellow Scouters and idealised by the Scouts. It was unanimously agreed that the extension should be named "Bosun's Locker" The plaque reads *"This extension to our boatshed to be known as Bosun's Locker in memory of Bruce Holden (Bosun) A.S.L. who died as a result of a car accident 2-5-80. Aged 22 yrs. B.Gordon (then GL) 6-3-83."*

Today, 1<sup>st</sup> Oatley Bay Sea Scouts is still a very active Group. It caters for girls and boys from 6-7 years, known as Joey Scouts, 8-10 years Cub Scouts, 11-14 years Scouts, 14-17 years Ventures and after a break

of a few years the Group is proud that the Rovers 18- 26 years are active again. The Oatley Community spirit is still alive within the Group. It is noted that a couple of Cub leaders, Mark Connell and John Vickery who themselves were members of the Group from Cubs, have returned to impart their knowledge. John attained his Queen's Scout Award. With the dedication of the likes of Mark and John, their influence could spark interest into today's Cubs so they too may be tomorrow's Leaders. With this enthusiasm, 1<sup>st</sup> Oatley Bay Sea Scouts should still stay an active Group for many years to come.

**Acknowledgements:** *The late Joyce Cowell, inaugural Vice President of  
THE OATLEY HERITAGE GROUP. Early research of the Group.  
Margaret Rudd, Cub Scout Leader for 14 years.  
Mark Connell  
Peter Eden  
Rex Roberts.*

**LeachMob**

---

**From:** <rango564-mail@yahoo.com.au>  
**To:** <heritage@exemail.com.au>  
**Sent:** Friday, 12 October 2007 10:31 AM  
**Subject:** Oatley Bay History

Hi Alex,

I spoke to Dad about the film of building the scout hall. He isn't sure where it is but thinks that he'll be able to find it without too much trouble. The other film he has that is historically interesting is the demolition of a shop in South Hurstville. 1st Oatley Bay Sea Scouts won the contract to demolish the building to make way for a council park. As well as raising funds to build the hall we were able to keep the bricks to use for the foundations on the hall.

Parts of the film are hilarious and would make the work place health and safety people cringe. There is one scene where one of the venturers is standing on a partly demolished wall swinging a sledge hammer knocking down some other part of the building. As he lifts his foot someone else removes a few more courses of brickwork and without missing a beat the venturer (who if I remember correctly is Owen Manly) puts his foot down to the new level and carries on.

Dad's address is 6 Russell St his phone number is 95701802. He is usually in Oatley Tuesdays to Thursdays but he can still be hard to get hold of. His number at Oakdale is 46596312 where he is easier to contact and he's there Fridays to Mondays. He'd be delighted to hear from you.

I'll give you as much of the history of 1st Oatley Bay Sea Scouts as I can remember. I was a cub at 1st Dulwich Hill and when we moved to Oatley in late 1960 we didn't immediately join the scouts.

I can remember one Friday night in 1961. John and I were watching a Cary Grant movie on TV when Dad announced that we were going to join the Scouts. We were reluctant to get out of the lounge chairs but we didn't seem to have a lot of choice.

Doug Woodcock was the Scout Leader, Barry Fiddick was his assistant and Bill Darville was the Group Leader. Doug and Barry had come from Kogarah Bay Seas Scouts. There were only two patrols at the time, probably about 14 scouts. They met in what is now the boatshed.

We were ushered into the back room to fill out forms and I couldn't help noticing how much fun the scouts seemed to be having. We never really looked back.



John and I both went through scouts, seniors (now called venturers) and rovers. John became Venturer Leader and later District Venturer Leader. At various times I was Assistant Scout Leader, Scout Leader, Venturer Leader, Group Leader and Rover Advisor. (I can provide specific dates if you want them.)

When we first joined Rene Hodge was the Cub Leader. Mrs Armstrong and various others were her Assistants. Geoff Flood was the Senior Scout Leader and Rod Foy was the Rover Leader.

By the time I joined the seniors, Rick Allen was the Senior Scout Leader. Fred and Audrey Ellis took over the cubs from Rene Hodge and Mrs Armstrong. When John took over the seniors from Rick Allen, Rick became Group Leader. Garry Beers and Rob Hodge were Assistant Venturer Leaders.

When I first joined as a scout they were repairing a carvel build surfboat. It was converted from four oars to eight oars and was initially housed at Como. We used to walk across Como Bridge on Friday nights to go rowing.

This was always a bit treacherous as there were a few planks missing on the pedestrian path across the bridge.

To house the surfboat at the hall we dug out underneath the boatshed including cutting away some of the sandstone rock. One mammoth working bee was held to build the boat ramp and concrete apron. The concrete had to be poured on a particularly low tide which occurred at some unearthly hour in the early morning.

A second surfboat was purchased and they were housed side by side under the boatshed. When these were replaced by the patrol boats we had to dig down deeper to be able to stack two boats one on top the other with two boats on each side.

I can remember a few details of the new hall being built. Bruce Gordon was the architect; this was well before Bruce became Group Leader. Bill Crane did all of the brick laying. Bill was a leader with Oatley West Scouts.

I think Frank Lundy was president of the parents committee at the time. Dad, Paul Melrose, Albert Webster and probably many more were on the building committee. I think Jim Duckham was involved. Jim was one of the very active presidents of the parents committee.

Doc Bailey took over as Rover Leader from Rod Foy when I was a rover. Barry Fiddick was Assistant Rover Leader. Paddy Dutch was the Assistant Area Commissioner for Rovers. His son Peter was in the scouts.

When I was Venturer Leader, Bruce Gordon was Group Leader. In those days the Scout Association used to run State Regattas. 1st Oatley Bay Sea Scouts won at least two of these events. One at Pittwater and one at Canberra.

In previous regattas we weren't very competitive. But by that time we had a very strong Scout Troop and Venturer Unit. They introduced a system at the State Regattas of awarding points for participation. I think we could have won the regattas on participation points alone.

There was never any standardization of boats at the regattas so they usually improvised a handicap system. One of the funniest moments at the Canberra regatta was during the rowing. The starter would point to a boat or call out a scout or guide group name when he wanted that boat to begin. He called out "Hughes Guides Go!" and as well as the Girl Guide boat from Hughes, off went a bunch of rovers who thought he had said "Youse guys Go!"

A couple of names that could be useful depending on how much research you want to do are Eileen Barns and Bill Horsington. Eileen edited the group newsletter for many years, even after her sons Doug and Murray had left venturers. Bill had connections with Oatley RSL and used their facilities to print the newsletter well after his son Rob had left the rovers. They or someone else may have a collection of old newsletters which would be a boundless source of history.

When I was Scout Leader, Keith Burnham, Jack Brisby and George White were Assistant Scout Leaders. George White took over as Scout Leader when I moved to Grafton to do a stint of country surveying.

I think Paul Brown took over from George White and Rex Roberts who had been president of the parents committee was Scout Leader for quite a while before taking on Group Leader. Trevor Philips was Scout Leader and Bob Wilkes one of his assistants after that.

One of the outstanding aspects of the 1st Oatley Bay Sea Scout Group was the strong cooperation between all of the sections. I think this was helped by the yearly family camps initiated by Bruce Gordon and the monthly Group Council meetings.

Group Councils were the meeting of all of the leaders and chaired by the Group Leader. The meetings allowed the Group Leader to report to the parents committee and to the District and Area organisation. The earliest Group Councils that I attended were run by Rick Allen. Bruce Gordon and Rex Roberts were also

very effective at running these meetings.

page 11

Many of these meetings were held in the homes of leaders rather than at the scout hall. They were very social meetings as well as necessary for the smooth running of the group. We had many meetings at John and Margaret Rudd's place when Margaret was Cub Leader. We met at Fred and Audrey Ellis's when they were Cub Leaders and at Bruce Gordon's for some of the time he was Group Leader.

The minutes of these meetings should still be available. The older records may even be at the scout hall.

Philip and Sheila Sansom were Venturer Leaders after I went to north Queensland to help my brother Max run his tin mine. Michael Miller was an Assistant Venturer Leader.

I'm not sure if I've provided the kind of history you were asking for. Its appears to be a bit random but then again the history of Oatley Bay is complex as it can follow many strands. It involves the four sections of cubs, scouts, venturers and rovers as well as two more strands; the leaders and the parents.

Other interweaving strands are the boats, the activities, the camps, the equipment and the building. Throw in district, area, state, national and international scouting and there is no way of systematically covering everything.

I could provided more detail on any of these if you want. Of course the most interesting would be anecdotes of specific events. You could write a novel if you tried to cover all of it, even if you restricted yourself to the most interesting parts.

Regards  
Peter Eden  
12-October-2007

---

Sick of deleting your inbox? Yahoo!7 Mail has free unlimited storage. [Get it now.](#)

12/10/2007

SCOUT



NEWS

REGISTERED AT THE G.P.O. SYDNEY FOR

TRANSMISSION BY POST AS A PERIODICAL

MAY, 1966

Price: 5 Cents

**PATROL LEADERS' CORNER**

Stenson, D.S.M., contributed this article. Editor invites other to continue the series. Following is an extract from "and Promise" session at Patrol Leaders' training

our founder, Lord Baden-Powell, he took as his path and Code of Honour the Mediaeval Knights and Table.

our Promise, (which was called the 'Scout Oath') similar to that taken by knights of Old at their in-

parts of the Oath were: to God.

to the King. try to all.

being accepted into the order of Knights, a 'Squire' proved his worthiness by a number of tests of bravery. Finally, he had a 'Vigil'. He spent the night before the high altar kneeling, sword in hand, prayer and meditation. He expected to cleanse his all unworthy thoughts, devote himself to a code of gallantry and chivalry.

There has been carried on a... Before a 'Rover' can be invested as a Scout, he must carry out a ceremony similar to that of the knight and dedicate himself to Duty to God, Clean Living and Service to others. We see that when we make a Scout, we are making a man of form, not just a lot of words that we learn just to recite in order to be in uniform. It is a solemn promise to 'keep' in the presence of our Scouts. We should, at all times, do our very best to live

as a member of the Great Brotherhood of Scouts. It is our privilege and a privilege of which we should always be proud. Let us live out our Scout Promise. If we are worthy of our ability, we make ourselves worthy of this great

**RAFT DRIFT DOWN THE GEORGES RIVER**

Over the Easter weekend, 23 Scouts of the 1st Oatley Bay Sea Scout Troop, with their Scoutmaster, Doug. Woodcock, and Bosun, Barry Fiddick, drifted, paddled and sailed down the Georges River on 2 rafts, 20 feet by 15 feet, made of oil drums, poles and an elegant decking of water proof ply. Each raft trailed a kayak for quick trips.

The drift started at Liverpool on Friday morning and the rafts were soon buffeted by the heavy winds. Taking advantage of the tide, a large part of the journey was covered at night with the rafts under the control of the patrol on watch.

Both rafts, the "Sturt" and the "Flinders", were equipped with cut down oil drums for cooking pur-

poses and for warmth. On the cold windy first night out, one of the boys on watch on the "Flinders" misjudged the use of coal and used up all the supply. However, wood was plentiful.

On the Sunday morning, at approximately 2.30 a.m., the mast of the "Sturt" struck a rotten overhanging branch of a tree and broke it off, with a noise like a

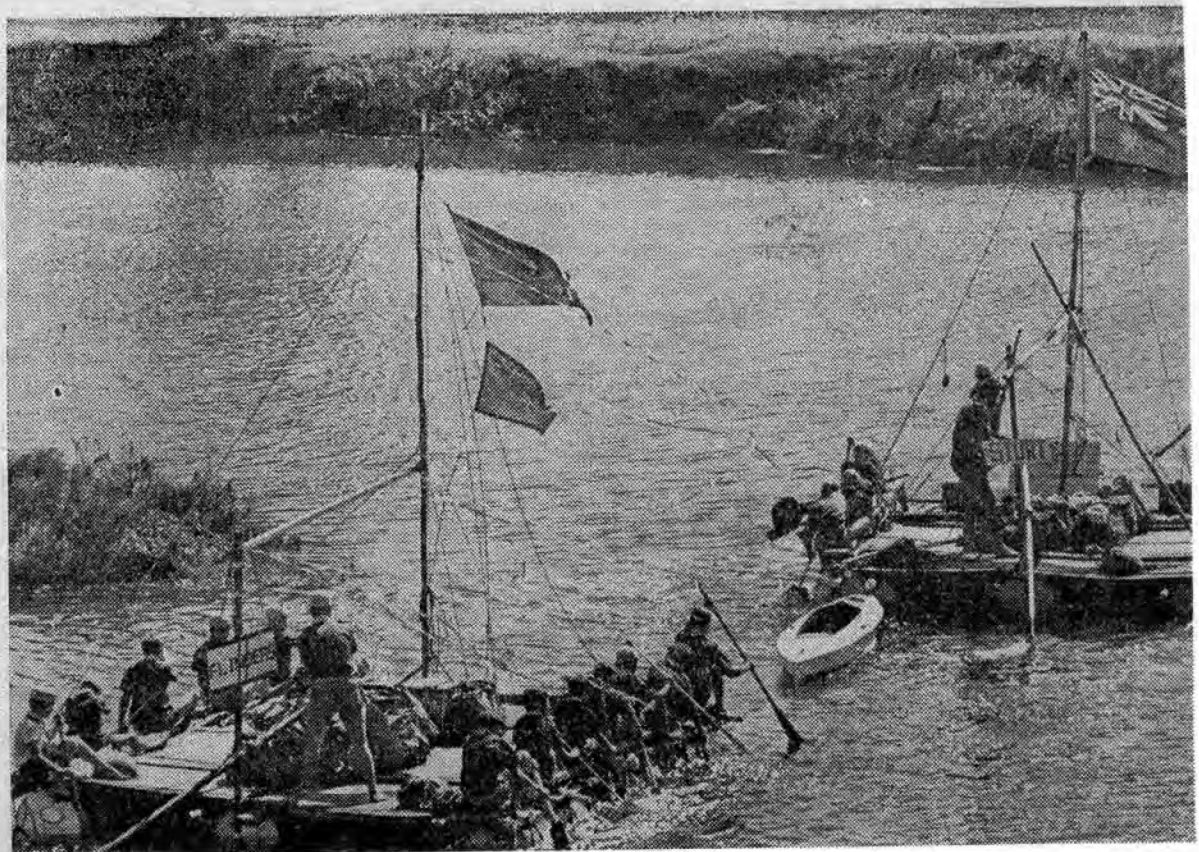
rifle shot echoing along the quiet river. The branch slid down the mast and nearly knocked Doug. Barnes into the water, but the situation was soon under control.

However, the "Flinders'" mast also got caught in the trees and Chris Melrose had to do a monkey act and shimmy up the mast to free it from the branches. He was left up the tree, 15 feet in the air, when the raft drifted on. This situation was not under control because the boys were helpless with laughter. It was a long cold dark drop for Chris.

The journey of approximately 25 miles (this included exploring Mill Creek and others) was completed by Monday morning, after the rafts had passed Lugarno Punt at 3.30 a.m., and with the sun rising as they drifted under Como Bridge.

The average age of the boys participating was 12 to 14 years, all being 2nd class scouts.

Block by Courtesy "Sydney Morning Herald"



# GEORGES RIVER DISTRICT

## 2nd MORTDALE

**CUBS.** Cubs had a good year for outings, visiting new places and seeing interesting things. Akela has the new year well planned, and we know it will be a good year, with Cub Scouters strong.

**SCOUTS.** The year for scouting was reasonable, with a fair amount of work completed. This year we are looking forward to even better things.

**SENIORS.** Seven seniors attended the Dispatch Rider Course and gained the badge. Mike Stead received his First Class and was invested. Rock Climber badge to K. Mitchell. John Kitchener and Lee Neylon have met all requirements for the Queen's Scout Badge.

Ross and Lee went to the War-rambungles at Easter and the rest of the troop went with 1st Mortdale and had a spectacular week-end bush walking and mountain scrambling.

**ROVERS.** The crew are making progress under Allen Leech with walks, camps and caving well in hand.

**GROUP.** The Annual Meeting attendance was very poor, owing to a change of date and the postal strike causing notices to arrive late. The same officers were elected for another year.

## 3rd MORTDALE

**TROOP.** Congratulations to Murray Creighton, Gary Risk, Ross Daddo, Raven Patrol; Geoff Caldwell, Gary Field, Gavin Sullivan, Eagle Patrol, on their investiture to the Troop. Murray and Geoff have proved to be good acting P.L.'s aided by their acting Seconds, Gary Risk and Gary Field, so we were happy to present them with their stripes.

Parents' attendance at this double ceremony meeting was appreciated.

The troop recently had an enjoyable day at National Park, where many good trails were laid by each patrol. Experimental cooking projects proved to be interesting and edible.

## 1st OATLEY BAY SEA SCOUTS

**PACK.** The boys had a pack holiday at Bundilla, with lots of food and fun. The only complaint was the size of the pikelets, 8ins. by 1/2 inch, a little too big to eat for sleeping.

Three cubs have gained their Leaping Wolf, C. Bradley, G. Ferguson and J. Favelle; House Orderly, J. Favelle, S. Nicholson; 1st Eye Open, W. Connell; new Sixers are G. Doble, J. Favelle and C. Bradley; new Seconders, G. Ferguson.

**TROOP.** The troop spent the Easter holidays drifting down the George's River on two rafts. Paddles and sails were used to help propel the rafts. The boys took turns in the night to guide the craft on its drift.

Cook's Badge, C. Melrose, W. Dean, N. Hill, P. Dietz, G. Newman, R. Hodge; 2nd Class, S. Leask, M. Brown, A. Hickson; Linguist, N. Maharaj, C. Melrose.

**SENIOR SCOUTS.** The Seniors are doing a very active Speleolo-

gist Badge Course with 1st Sutherland. Badges: 4 Boatswain, 8 Helmsman, 3 Venturer, 5 Seaman's.

## 1st WEST OATLEY

Congratulations to 1st Mortdale and 2nd Oatley on their successes in Wontolla Day Pennant Day. Invested, C. Bowen, G. Battishall, B. Dickson, G. Mulder; 2nd Eye Opened, L. Neilsen and D. Alden. 1st Year Star, R. Bowen, J. Keating; 2nd Year Star, R. Battishall and A. Hill; Sixer Stripe, L. Neilsen; Seconder, D. Alden. Best Six, White Six; Best Boy, L. Neilsen. Badges: R. Bowen, Collector; D. Alden, Leaping Wolf, House Orderly, Gardener; L. Neilsen, Leaping Wolf, House Orderly, Artist; A. Crane, Leaping Wolf and Collector; S. Denmeade, Leaping Wolf; A. Crane, L. Neilsen, D. Alden, S. Denmeade, gone up to the troop.

Welcome to B. Underwood, P. Denmeade, M. Lenahan; M. Henry received 2nd year service star; G. Eccleston, Swimmer's Badge; R. Battishall, G. Holt, Sixer stripes; R. Jackson, P. Watts, J. Keating, Seconder stripes.

Congratulations to the pack and also to 2nd Oatley, who took 1st and 2nd places at the district Cub Sports.

## 1st MORTDALE

**CUBS.** Welcome to Peter Riley, Ross Walker and Andrew McLean. Invested John Michel, Cyclist badges to D. Michel, G. Stewart, R. Petersen; House Orderly, J. Vaughan, R. Burns; Sportsman, G. Neale, G. Stewart; Swimmer's, R. Thompson, D. Michel, R. Petersen, G. Stewart; 1st Eye, Rodney Waudby; 2nd Eye, R. Riley, R. Burns, W. Middlemiss. Outing to Pennant Hills was enjoyed by all, the mosquitoes having a wonderful feed from us. Parents' Night was well attended.

**SCOUTS.** Two new Scouts, R. Bedford, W. Gorman; K. Whetmough, C. Harriss, Invested.

Eleven scouts and three fathers went on a hike to Blue Gum. A few fathers were weary as they crawled home. Scouts were at 2nd Mortdale. Entry into the troop is via the waiting list only.

**SENIORS** went to Pigeon House for a look around for their Easter Camp. There was a visit from 2nd Mortdale Seniors for a slide night. P. Neal on First Class hike.

**ROVERS** visited by 1st Rams-gate. Our rovers were thoroughly trounced in a game of hockey with them.

## OUR STATE-WIDE GOOD TURN

Our good turn to the Smith Family is certainly a part of Scout Week but it must not be the only contribution we make. You need a far more personal impact in your local community. You need the local citizens to know that there is an active live-wire Scout Group in their midst ready to help out when needed. This week is your week in your town.

# KIRRAWEE DISTRICT

## 2nd GYMEA

(St. Catherine's Own)  
**PACK.** 1-2-3 woof to Graeme Coughlan for gaining his Cyclist Badge and Leaping Wolf; Collector Badge to Peter Corney. A night outing was held at National Park, where Graeme Coughlan went up to the troop.

**SENIOR TROOP.** The troop spent two week-ends climbing in the Katoomba area. Congratulations to Ken Joyce and Shane Bourke, both of whom have gained their Rock Climbers Instructors and Examiner's Certificate. Jim Flaherty was our only representative at the Swimming Carnival.

**COMMITTEE.** Jim Tierney has applied for a warrant as Rover Scout Leader. The Annual General Meeting was held on Tuesday, April 12, and we wish to thank all who attended. Don't forget the second Tuesday of each month.

## 2nd SUTHERLAND (Armco)

**PACK.** Welcome to Baloo, Mr. P. Hayden, who is training with us for 1st Gymea. Another Finney has joined the movement, Craig being invested, also John Bush. 1st Eye to G. Heath, W. Slamer; 2nd Eye, G. Dan, G. Fernance, I. McLean, C. Lenton, K. Hancock; Swimmers, I. McLean, B. Jackson, G. Heath, C. Lenton, W. Slamer, K. Hancock; Collector's, G. Heath; Book Reader, G. Dan; First Aider, I. McLean, G. Dan, G. Fernance, P. Heuer; Leaping Wolf, P. Heuer, I. McLean, G. Dan and G. Fernance.

Parents' Night proved that not only are the boys keenly interested, but their parents, too, enjoy cubbing activities. Our outing to Waterfall was welcomed by the boys. Thank you, parents, for a large roll up to the Swimming Carnival.

**TROOP.** Invested, G. King, R. Pavitt, D. Potter; Stalker's, D. Fernance, P. Davison; Backwoodsman, D. Fernance, P. Davison; Swimmer's, D. Fernance; Scout Cords, R. Duncan.

Congratulations to 1st Kirrawee for sharing first place in the Swimming Carnival with us.

## 1st KIRRAWEE

**CUBS.** The following cubs gained badges: Peter Wilson, Book Reader, House Orderly; Mark Mansell, Artist; Glenn Miller, House Orderly; Peter Johnston, Swimmer; Leslie Harris, Swimmer; Brian Crockett, Athlete; Geoff Steel, Athlete and Swimmer and Leaping Wolf. The cubs participated in the Swimming Carnival.

**SCOUTS.** The end of the scout year again and what a success it has been for the troop, with a win on Pandemonium Day, and a win in the District and Inter-District Campercraft Competition, and the Area Campercraft Competition. The group gave the boys a barbecue to celebrate, and Skip presented Wayne Vickers with his First Class Badge and Scout Cord.

The Troop will say goodbye to T.K. Stephen Bembrick and P.L. Wayne Vickers shortly, as they are going to Seniors.

**GROUP.** The building is the building is we are always members at on the second month.

## 1st NORTH G

**PACK.** 1-2-3 land, Greg. Hud Trail, Martin J Bennett for th win the District val Cup. The has voted a me to each member at a later date.

**TROOP.** Six joyable week-ends are looking for end hike to scouting to Ge McDuff and Joh invested on 7th

**GROUP.** How Dads, at our ne 30th April. We ner of Presid Premier Street morning.

## 1st GRAYS PO

**PACK.** Welcor, Dona Brack new chums, W. J. Howland and vested; T. Cri House Orderly Badge, 2nd Year Sixer for Gray 2nd Year Star a Six; G. Ellis, and Leaping Wol for Red Six; P. Bates, Second Y House Orderly; Reader's; T. Con ly and Leaping Badges to C. E K. Lindgren, M. C. Blackburn, Malone, A. Bagn T. Crunkhorn, P up ceremony for G. Blackburn to at Swallow Rock

**TROOP.** Cong gull (L. Brack Seniors and seven tended the 18th t tune Sea Scot Abbotsford.

Welcome to G. A. Bagnall, R. Lingram. **COMMITTEE.** Messrs. Harrin Tierney and Jen their help with tr

## Rocky Poi

### 1st RAMSGATE

**PACK.** Welcome P. Jarvis, G. Mar A very cold day Swimming Sports two competitors v to gain third ple tions to T. Winds 8 year old events. A. Young, also C for a very fine col Many more boys a Jubilee Badges.

**Main Identity**

---

**From:** "Stephen Gard" <stephen@stephengard.com.au>  
**To:** "Cliff Crane" <cliffcrane@iprimus.com.au>  
**Cc:** "Robert Hodge" <RHODGE@superannuation.asn.au>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 27 November 2007 4:04 PM  
**Attach:** OBSSFfinal.doc  
**Subject:** Oatley Bay Sea Scouts Memoirs

Cliff,

I have now finished this account, or at least, I've decided to call a temporary halt to my writing of it, before the project stretches out to the crack o' doom and you never receive the final version.

Attached is essentially the blog I created, in MS Word format. Several photos have been left out in an effort to keep the file-size small(ish). They can be retrieved at any time from the blog at:

<http://blognow.com.au/1stOatleyBaySeaScouts/>

Just a word of warning; although I'm perfectly happy for you to publish or archive anything I've written, one or two of the photos, e.g. the Sea Scouts leaning out of the train window, were snaffled from the 'Net, and may be subject to copyright; that one, indeed comes from the State Library of NSW.

Rob Hodge has sent me some useful material, which I have incorporated, with a credit wherever it appears. He has also promised some photos for the blog, about which I'm delighted.

I've heard from Doug Barnes, who mentions photos, but that's all from him, so far.

All good wishes for your evening on the 29th, and congratulations for your work in preserving the history of the place we so happily grew up.

SDG

---

On 24/11/2007, at 5:17 PM, Cliff Crane wrote:

Stephen

29/11/2007

## 1st Oatley Bay Sea Scouts 1959-1965. A Memoir, by Stephen Gard

These are my memories of my years with the 1st Oatley Bay Wolf Cub Pack, and Sea Scout Troop. I am now of an age when my childhood is bordering on the historical.



Stephen Gard, 1st Oatley Bay Wolf Cub, circa 1960

This is by no means a precise and cross-checked history; I have set down only what I remember, and I observed these matters as a child. Children do not always grasp the complete picture of what they are involved in, and of course, memories can be highly selective, incomplete, and sometimes simply wrong.

Stephen Gard  
Thirlmere, NSW  
21 November, 2007

Formerly of 68 Yarran Road, Oatley, son of Don and Peg Gard, brother of Tim and Jacqueline

## Joining the 1<sup>st</sup> Oatley Bay Wolf Cubs

I know nothing of the beginnings of 1st Oatley Bay Sea Scouts, (OBSS) or its Cub Pack. I was a child when I joined, and why would a child ask such things? I became a Wolf Cub in 1959, at the age of seven. This photo shows me around that time, with very little on my uniform in the way of badges and such to show my progress:



Geographically speaking, I ought to have joined 1st Oatley Troop, which was closer to my home. 1st Oatley's Scout Hall was right beside my primary school in Neville Street, built at the mouth of the cutting where a railway line once ran up from Como Bridge and onwards to Oatley Station. It now carries the fat water pipe from Woronora Dam to the Hurstville Reservoir.

1st Oatley's Akela, Mrs Isabel Leate, was one of my mother's closest friends, and it was no doubt she who urged me to become a Cub. But Mrs Leate was just about to leave the group, I think to have another child. I am guessing at the reasons I joined. Perhaps it was because my school mate Rob Hodge belonged.

I was present, for some reason, at Mrs Leate's last night as Akela at 1st Oatley. Only four other boys had turned up, which situation my mother later described as 'a bloody disgrace'. We played a game which involved us standing in a ring, arms linked, around a circle drawn in the floor. We then had to move around the circle, each trying to pull the other so his foot crossed the line, while avoiding the same fate. This seemed like great fun to me. If this was Cubbing, count me in.

Rob Hodge observes: *Isabel Leate must have been trying to start a new cub pack there. She was the Akela at Oatley Bay two 'Akelas' before my Mum (Mrs Hodge).*

I turned seven in 1959, so I was eligible to join 1st Oatley Bay Wolf Cub Pack.

Some of the OBSS boys lived in the Oatley Bay precinct. They caught Ted Lind's green bus to Oatley Public School. I was a Yarran Road lad, a foreigner from out Gungah Bay way, and caught Andy Prlovic's red bus, but there were plenty of other Cubs who came from as far afield as Douglas Haig Street, or even Jewfish Point. Such places were far, far away in Oatley West, a distant place which had its own Troop, but they came to OBSS, so we must have had something going for us. Was it our boats?

To become a fully-pelted Wolf Cub, one had to be 'Invested', a big word for a little boy. A recruit was required to learn the Wolf Cub Promise, and the Wolf Cub Salute, (of which more in a later Chapter.)



On the next Cub Night, I recited in front of Akela and the Pack the Promise, and gave the salute, and was then allowed to don my newly-bought cap and scarf. I was given the 'Tenderpad' Badge, to sew on the left breast of my jersey. And then, I was in!

### 1<sup>st</sup> Oatley Bay – The Place

Could there have been a more picturesque, a more pleasant setting for a Scout Hall?

On the western curve of quiet Oatley Bay, where crabs clicked among the rocks, with the wash of tiny waves on a warm evening, with the George's River beyond, its distant pleasure boats silently passing, here, 1st Oatley Bay Sea Scouts had their headquarters. The Hall had been built within the grandiloquently named 'Oatley Pleasure Grounds', below Annette Street, once the weekend playground of Sydney's working class, at the foot of a long grassy slope among eucalypts.



The 1st Oatley Bay Scout Hall *circa* 1997

Pity those urban Scouts, whose Hall was jammed into some ugly street, within earshot of roaring traffic and a hundred horrid city stinks! We had the rich scents of mud and iodine from drying weed, saw the tints of olive waters and ochre Angophoras, and as the evening drew on, watched the pastel tints of lit windows fill the darkened hills around, as we bundled out of the

Hall door, eager for some task involving knots and ropes and poles or just running about in some vigorous game.



Photo taken around 1997; the Hall is at least three times the size of the place I attended.

The Scout Hall, pronounced 'Scat Awl', no haitch required, was a simple, functional brick structure, shoe-boxed shaped, jutting out at the Bay's edge. A steel door at the side was the entrance. Big folding doors at the Hall's end opened out for a fine view of Oatley Bay, bringing in billows of fresh tangy air from the river. At night, the Hall was lit by a dozen buzzing neon tubes.

Underneath was a big storage area, 'The Boat Ouse', (no 'haitch' required) as we called it, its ceiling just high enough for a boy to stand upright in. The Boat Ouse always smelled divinely of sea-things; ropes, pitch, paint, varnish, raw timber, weed and brine. The odours rose towards us as we stood on parade overhead, and stirred the blood of our Ancient Mariner within.

We'd play our games and have our activities on the grassy area beside the hall, or on the slope above, if there was still daylight. The brick barbecues shown in the picture weren't there in my time.

Rob Hodge observes:

*The brick barbecues were built some time after 1966. Prior to that the BBQs were simpler affairs built at the base of a small rock face (about 4'). I remember them well as I used to always jump down the small cliff when going into the Hall. One evening as I ran towards the edge on my way to Cubs one night and went to stop I slipped on the wet grass, clipping my elbow on the rock edge before landing on the concrete path below. I broke my elbow and had my arm in a half caste bandage to my arm and supported by a sling for about a month.*

Fire-making was one of the 'woodcraft' skills included by B-P from the very start of the Scouting Movement. It's a requirement that sat very well with Australian Scouts; it's hard to imagine an Aussie boy, or at least one of my generation, who couldn't set and light a fire to cook with, whether or not in a 'made' fireplace like those.

Beyond was a shark-netted bathing area, with a small expanse of sandy beach, hard and walkable at low tide, waist deep in Bay water at high. We once held here one of the most exciting and interesting of our Scouting challenges, of which more can be read in Sea Scouts - Our Activities.

I can't recall whether we had a toilet - we must have done. There were public toilets at the top of the slope, but they were much too dark and spooky, not to mention smelly, for us to venture into at night, and not much more inviting in broad daylight.

There was an office at the end of the Hall, and a big, brass ship's bell by the office door. A white 'Sea Scouts' life-preserver hung on the wall, with our flags either side of it. There were benches along the walls to sit on, the naval 'locker' style, with a lid that lifted, and all kinds of pungently smelling Scouting gear inside: ropes, blocks and tackle, tent-pegs and toggles, camp ovens (iron cooking pots redolent of gum-bough soot), canvas tents and flies and ground sheets, and lots, lots more.

Folding chairs and trestle tables were stacked along one side. Various plaques, awards and presentations, as well as portraits, were hung around the the walls, including a display behind glass of fierce and complex knots and whippings and lashings that looked very serious and sea-faring.

The Hall was so distant from any neighbours that we could be as rowdy as we wished.

And we *were* rowdy. We made the happy, noisy noises of happy, busy boys.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Oatley Bay – The People



1st Oatley Bay Wolf Cub Pack 1962, photographed by Fred Leate, of Jock Leate Photographics, Hurstville

Here are the names of as many of these people as I can recall:

**Extreme left:** 'Akela' (Cub Leader, Mrs Irenie Hodge).

**Right, at rear:** 'Kim' (Assistant Cub Leader, Mrs Mill (Miriel) Armstrong)

**Rear row of Wolf Cubs:** Peter Sewell, Preston Dunn, David Hurst, Philip Dietz, unknown, Maurice Carmody, unknown.

**Middle row of Wolf Cubs:** Unknown, Robert Hodge, Stephen Gard, Robert Dunn, unknown, Ernie Ring, Robert Easton, Colin Packer

**Front row of Wolf Cubs:** unknown, Stephen Packer, Peter Dutch, [Johnny?], Tim Gard, unknown, unknown.

To the left, poking out of Peter Sewell's head, is our Wolf Totem. More about it later.

Our Akela was a petite, perpetually smiling, and rather elegant figure, calm and self-possessed, with a trace of a British provincial accent somewhere. I cannot recall Akela ever raising her voice to us; Mrs Hodge was so lady-like that I think she naturally brought out our gentlemanly good manners; I think we would have been ashamed to disobey or disappoint her. Perhaps children were more respectful of adults, back then; perhaps, unlike school pupils, we were in the Cubs because we chose to be, and so naturally co-operated.

Rob Hodge adds: *Mum's correct name is Irenie, but she was variously addressed as Rene or Renie. Her British provincial accent came from Lancashire where she was born. She came to Australia in 1946 as a war bride.*

Kim was (to us) a tall, large-boned lady, with a deep, soft voice, and a warm and gentle way with her. I remember little else about Kim save that she was always there, and always carefully looked after us.

My Wolf Cub mates were vigorous, friendly, eager to take part in anything happening. We were also Anglo-Celtic to the man. I am sorry to say we sometimes teased one of our number because he was a little slow mentally, but otherwise I think we were a nice bunch of kids, without resentments or jealousies. There were no bullies or sooks.

I used to wonder why some boys seemed perpetually to be receiving badges and stars, while my uniform remained unadorned, but in time I connected this with energy and willingness to step forward and try something, and the awards began to trickle in.

First and valuable lesson in life: nothing comes from nothing; the glittering prizes go to the strivers.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Oatley Bay – The Uniform

My Wolf Cub uniform was as follows, working from the floorboards upwards. Black leather shoes, long black 'stockings' akin to football socks; elastic garters to keep them up, with bright-green felt garter-tabs ("flashes"), forked at one end and sewn on to the elastic, and over these, woollen 'sock-tops', a kind of muff for the calf, coloured brown, with green stripes.



This leg-wear had been copied by B-P (Baden-Powell) from Highland Dress. The sock-tops were a nuisance to keep in place on skinny little boys' calves; they tended to stretch and drop down to the ankles. I notice from photos of B-P's own Scout dress that he didn't wear them! Next upwards came dark-blue woollen shorts, and over these a short-sleeved, dark-blue woollen jersey.



Our scarf was very nautical: a sky-blue triangle of cotton cloth with a cloud-white border. We learned to roll this, from the hypotenuse towards the apex, leaving about six inches to spare. This turned the cloth into a long 'pipe' with a curlicue white stripe, which was then draped around the neck, the ends hanging down the chest and the apex hanging down the back. Lazy types simply grabbed the corners of the cloth and twirled it, 'winding' it up like an elastic band.

Scarves got very grubby from handling, e.g. wiping wet or sweaty hands on, and they needed frequent washing and ironing. We were supposed to do this ourselves, not our Mums. I don't think many of us did.

Scarves were fastened around the neck with a 'woggle', a Turk's Head knot woven in our Troop Colours (like our scarves) of blue and white plastic tube. One poked the ends of the rolled scarf down into the woggle like a napkin-ring, then slid it upwards until the thickness of the material jammed it in place. Dropped woggles were a familiar hazard when scarves became loose during vigorous activity.



(I spotted quite fancy woggles among Leaders and Senior Scouts, and such folk. It was the one item of adornment permitted on Scout uniform, which was designed to create a sense of equality and community. The fanciest I saw was made from a huge West Australian gumnut, the size of a hen's egg.)

To top all this was our green Wolf Cub cap, with yellow piping, and a Wolf Cubs' cloth badge sewn on front. Every boy wore a similar cap in Edwardian period days, as part of his street clothes; they were as ubiquitous then as the Yankee baseball cap of our days. However, like the straw boater and blazer worn by Edwardian rakes, and now worn by boys of the most conservative private schools, they had once tried to match the fashions of their time, and become a curiosity and an anachronism.

On the right sleeve of our jersey was sewn our white '1st Oatley Bay' shoulder-flash, a strip of cotton with our troop-name printed on it. Under this, badges might in time appear (see Badges and Awards). On the left sleeve was sewn a coloured triangular patch to show which 'Six' (litter or 'team' of Wolf Cubs) one belonged to. I was in the Blue Six, which I've since discovered was not in accord with B-P's ideas: B-P's Sixes had to take the colour of wolves - Grey, White, Brown, Tawny and such.

On the left sleeve also would go one's 'rank' stripes. The Sixer, leader of the Six, wore two wide yellow stripes; his 'Second' (2IC in military terms, Lance Corporal, perhaps) wore one. B-P always vigorously denied that the Scout Movement was militaristic; it didn't stop him from adopting many military dress conventions. In the photo above, I'm wearing the single stripe of the Second of the Blue Six.

On the right breast was the cloth badge showing to which Area one belonged; we were of St George, and so ours was of course white, showing a red St George, mounted, and ramming his lance down a dragon's throat. When I joined, this Area badge was a modest disc about the size of a florin. It was shortly replaced by one in another style, a large white square, as big as a Sao Biscuit. On our Pack picture of 1962, (see People) the younger boys are all wearing this new and larger badge, while the old lags like Rob Hodge, Colin Packer, Preston Dunn and myself, have the previous, smaller badge. The new one was flimsy and printed; our older badge was thick, and the figure was closely woven.



My brother Tim Gard, 1962. His uniform bears the new, larger St George District Badge.

He also has his 'Tenderpad' award, and one 'Eye' open.

On the left breast was another 'Wolf Cub' badge, I think to show that I was no longer a 'Tenderfoot' i.e. a complete beginner.

Some of my uniform came from the Scout Shop, which was I think in Hurstville. Some of it was bought from St. Vinnies, my mother being a devout child of the Depression.

During our games and other vigorous activities, we removed and hung our hats and scarves on hooks along the wall. For Final Parade, we put them on again.

At camp, we wore 'play' clothes, but for Camp Parade, we were considered to be in uniform if we wore 'Hats and Scarves' only. B-P himself had allowed this, knowing that many boys could not afford full Scout uniform. It was the accepted minimum.



We wore our Wolf Cub uniform proudly, and not just to Cub activities. In the photo above, I'm in Cub uniform at the Open Day of Newington College, Stanmore, where a family friend took me. I once or twice wore uniform to school, on some special occasion, ANZAC Day, perhaps.

### Cub Night

We attended Cubs, 6:30 to 8:00 pm on a Monday night. The time always went very quickly. Those fragrant and caressing summer evenings down beside the Bay... I wonder if children today enjoy a childhood so serene?

We'd romp about in the twilit park until we were called inside, by the clangour of a big, brass ship's bell, to assemble (parade) in the Hall, standing in a circle in our four 'Sixes'; I think we had all the primary colours, Red, Blue, Green and

Yellow Sixes. The Wolf Cub movement was based by B-P on Kipling's *Jungle Book*. Our evening's opening ceremony was supposed to suggest young wolves gathering at the Council Rock to pay homage to Akela and continue their 'training' as members of the Pack. We learned to chant:

*The Cub Gives Into The Old Wolf  
The Cub Does Not Give Into Himself*

(A sound precept, obedience and subordination and such being very good for any organisation of restless youngsters, but I wonder if any of us understood it quite?)

Akela would call 'Pack, pack pack!' and we would give a long, rising 'Paaaaaaaaaaaaaack!' in return, no doubt in imitation of a pack of young wolves. This was called a 'Pack Howl', I think.

We squatted like wolves, the index and middle fingers of each hand imitating 'paws', touching the floor:

There was then a lot of hearty shouting and yelping:

Cubs: AAAA...KAAAAAYYYY...LAAAAAAA...!!!! WE'LL-DO-OUR-BEST!!!

Akela: DYB-DYB-DYB! (i.e. Do Your Best!)

Cubs: WEEEEEEELLLLLL... DOB-DOB-DOB! (Do Our Best!)



We then stood up, and the business of the evening began.

We had another kind of 'howl' which we used when congratulating those of our number who'd done something commendable – earned a new badge, 'Opened an Eye', and such. We pounded our right fist downwards, into our open left palm held at waist-level, and shouted four times: ONE! TWO! THREE! WOLF!

(But we usually said WOOF! or at least, I did. 'Wolf' sounded wrong, like we were calling to a wolf.)

This was the Wolf Cub version of the Scout's congratulatory 'Bravo' - the same procedure with fist and palm, but they shouted out the letters of the word 'Bravo' with each pound of the fist:

B! R! A! V! O! O! O!

We gave visitors to our Pack or Troop this 'shout' as a 'Thank You', instead of clapping. (In those days, 'thank you' was spelled as two words.)

At the front of the Hall, in a kind of umbrella-stand along with the flags and ensigns of the Troop, lived our Pack Totem, a wolf-headed staff wearing a ruff of coloured ribbons, each ribbon bearing the name of the Cub who'd won a badge or other award. (The totem appears behind Peter Sewell in the Pack's photo, on the People page.)

Truth to tell, it was a rather grisly object, a decapitated wolf with its fangs menacingly bared and gums painted a lurid scarlet. If one picked it up carelessly, one might perhaps have a hand bitten off. The Totem was borne like the standard of a Roman Legion; I think we took it with us camping and set it up rather like our household god.

Akela bore the Totem somewhat royally, like a sceptre, as part of our evening assembly. She also sort of waved it at our knees as we stood in a circle; I never understood why, but everything was part of a glorious ritual of harmless balderdash that B-P had devised. He knew the minds of little boys and how they relish such Masonic ballyhoo.

The next part of the evening's business would be announcements, awards, collection of 'subs.' (subscriptions: I think we paid a shilling a week) and such. We'd then remove our caps and scarves, and the more energetic part of the evening would begin.

## Fun and Games

Outdoors we rushed to play traditional field games, like 'Rob the Nest' and 'Hoppo Bumpo' and 'Cocky-Laura 1-2-3'. If wet, we stayed indoors and enjoyed Captain Ball, Tunnel Ball, 'Hit the Deck' and 'Poison Ball'. We used medicine balls, bean bags, cane hoops and tennis balls. We didn't play cricket, football, or any game where any individual could prevail through superior skill. No points were awarded or pennants earned during these games. It was all team-based, shared fun, and very lively, making a good balance among formal, stand-at-attention meetings, the study of knots and bandages, and tearing around happily yelling.

The 'study' period of the evening would have involved us all in learning the skills necessary to move upwards through the various grades of competency; 'One Eye Open' and so on. Some of this was simple stuff, like being able to throw and catch a ball, or hop a certain distance. Other requirements called for the mastery of a skill, like tying a Clothes Itch.

## Knots and Ropes

Wolf Cubs were an afterthought of B-P's, like Guides and Brownies, so our activities were Scout-derived, but more in keeping with the capacities and understanding of children. Wolf Cubbing's aim was to prepare one for Scouting. Most of our 'serious' activities were cut-down or introductory versions of what the Troop did.

For example, we had to learn to tie knots, simple ones like the Reef Knot (which we called a 'wreath' knot), the Clove Hitch (we said 'clothes 'itch', no haitch required), and the 'Roun' Turn an' Two 'Arf 'Itches'. (No haitches employed.)

For a 'Wreath' Knot, we chanted, 'Right-over-left and left-over-right' as we wielded the ropes. If it came out wrong, it was scornfully called a 'Granny Knot'. (The Americans called this a 'square knot', but then, they would, wouldn't they?)

What these knots were for I didn't understand, and I didn't ask. Wolf Cubs tied knots, and that was that. It was all part of B-P's wonderful Scouting arcana. Later, in the Sea Scouts, it was explained to us, or I was better able to understand, the use of various knots.

Mastery of the more recondite knots, like the 'Sheep Shank' or the 'Sheet Bend' were matters of status, back then.

## First Aid

We learned to tie a cloth into a sling for a broken arm or wrist, or how to use our scarf as a stop-gap. How to apply a tourniquet to stop snake poison flowing or blood squirting from an artery, and how to deal with Burns and Scalds - I think butter was to be used in an emergency. Tying bandages around sprained ankles or skinned knees was another absorbing pastime, also applying splints to fractured limbs. Knots made sense here: the wreath/reef knot lay flat against the skin, while a granny dug into it. We would have made busy little ambulance officers!

All this useful training stays with one. I remained calm even years later, if the students at my little one-man bush school skinned their knees or sprained their ankles. The Wolf Cub in me just grabbed the first-aid box, chanted 'right over left and left over right', and soon, all was white bandages and Mercurochrome. Fortunately, I never had to use the Snake Bite kit, with its razor, its rubber garrotte, and its Condy's Crystals.



Towards the end of our evenings, probably to calm us down, we sat on the floor while Akela read us tales from Kipling's *Jungle Book*, her taupe, box-pleated skirt tucked primly about her stockinged knees. I still get a thrill from recalling her pronunciation of the names 'Buldeo' and 'Mowgli', though I found out years later that 'Hathi' should have been pronounced 'HUTT-ee.' I preferred Akela's softer locution of Hath-eye. Somehow her British accent gave these stories an authentic English nuance missing from flat, Australian readings.

I'd heard most of these stories already on ABC Radio's Sunday morning program 'For the Young in Heart', and later read them again and again, to my own children and those that I taught. I consider Kipling's 'Kim' one of the finest novels ever written.

### **Bob A Job**

Fund-raising was always a necessity, to keep our mob able to pay its way. We Cubs (and Scouts) paid a small weekly subscription, but the Hall and its equipment, our badges and stars and such, these had to be paid for by raising extra cash. The traditional Scout fund-raiser was 'Bob a Job'.

Bob-a-Job was an annual occurrence. We went around our neighbourhood in uniform, knocking on doors and asking people for a chore, in return for money. A bob (one shilling = ten cents) for each job (chore) was the going rate.

We were usually given something dreary, if simple, like sweeping all the leaves off the path; a householder, being suddenly asked for a 'job', was often at a loss to think of some quick and easy task. Still, we all enjoyed the slow filling up of our yellow 'Bob-a-Job' record card, showing the work we'd done and the cash we'd earned. Most people gave us three or four shillings, sometimes a ten-shilling note!

We'd all heard the story (urban myth?) of the man who'd got a team of 'Bob a Job' Cubs to wash his car, and then gave them a shilling to share among them. I'd like to say I met no-one this mean on my 'Bob a Job' rounds, but one elderly man in Yarran Road shook his head at me and grumbled, 'Oh no. We're pensioners, son.' I remember exactly which house he lived in. Forty years later, he may still be in there, counting his bobs and zacs and deeners...

Guides and Brownies sought 'A Willing Shilling'. How very girly. After decimalisation, 'Bob-a-Job' was given the lacklustre name 'Cents for Service'; in time, the whole idea lapsed. Today, the idea of children, alone, knocking on stranger's doors and entering their houses, is alarming. I never heard of any of us coming to harm, though. We played all those rough, outdoors games down at the Scout Hall without insurance cover. How ever did we survive childhood?

### **Badges and Awards**

I will write only of those awards I earned myself.

The photo below was taken in 1962, when I had attained the dizzy heights of Sixer of the Blue Six, not through ability, merely by seniority. My uniform shows the twin 'Sixer' stripes on the left sleeve. Just above them, and hard to see on this scratched old black and white snapshot, is my Blue Six shoulder patch.



On my left breast is, I think, the Leaping Wolf patch, meaning that I'm about to 'Leap' (graduate) from the Cub Pack to the Scout Troop, which I did the following April. This replaced the Tenderfoot Badge, which was the very first thing we all earned. 'Tenderfoot' (or 'pad') proved that one could produce the two-finger Wolf Cub Salute, and could repeat the Cub Promise, which I remember as:

*I promise to do my best  
To do my duty to God and the Queen  
To obey the laws of the Wolf Club Pack  
And to do a Good Turn every Day.*

Sound moral precepts, though hard cheddar if you were a natural sluggard, atheist, or anarchist. I don't recall any clauses providing penalties for those who didn't do their best, their duty to either the sovereign, or the Deity, or who hadn't sought an opportunity to do a Good Turn.

(B-P's original *Scout Handbook* provides a penalty of 'one mug of cold water poured down the sleeve for every instance of swearing or bad language.' I'd like to have seen someone try that on some of the burly and freely-spoken Scouts in our troop.)

Above my Leaping Wolf patch is a metal star with a figure '2' in its centre, meaning that I had 'Two Eyes Open'. There was a series of tests, suggesting the growth of a Wolf Cub from birth to maturity, which progressed from Tenderfoot, through One Eye Open (One Star) and Two Eyes Open (Two Stars), each test developing one's skill and self-confidence, and providing us with many matters to study on our Cub Nights, when not tearing about shouting. Each Star we won would be set beside the Wolf patch on our cap, like two 'eyes'.

My left sleeve is invisible, but I managed only two badges, one being 'House Orderly' and the other, I think 'Toy Maker'. Part of the limitation here was that there were only eight badges in total to gain, and each had to have available to the Pack a willing and qualified Examiner.

My father was the Guide Badge examiner; I recall one small Cub, standing in uniform in our kitchen and looking up anxiously at Dad who had sternly asked him the way to Oatley Station. I'm sure he passed.

For my House Orderly badge, I had to go to Mrs Someone's house, and accomplish such challenging tasks as 'Make Cup of Tea' and 'Sweep Floor, Whilst Also Employing Dustpan and Brush.'

Rob Hodge, another 'House Orderly' recipient, says that this nice lady lived in Rosa Street.

The Toymaker Badge I'd rather forget; even I was ashamed of the collection of sorry playthings I'd fashioned. I can remember neither of my Examiners; they must have been even less rigorous than my father in their requirements.

I also seem to have taken a long time to get my Second Star ('Eye Open'), and one was not allowed to try for any further badges if one was stuck with just One Eye ajar.

Our Pack had other awards and incentives. I had to wait until almost my last gasp as an OBSS Wolf Cub before I made Best Cub of the Month, in March 1963:



I don't know who Mrs Blackett was, may God rest her soul, but I still have the book (*Tan, a Wild Dog* by Thomas C, Hinkle). In fact, I never read it. I preferred *Mary Poppins* and *The Silver Sword*, *The Sun on the Stubble*, or *The Phantom Tool Booth* to 'Biggles' and other conventional boy stuff about dogs or dare-devils.

I seem to recall being aware, even at the time, that I was awarded this prize *faut de mieux*, as the last Cub in the Pack who hadn't been so honoured. I was a lively lad, full of beans and back-chat, and this may have been the reason why I didn't earn this token of Good Conduct years earlier.

### Outings

In 1960, it seems that camping out under canvas was banned for Wolf Cubs, and this may have been the reason we went only to permanent Scout Camps with barracks to sleep in.

The first and most memorable was to Pennant 'Ills Scout Camp, no haitch required. I recall chiefly the difficulty I had getting to sleep the first night. The other boys whispered and giggled all night, and a delegation had to go and ask Akela to shut them up, thus catching the adults in the act of eating a supper of crumpets. *We* had eaten from a cauldron of glutinous stew made by Helper Mum Mrs Easton, a concoction which the boys had all grimaced at, and christened 'Easton's Goo'.

I recall also that in the office at the front of the Pennant 'Ills camp, I saw a genuine WWII German steel helmet, which I craved with all my being.

I was an odd child. When we played soldiers in the bush at Oatley, I played a Nazi soldier, or rather, one of the Wehrmacht. I thought the British uniform stodgy and the German outfit smart.

Thus, I now took my courage in both hands, and begged one of the Pennant Hills Scout Leaders for this helmet, but he replied casually, 'Nah, we need it. We use that for rock-fights.'

Rock-fights? An odd activity for a Scout Camp. But who was I to argue with a man who wore a Nazi helmet and a Scout Leader uniform while pitching gibbers at his peers?

It was at Pennant 'Ills Camp that I took my first steps towards the theatre and the craft of words. In the best traditions of Scouting, we followed our meal of Easton's Goo with a campfire, where we sang Baden-Powell's classic nonsense composition:

*Ging Gang Gooli Gooli Gooli Gooli Wash Wash,  
Ging Gang Goo, Ging Gang Goo.*

*Ging Gang Gooli Gooli Gooli Gooli Wash Wash,  
Ging Gang Goo, Ging Gang Goo.*

*Hay la, oh Hayla Shay-Lah  
Oh Hayla Hayla Shay Lah ho!  
Hay la, oh Hayla Shay-Lah  
Oh Hayla Hayla Shay Lah ho!*

*Shalli-walli, Shally-walli, Shalli-walli, Shally-walli  
Oom-pah, oom-pah, oom-pah  
Ging Gang (etc.)*

After this, it was skit time. The Blue Six produced a rapidly devised sketch of mine. Her Majesty The Queen was visiting Australia at the time, which fixes the date of this incident as February-March, 1963. Prime Minister Bob Menzies had delivered an interminable address of welcome, even reciting some lines of Robert Herrick's:

*I did but see her passing by  
And yet I love her till I die!*

When Ming finally ground to a halt, H.R.H. stood and said simply, 'I am deeply touched.' I still recall my mother's pungent remark about this. Nothing is to be gained by setting it down here.

In any case, our skit was a spoof of that farcical, Prime Ministerial welcome. I played 'British to the Boot Heels' Ming to the hilt, puffing and posing and pretending I couldn't read my speech, spinning it out as long as I could. Peter Sewell played the Queen, draped in some sort of blanket and absurd improvised crown, and I must say, Peter played H.R.H. with considerable dignity. He stood slowly and spoke his single line with singular aplomb:

*I am deeply touched.*

... and the place went up with a roar like a bushfire. The adults were in hysterics. The applause was louder than a hundred rocks striking a thousand steel helmets. I've never forgotten it; I became an applause addict from that moment.

### **Day Trippers**

All our outings otherwise were day trips. We'd catch the electric train (one of the old 'Red Rattlers') from Oatley Station. At Sutherland, we'd change onto the (then) non-electrified line, and take a diesel rail motor car to Waterfall.

We'd hike in the bush, have a swim in the river perhaps, then head tiredly back to Waterfall station, where we'd descend upon Don's Fish and Chips.

Our Pack once attended Church Parade, in the Methodist Church on the corner of Frederick and Letitia Streets, Oatley. While seated in our pew, I whispered to Akela that she had forgotten to take off her hat. We'd had to remove our caps. She whispered back that it was okay, because she was a lady. This was something I'd never doubted, but I quickly understood what she meant. My parents weren't churchgoers, so I'd never known this tiny bit of etiquette. Always learning things at Cubs, I was.

The Pack once took a Red Rattler to Cronulla, and then a ferry to Bundeena, where I saw a deer in the bush, though no-one believed me. I recall the water of Port Hacking being preternaturally clear. I looked over the stern and saw our ferry's large, horizontal (?) propeller turning, and tiny fish darting away.

We also visited the Jamboree in 1960, held at Lansdowne, of which I remember little, save that there was a large number of tents and Scouts. I had never seen so many variations on our uniform.

Somewhere around 1962, OBSS organised a Bike Rally. We rode around the streets and bushland parks of Oatley West, a place far, far away, following a map. There may have been more than one Pack or Troop involved in this. We passed through check-points, and stopped at certain places to take part in various activities. I remember only one: hefting a concrete Besser Block (breeze block) in the presence of someone's Dad, and having to estimate its weight. We all seemed to be hopeless at this task, and his response to every one of our guesses was, 'Jeez, I wouldn't take *you* fishin'!

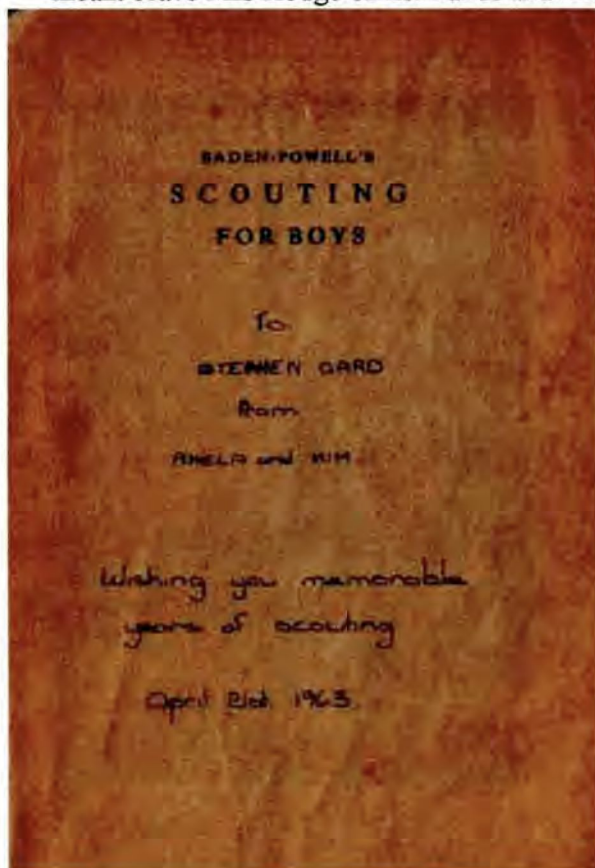
I think we went at least once to the newly opened (1958) Heathcote Scout Camp, which had bunk-houses, but just because we weren't under canvas didn't preclude 'bush' type activities. One such, was for each Six to create a 'Wolf Cub Den' for itself, a 'gunyah' type of structure, built from twigs, bark, leaves and branches we gathered. The challenge was to make this Den commodious enough for the Six to sit inside, with a door just large enough for a Cub to crawl in and out, but not so large that Shere Khan could enter (read your *Jungle Book*). The final test was if Akela could get in, which meant brave Mrs Hodge on her hands and knees, crawling into several precarious tee-pees of decaying eucalypt limbs. I think this may have been one occasion when she was obliged to remove her hat.

All these happy, patchy memories add up to many joyous days of Wolf Cubbing, among agreeable companions, and the very best kind of adult company, those who give their spare hours and hearts to the young.

### 'Going Up'

In January 1963, I turned eleven years of age. I was now eligible to join the Sea Scout Troop.

The Pack and the Troop usually tried to arrange a joint meeting, where a 'Going Up' ceremony could take place. I seem to recall that our Ceremony (there were three or four of us 'Going Up') was held in the Oatley Pleasure Grounds, in the area above our Hall.



I had seen other such ceremonies at Scout Camps. The Scouts generally built a symbolic 'bridge' for the Cubs to walk over, sometimes over a creek or gully, sometimes just a raised structure on flat ground. On one side of the bridge the Cub Pack would assemble, on the other, the Scout Troop. Having been farewelled by Akela, the Cubs would clamber across, be welcomed by the Scout Leader, and take their place with their Patrol, acutely aware of their junior status and 'wrong' uniform, but proud to be now among the Scout Troop, all of whom seemed to be tall, grown up young men.

At my 'Going Up' I was presented by Akela with this memento. The pages are now quite browned:

My few years of Scouting were indeed memorable.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Oatley Bay Sea Scouts – Our People**

I have no photo of our Sea Scout Troop, so I have to rely on my memory for the names of my peers. Their spelling is likewise from memory!

The boys who met me on the other side of the 'Going Up' bridge included Colin 'Piggy' Pearson, who was, or became, one of our Patrol Leaders, (I have no idea how he earned this nick-name, he wasn't at all tubby), Doug Barnes, Preston Dunn, Owen Manly, Tony Culberg, Wayne Dean, Russell Story, Trevor Maddock, Tony Armstrong, Graham (?) Woodcock who was the younger brother of our Scout Leader Doug, Ken Sewell (Peter's Elder brother), Chris Melrose, John Piper, Ken Doble, Bruce Hooper. I had 'Gone Up' with Jim Wilson, Rob Hodge, Preston Dunn and Colin Packer. Alan Hickson joined later, as did some of the (then) younger Cubs, like Philip Dietz and Colin Manly. I think there were about 30 of us, all told.

The Oatley Bay Senior Scouts included Graham Roberts, whom I remember chiefly because he lived in Yarran Road. I think Graham later became a National Parks Ranger.

Our Troop Leader was ginger-headed John Eden, as solid (and to us as elderly), as the Como Bridge. He may have been eighteen years old. The Troop Leader was a sort of Warrant Officer to the two Scout Leaders. I have little recollection of John's ever saying anything, save quietly and rather gruffly, though we all liked him.

John's job was to call us to form up for Parade. He rang the ship's bell for silence and ceremony, led our salute of the flag. Then Skip and Bosun would make their entrance from the office door at the end of the hall, like the Captain and Executive Officer appearing on the bridge of a destroyer, to a fusillade of salutes, and the evening's activities began.

Our Scout Leaders were Doug Woodcock (Skip) and Barry Fiddick (Bosun), and they made a good team. Skip and Bosun were also a complementary pair physically. Both were in their middle to late twenties, I'd guess. Skip was tall, tanned, lanky, good-looking: officer-like. In later years, when I saw actor Andrew McFarlane as Lt. Keating in the ABC's 'Patrol Boat', Skip Woodcock came alive for me again. Barry Fiddick was short, heavy, laconic: a Chief Petty Officer or Engine Room Artificer type, NCO material. (Fiddick seems such a 'sea-faring' name, too, like 'futtock'.)

'Chief' Darville occasionally paid our Troop a visit. Chief Bill Darville was the Oatley Bay Group leader. One of the OBSS surf boats was named after him.

He was a big man, who bore himself with all the gravitas of a Rear Admiral, but even as a child, I thought he looked rather silly in shorts.

Shorts don't suit certain males, they tend to diminish their dignity. B-P was almost always depicted from the waist upwards. Full-length photos of him suggest why.

It was daunting at first to be among 'old men' of fourteen, fifteen, even sixteen. I had in the Wolf Cubs been (relatively) richly clothed in tokens of rank and attainment, and wore an air of *savoir-faire*. Now I was a gawky sprog in an almost naked uniform.

Still, in the Sea Scout Troop I was once again among amiable companions, with no bullies, teases, or sooks. The boys didn't suffer fools gladly, though! One's 'elders and betters' could be scornful of those who made a poor effort at anything, or let the side down. Yet, 'Do Your Best', and you were accepted as one of the mob.

---

It wasn't until years afterwards that I heard about Doug 'Skip' Woodcock's sad death. I left the troop not long before he died. Whatever the circumstances, I remember him as a friendly, softly-spoken, imaginative leader who arranged for us all to have a great deal of useful fun: fun with a point, learning and active fun, and for that, I will think of him always with affection and gratitude.

### Our Uniform

Sea Scout Uniform was more interesting than the Wolf Cub outfit. We had more bits and pieces dangling from and around us, and more insignia of status was to be had.

I have no images of myself then, but this photo of Sea Scouts taken around this time (1960) gives a general idea of how we looked, wink being optional:

Starting from the floorboards again: the same black leather shoes, stockings, garters with tabs, and sock-tops as the Wolf Cubs. The same dark-blue shorts, but we kept ours up with a Scout black-leather belt, with its black iron Scout fleur-de-lis clasp. The belt had to be kept polished and supple with something called 'Raven Oil'. The clasp rusted if not cared for.



From the belt dangled a clasp knife. There was status at stake, here. No pen-knife from Coles or Woolies would do. The 'correct' type had a covering of black, knurled plastic. It had one blade, and a can and bottle opener, as well as a steel spike which we knew was NOT for removing stones from horses' shoes, but a 'marlin-spike' for unpicking knots. We called this a 'Navy' knife, but it was a WWII British paratrooper model, it seems.

Like the woggle, the choice of knife carried was an area where a Scout might show some individuality. I never saw a Swiss Army knife; all knives were versions of this basic, useful, no-fuss 'tool'. The fancier knives were entirely of stainless steel.

Our shirt was the 'bush' type, Australian Naval style, of tough cotton, with epaulets and two big pockets at the breast. British Sea Scouts wore a jersey with 'SEA SCOUTS' across it in large letters, which looked a bit redundant to me. We were obviously Sea Scouts, who needed a label? And where did they carry things?

Around our necks we wore the same scarf as the Wolf Cubs, but we also had a white lanyard, just as hard to keep clean! Unlike the boys in the photo, our lanyard went around the left sleeve, under the left epaulette (which kept it in place) and then tucked into our left shirt pocket.

It had a small loop at the end, where Patrol Leaders could attach a whistle, the Aussie Thriller 'referee' style, or if they were more traditional (and expert), a bosun's pipe.

I could never blow this 'pipe' the way a real naval Rating could, with that plaintive rising and falling note, for greeting Rear Admirals or Area Commissioners or other nobs. Neither could anyone else, though.

Our Troop flash went on the right sleeve, and our coloured Patrol 'shoulder knot' on the other. Area patch was on the left pocket. For the rookie, that was all. But there was a whole world of awards ahead, if one stuck at Scouting.

Topping all this, was a Navy Style cap with 'Sea Scouts' on the band.

These caps had often to be scrubbed with soap and water, because they easily got dirty, and they were expected to be snowy, like a cloud. Or a whitecap.

### **Weekly Meetings**

Scout Night may have been Friday night. I don't recall, but it was a weekly event. We were organized into Patrols. I think there were four, and a maximum of eight Scouts in each patrol. I was of the recently created Gannet Patrol (Troop numbers were expanding) and our colours, worn as a 'shoulder knot', were grey and orange. Other patrols were the Sea 'Awk, no 'haitch' employed, the Petrel, and the Albatross.

(I recall considerable discussion on whether it was the *puh-TRELL* or the *PET-rull* Patrol. The authorities support the 'petrol' pronunciation, but we preferred the poetry of *puhTRELL puhTROL*. Perhaps there should have been an Iambic Patrol.)

We were led by our Patrol Leader, who had two vertical white stripes on his left pocket to denote rank. His Second had one white stripe. I think the rest of us lined up beside these two in the order of our joining the patrol. Our 'PL' was Colin Pearson; Second, John Piper. Others I can't recall. What our weekly ceremony was I simply cannot remember. I think there was less hullabaloo than the Wolf Cub gala.



## **Knots, Ropes and Lashings**

Scouts are about knots. Sea Scouts, especially. They are also about poles and lashings and whippings, about block and tackle, about all kinds of rigging, descending from the days of sail. The knotting we'd done in Cubs was baby-stuff. This was post-graduate knotting, and a fascinating activity, too.

This was because we actually did things with the knots. Tying a bowline in a rope, and then lowering it into some declivity to haul something, or someone, out, had a point to it.

Sheep Shanks were for shortening ropes without cutting them; for taking up the slack. A Sheet Bend was for tying a thin rope onto a thicker one, or onto a hook. We actually did these things.

I learned to stop saying 'wreath knot' and 'clothes itch'. I learned to tie a Hangman's Noose - very satisfying. I learned that a Round-Turn-an' Two-Arf-Itches (some things don't change) was used to tie a tent-guy.

Even more interesting were lashings. You could actually build things, structures that you could climb on, with poles and lashings. The bridge the Scouts built for our Going Up was made this way.

Being knot-capable was a sign of Scouting status. Lashings were the true test. A wonky lashing, and your structure would come crashing down around your ears. Goodness knows how many Wolf Cubs were lost through shoddy 'Going Up' bridges. The toll must have been frightful.

I genuinely admired those of our Scout Troop who'd mastered these skills, as well as advanced work like whipping, which was used to prevent the end of a rope unravelling. I can still tie a Hangman's Noose, and a Carter's Hitch. Not always useful, but nice to know they're there.

## **Fires and First Aid**

First Aid was, again, like the Wolf Cubs activity, but more-so. We may even have graduated towards open-heart surgery, who knows? It was a necessary part of one's Scout knowledge. I learned the 'Fireman's Carry' and the 'Four-handed Seat', and NOT TO BREAK THE BLISTERS of a burn.

On the other hand, we never learned how to cut down the hanging body of a suicide, or throw cold water in his face (see *Scouting for Boys*, Yarn No 25).

Lighting a fire was, like tying lashings, another skill that sorted out the lads from the boys. The rule was that one must light a fire with just two matches. I was something of an expert at this. I could do it with one match. Even John Piper, stolid, sceptical Second of the Gannet Patrol, allowed that I had a tiny gift here. I could get a fire going even in mist or drizzle, even in the rain, with a ground sheet for shelter.

The trick was to make a little pyramid of thin stuff, like strips of bark or twigs. And then... but my secret will die with me. Not even my sons know it.

Incidentally, another bit of Scout lore we learned was that, after lighting the fire, the match had to be broken in half before it was thrown away. This was to make sure the match was out, so as to Prevent Bush Fires.

I did not understand this, then. I do not understand it, now. The match always became part of the tinder. One threw it into the fire. Why, in the name of sweet Lord Baden-Powell of Gilwell Hero of Mafeking and Chief Scout, would you throw it *away*?

Alas, there was no badge for fire-lighting. This was just a basic Scout skill, like tying a wreath knot or a clothes itch.

### Games

Games were just like the Wolf Cubs', but more-so, and due to the size of the players, more robust. In fact, we Scouts had less time for games because we had more learning to do, Advanced Lashing, for example. At weekend Camps there was more game-time. One I do recall was a two-storeyed version of 'Hoppo-Bumpo', one Scout climbing onto the shoulders of another, and then the opponents lunging at one another with arms folded until the other 'horse and rider' toppled. This was especially good fun in the water.

### Time and Tide

And speaking of water; on one summer's evening, Skip and Bosun devised for us a brilliant activity. It involved poles, and of course lashings, and the risk of getting soaked. What more could we Sea Scouts ask for?

I have told how, beside our Scout Hall in the Oatley Pleasure Grounds, there was a small beach, down below the sea-wall, enclosed by a shark net. (Whether sharks still cruise up George's River hunting Wolf Cubs I know not. I suspect not. The water is awfully foul these days.) To this beach, one summer's evening, we carried poles and ropes, and set about our assigned task.

Each Patrol had to build on the beach, from its heap of poles, a platform high enough to climb up onto and perch upon, before the tide came in and the dark fell. Its design was up to us, but we were allowed to use only the gear we'd brought with us, the same allowance for all.

We had about an hour for the task, I think. Our PL told us that it would be a silly idea to get fancy with the design, we should just construct a big tripod, with poles fixed to its legs horizontally, for us to stand on.

'I say, shall we use lashings?' I asked excitedly.

'Yes, we shall make our tripod with lashings, Gardy,' replied our P.L.

'Gosh,' I sighed. 'Lashings, eh? Good show.'

The other Patrols had started on large, fort-like structures, with a commodious standing platform surrounded by handrails and perhaps a mooring mast for dirigibles, but ours was up and done in half an hour. Suddenly, seeing us just about finished, Skip changed the rules. There now had to be a platform, where a fire could be built, on a bed of rocks and mud. Our design could easily incorporate that. We just laid poles across from each of our horizontal 'footrests' to the other, and attached them with, yes, lashings.

At this point, my memory of this event has faded. I still want to know how, after the tide came in, and it did, we got ashore dry-shod. Perhaps we got wet, but who'd have cared? The water was waist deep at the most. I also want to know who dismantled the structures standing in the water, hidden in the dark. I don't think it was us, or at least, not me. Was there a Working Bee next day, to pull it all apart? The lashings would have been tightened by the sea-water; there would have been a great plying of marlin-spikes.

## Badges and Awards

Scout badges and awards were serious stuff. The movement looked ahead with the aim of seeing you right through your youth to young manhood, keeping everything a challenge and providing ways of measuring your progress. There was never a 'competitive' ethos, B-P wanted boys to look to themselves and their own development, rather than striving to beat others. Teamwork, belonging, acknowledgment of effort. I believe one or two OBSS lads reached Queen's Scout, and beyond.

*B! R! A! V! O! O! O!*

## Tenderfoot Trek

One Saturday, myself and another Scout (who was it? Ernie Ring? Colin Packer?) made our Second Class journey. This was part of the requirement for the Second Class Badge, wherein it is written, in Paragraph 433 (11) of *Scouting for Boys*:

"Go by day, on foot, with another Tenderfoot Scout, a journey of 8 miles. The journey will have a route laid down by the S.M. (Scoutmaster) and an objective will be given. A verbal report from notes, will be made to the S.M. by the Scout immediately he returns."

We took the good old rail motor to Waterfall and slogged up to our objective, in this case, it was the Peach Trees trigonometrical station, in the Royal National Park, a destination well known to hikers. Once there, we ate our limp sandwiches, drank warm G.I. Lime Cordial from a plastic bottle, and tidily buried our mandarin peel. We took bearings in every direction with a prismatic compass that neither of us knew how to use, scrawled a map, and scribbled a log of sorts in an exercise book.

Afterwards, we slogged back to hand over our two-bobs and deeners in exchange for hot and greasy chips at Don's, Waterfall's famous road-side fish-and-chip dispensary.

Every Pack and Troop descended hungrily on Don's at Waterfall, after a day, or a whole weekend, of camp-fire food: gritty, tacky damper, burned chops, burst sausages, bitter billy-can tea made even more ghastly with squeezings from a tube of condensed milk, whole potatoes in charcoal skins, or just ETA peanut-butter sandwiches, warm and odorous in Tupperware lunch-boxes.

The natural diet of growing boys in those days was grease, in the form of potato scallops, potato chips, and battered 'flake' (a euphemism for shark meat, but nonetheless tasty and filling). These were lavishly powdered with salt, wrapped in white butcher's paper and a skin of *Daily Mirror*, and washed down with a bottle of Fanta or Passiona. These drinks were sugary brews of artificial flavour, preservative and colouring, upon which we thrived. Attention Deficit Disorder hadn't been invited then; folk remedies for poor behaviour, e.g. a swift clip on the ear, a mug of cold water up the sleeve, remained popular.

We young Scouts both failed our Second Class Journey, which was hardly surprising, but by this time I was beginning to lose interest in Scouting, as I explain in my final Chapter.

## Things We Scouts Didn't Do

1. Spoooring and tracking. Rather hard to do on water. B-P's *Scouting For Boys* told us all about Badgers and Stoats and such, but none of us learned to tell a Jackdaw from a Rook (*Yarn No. 15*) or to spot a Larch or Sycamore (see *Yarn No. 16*), or explain how the timber of each would burn in a campfire. Someone at one of our Scout camps pointed out to us some signs of grubbing in the dirt, and claimed this was caused by a Bandicoot. Perhaps it was. Could have been a rabbit, or a Scout burying mandarin peel.

On the other hand, we Sea Scouts could instantly tell a Gull from a Jelly Blubber. You dropped stones from the Como Bridge onto the big, orange blubbers pulsing by, because they stung your legs when you swam at Sandy Beach. A Gull hardly ever stung anyone. So much for spoooring.

2. Carry a Scout Staff. This was for the Lemon Squeezers. A hiking pole would be picked up by many of us, from the litter of sticks and boughs beneath the gumtrees, as we set out along a bush track. I still do so; I'd feel naked without it. But this carefully selected stick, useful for keeping one's balance over tricky patches of ground, or just whacking things, would be flung away at the end of the hike. It would be an encumbrance on the Rail Motor or Red Rattler, and especially within Don's Fish and Chips.

3. Semaphore. Still an utter mystery to me. (Even the Beatles got it wrong; witness the cover of Help!)

4. Estimation. Something I was interested in, though I secretly thought it was rather pointless to calculate the height of a flagpole by using our (non-existent) Scout Staff, the sun, a thumb, and the trigonometry I'd failed at High School. This 'estimation' lark was part of B-P's military background; scouts, by slinking into the enemy's territory and sneakily estimating the height of his flagpoles, were certain to damage morale and shorten a war.

## Working Bees

Scouts own lots of equipment; Sea Scouts even more. Equipment means maintenance, and maintenance means Working Bees. Our weekends were often occupied with tasks requiring elbow grease, down at the Scat Awl, by the Bay. We were often kept as busy as sailors on a long voyage, and it was interesting and useful work.

We had, one Saturday, to Paint the Boats. The four-oar and the Surf Boat needed their bottoms re-coated, so out they came from the Boat Ouse, over they went onto their gunwales supported by trestles, and to work we set.

Painting the bottom of a boat is a steady, peaceful pastime. A handful of we younger Scouts were detailed for this task, each with a brush and a pot of dark-blue, marine paint. Away we daubed.

The difference in temperament between our two leaders was, this day, made clear to some of us for the first time. 'Skip' Woodcock came over to inspect our work.

'Now fellers, this boat has to put up with all sorts of things - salt water, weed, barnacles, bumping into jetsam, scraping on sandbanks, rocks, strong sunlight - so, work that paint right into her timbers, work it in, work it in, work it in...'

We slowed our brushing pace right down, and we worked it in, worked it in, worked it in...

'Bosun' Fiddick stopped by to check on us.

'Look fellers, that paint is expensive! We haven't got much, and we can't afford any more, so spread it out, spread it out, spread it out...

We sped our brushing pace right up, and we spread it out, spread it out, spread it out...

'Skip' Woodcock came over to inspect our work.

'Now fellers, what did I just tell you? How this boat has to put up with all sorts of things? Remember the rock? Remember the weed? Remember the sunlight? So, come on, let that paint soak deep into the woodwork. Work it in, work it in, work it in...

I recall another working bee, when we built a slipway, from Oatley Bay's floor, right up to the top of the sea-wall. Along with others, I barrowed wet cement, backwards and forwards, or shovelled gravel into the big tulip-shaped bowl of the chugging cement mixer. It was quite the heaviest physical labour I, a short and slightly-built boy, had ever done, and I enjoyed it all. Young folk readily endure heavy work if they can see the immediate purpose of it, and the need for us to have a slipway from our dock into the waters of the Bay was obvious.

There was also the exciting fact of our having to get it all done, form-work, mesh, concrete mixed and poured, before the tide came in. We *just* made it. As the salt water crept up over our new structure, I asked Skip worriedly if the briny wouldn't dissolve and wash away our handiwork. Not at all, he said, it wouldn't hurt it. Indeed, by keeping it at an even temperature, the waters of the Bay would help properly to cure the concrete.

I had my doubts, and uneasily watched as one of the adults waded out and, stooping, pressed into the now completely submerged wet concrete a couple of steel eye-bolts, intended for mooring.

And of course, Skip was right. Next day, our slipway was still there, set firm, the mooring eye-bolts shiny and upright where they'd been set. Next week, we began to use the slipway regularly. In all, it was a most satisfying effort.

Did we inscribe our Troop name and the date in the wet concrete? I don't know. We may have been too exhausted to manage it. Perhaps the tide washed our initials away.

In any case, our worthwhile effort is inscribed in my memory.

### **Messing About in Boats**

Our fleet consisted of kayaks, a four-oared, two-place rowing boat, and a handsome, narrow, eight-scuil long-boat. We sometimes called it surf-boat, but I don't think this was correct.

*Rob Hodge observes: The larger boats were indeed surfboats. The original one was clinker built (overlapping planks). I think it was the one we called the Darville, named after the group leader and I think it was ex Garie SLSC. I cannot for the life of me remember the name of the 4-oared boat. Did Doug and Barry have a motor boat moored off the Hall called Flotsam?*

*We later got a sleeker model made from marine ply (same style as current surfboats). I think it was ex Coogee SLSC. It had 'fallen' off a wave onto a sandbank, breaking the ribs on one side. I can't recall who brought it back to OBSS hall, or who repaired it. But I do*

*remember painting it, and rowing countless miles in it on the Georges River, Hawkesbury River and regattas on Sydney Harbour and Lake Macquarie..*

*I have a recollection of the Darville being stored at Como in a boatshed below Central Avenue. I remember walking over the Como Bridge on a Friday night (a scary adventure with its missing planks), and then rowing the boat back to the Hall.*

*I can also remember us getting two dinghies, which we towed behind the surfboats on our Hawkesbury River Expedition with all our gear on board. That trip has its own memories.*

Why OBSS had no sailing craft, not even little Vaucluse Juniors, I don't know. It may have been due to expense, or lack of sailing expertise among our leaders, or simply that Oatley Bay and its sheltered arms and coves was too small or windless for tacking and reefing and luffing and whatever else it is sailing people do; I never learned. In any case, I never felt the lack.

Our big boat was the equivalent of the naval 'long-boat' of yore. In crews of ten, we rowed the OBSS surf-boat regularly, often on long summer evenings, around and around the Bay, sometimes out onto the river. Once we attended a Regatta, held up-river at Kyle Bay. We rowed the boat all the way there, raced, lost, and then rowed it back, along the choppy George's, toiling into a head-wind. Imagine the shame of towing it by road!

We each learned to handle our scull with the aplomb of a Royal Navy rating, and I gloated over all the rich, romantic talk of Nelson's Age that went with boatmanship – *bow, stern, starboard, port, thwart, keel, gunnels, painter, rowlocks*, ('rollicks' to me, until I saw the word written down) *stringers, cleats* – and the skill and discipline.

Rowing was an art, make no mistake. The blade of one's scull had to enter the water *just so*: splashing was lubberly. To scull, one bent forward, but not so far as to bash the spine of the rower in front, meanwhile pushing down on the handle to lift the blade, while rotating it ninety degrees so that it was edge-on to the wind, to avoid its slowing the boat. This is called 'feathering' and at first it foxes the novice rower.

Then, just before it entered the water, the oar had quickly to be turned vertically, so as to drop the blade perpendicularly, as cleanly as an Olympic diver knifing into a pool. Then came the power stroke, pulling back into one's chest, but not so far as to bash your ribs or fall over backwards.

We all took our cue from the 'stroke' oarsman on the port side; his starboard partner was the 'bow'. These were positions of honour, not by any means given to the Patrol Leaders or other 'elders' of the tribe, but to those boys who could row with the steady, rhythmic strength that set the tempo and the beat for the whole crew. I don't think we sang to keep time – we'd soon be out of breath! – but there may have been a cry from the Coxswain of 'stroke! stroke!' to keep us together if we were pulling at speed, or into a wind.

The Coxswain sat in the stern, plying the white steering ropes attached to the rudder. We didn't use the surfboat 'sweep' oar, because we didn't move or turn at that rate of knots. Perched on the small foredeck was the Scout who handled the painter (rope for tying the boat to the dock, but you would never speak so crudely of it) and the boathook used for 'fending off'. When not in use, the painter had to be coiled on the foredeck *just so* – like a big, flattened snail.

For our craft to strike, or even scrape against, a dock or sea-wall, or touch the rocks on the bottom, was a disgrace to be avoided at all costs. To do so would have been for us as scandalous as a captain stranding his destroyer on a sand-bar; he might as well hang himself from his own yard-

arm. In our case, we'd have to survive the almost unendurable jeers and contempt of the other Scouts, who took this kind of responsibility very seriously - and good for them, too!

Scouting encouraged and taught us to be responsible. God knows what our surf-boat had cost the parents, how many Lamington drives and chook raffles or outright begging of cash donations it took to raise the dough, but we didn't think of it in that manner, as just an expensive piece of 'gear'. Boats are not 'gear'; they have a personality. One loves and cherishes a boat, in a way one would never love, say, a pie-warmer or a tent.

No, we took care, because of competence, compliance, mastery, acceptance among the group: these were things of superior and lasting value. Crewing the long-boat was an honour, and a demonstration of mastery and 'arrival'. We Sea Scouts didn't ask for a more glittering prize than that.

I often wondered how anyone could be a boring 'land' Scout. Where was their romance, their high-seas adventure, their age-old, salt-caked jargon to be acquired and shared like a secret code? I'd heard even of Air Scouts, but I doubted profoundly that any such Troop owned its own aeroplanes.

How could you wear a hat that looked like your Mum's lemon squeezer? Who'd want to look like a knock-kneed Canadian Mountie?

Aye, we were definitely the Senior Service. We resembled sailors, and when 'at work', we spoke like them. Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of Coke.

Therefore, bringing the 1st Oatley Bay surf boat into dock was accompanied by more ceremony and ritual than the berthing of a battleship.

(Incidentally - we didn't wear, or even stow on board, life-jackets. We would have considered them as cissie as the CEBS (Church of England Boys Society), and life-jackets would have been a nuisance to scull in. This may cause some folks of our insurance-haunted age to gasp with horror, but we all had to show a swimming qualification before we were allowed out in a vessel of any kind.

All Australian primary school children attended a swimming scheme in those days, as part of their studies, so the vast majority of us possessed a Water Safety Certificate, proving that we could 'safety jump' into deep water, swim a short distance, and tread water for a certain time. There were plenty of OBSS boys who'd gone on to Bronze or even Silver Medallion-levels of swimming competence. Besides, why would they choose the Sea Scouts if they were afraid of water?

On top of all this, we had to demonstrate to Skip our swimming ability, no matter what our certificates said. We had no drownings, not even any incidents, in my time with OBSS. Indeed, the difficulty was keeping us out of the water; we swam and splashed around like seals at every opportunity.)

But to return to the berthing of the long-boat. The ritual was as follows.

On approaching the dock, the Coxwain would give the order 'Hold water!' This meant holding the blade of your scull firmly in the river, the blade vertical, to bring the vessel to a stand, or at least, to slow it quickly.

The next order would be 'Boat Oars'. This meant sliding your oar across the boat, so that its handle lay on the opposite gunwale. This allowed the water to run off the blade, though we were usually in

t-shirts and swimmers and didn't care about getting wet. (If we were in uniform, it was another matter!)

Then 'Toss Oars': lift and stand your oar on its handle-end between your feet, setting it upright like a mast, the blades aligned *just so*. Lastly, 'Ship Oars'; passing and laying the oars along the centre-line of the boat, blade towards the bow. There were other commands like 'Trail Oars' that I have probably forgotten.

Quite a business! Launching and setting off were just as ritualised. To get the boat ashore, we ran it into a cradle on wheels, then dragged it up the slip-way, thence into the Boat 'Ouse.

### Sea Scouts – Our Outings

Sea Scouts do it in the water, but they also do it in the bush. All basic Scout activity has to do with tents and camping and woodcraft and such, and thus, several times each year, off we'd tramp into the hinterland, where boys were boys, men were boys, guys were ropes, and the sound of poles being lashed together was deafening.

### Jamberoo

My first Scout Camp was under canvas, and at Jamberoo on the South Coast. This must have been in 1963, and I think we were there for a whole week, as part of large gathering of Scouts, perhaps an Area Camp. Whatever the occasion, what I recall chiefly was my first experience of intense home-sickness. I wasn't the only one; several of we younger ones got over this misery by singing a silly song we'd invented, that went something like

*I want my Muuummiiee,  
I want my Muuummiiee  
I want my Muuummiiee  
Now!*

After a while, we found that we couldn't sing this without bursting into laughter, and it helped us get over our sorrows.

This was my also first experience of a Scout Church Parade. There were quite a number of Troops there, and I noticed that *all* hats came off. I now knew that this was due to there being no Ladies present.

One of our hiking forays at this camp was by night, to Minamurra Falls, where I saw glow-worms for the first time.

I learned a new word at this Scout Camp, one which I didn't try out on my mother. She wouldn't have understood. The word was 'kybo', and it referred to the latrine.

I presumed this word was more B-P arcana; no doubt 'kybo' was a Hindu word he'd learned while serving on the North-West Frontier, like the British word 'khazi' (still in use), an Arabic word also derived from military slang of the Indian Empire period.

I couldn't have been more wrong. 'Kybo', I was assured, was an acronym of Keep Your Bowels Open. Bowels were another matter to which B-P devoted a Camp Fire Yarn: No. 18, in his *Scouting For Boys*



### ***Camp Coutts***

The next Scout Camp I remember was at Camp Coutts, near Waterfall. We probably took a bus there, because I we came home in one. We took large, ten-man tents, one for each Patrol, plus a huge canvas 'fly' (a cover to keep our tents rain and sun-proof). Struggling to get these, plus all the pegs and ropes and such, on and off trains, would have been too much to expect of us. Hence the bus.

Still, I believe we did carry our tents some way into the bush, and we didn't have a 'trek cart' (hand cart), either, though we sang a song about one:

*Over hill, over dale  
As we hit the mountain trail  
And the trek cart goes rolling along.*

*In and out hear them shout  
Gee, I'm glad that I'm a Scout,  
And the trek cart goes rolling along.*

There was also a ruder version (there always is, among boys) which I won't share. I still dread that sleeveful of cold water.

We arrived late in the afternoon, too late to put up tents, so we all slept under a huge canvas fly, to keep the dew off us, lying ranged round its extremities, our feet toward the middle. I had only an old cotton-wadding sleeping bag, instead of one of the new Dacron ones, and I was often cold at night when camping, even if I wrapped a blanket around me. The boys in their big, puffy sleeping bags with a hood looked like fat grubs lying about.

### ***Camp Activities***

One of our projects at this camp was to compete with other Troops, and build a footbridge across the upper reaches of Heathcote Creek, using ropes and poles, and of course, lashings. At the height of summer, with much creek-immersion involved, this was wonderful fun. Ken Doble and Doug Barnes and others endlessly demonstrated expert duck-diving, in mid-stream and Speedos, locating holes on the creek bed for our bridge supports.

The OBSS bridge, designed entirely by we Sea Scouts, wasn't as conventionally square as the one built alongside us by some Lemon Squeezers, but we thought ours beautiful. Our 'deck' was a freehand effort, whose surface ran up and down, following the contour of the rocky stream-bed, while the Squeezers', built under the stern supervision of their Scout Leader, was boringly right-angled and horizontal. One had to clamber up the Squeezer's structure at one end to reach the walking deck, and then clamber down the other side after crossing it, a terrible danger to any graduating Wolf Cub.

On the other hand, the OBSS bridge, Bridge of Many Lashings, started invitingly low on the bank and took one in a friendly, roller-coastering manner to the far side, with only the slightest dampening of the boot soles.

Big Chief Darvill was the nob who tested our bridges, by crossing them himself, but he, despite his Sea Scout leanings, awarded the prize to the Lemons, due to their tighter lashings, or their preference for the horizontal over the imaginative. I was glad the Chief looked so silly in shorts.

### *Woodcraft*

One Scout Camp 'leisure' pastime involved each Patrol competing to decorate its camp-site with the largest number of useless domestic appurtenances, using 'natural materials'. This caused a frenzy of gibber and gum-bough gathering, furious laying of rock-bordered paths and elaborate fireplaces, and frantic contriving of rustic dish-racks, mug-hangers, tea-towel pegs, wash-stands, shoe-trees, besoms, billy-lifters and similar aids to gracious living. There were lashings of lashings. Doug Barnes's Patrol easily won the Pointless Woodcraft Pennant with a boom gate at their tent's entrance. A little gum-bough arm could be raised and lowered to admit visitors. Nice.

### *Camp Shirts*

One could soon spot the 'old hands' at a Scout Camp: they wore a Camp Shirt. This shirt was donned when we were done with uniforms and ceremony and had gotten down to the serious business of camp life.

A 'camp shirt' was usually a faded but serviceable Scout shirt, bearing patches and badges the wearer had collected during his visits to camps, Jamborees, and similar Scout gatherings; or by making swaps with Scouts met there, for example, their shoulder-flashes. Established Scout Camps, like Pennant Hills or Heathcote, usually had a shop that did a brisk trade in such souvenir patches.

Rob Hodge on camp shirts: *Pale blue with a tassled white fringe around the bottom and on the back was stencilled 1st Oatley Bay in a crescent over a seahorse. Some lads had other Areas' badges on their shirt, others put badges on their camp blanket.*

(One or camp blankets such as these were recently auctioned on eBay. They are now collectible Australiana!)

### *At Night*

After dark at camp, there were usually activities planned to wear us out and make us sleep. My favourite was the Wide Game. These large-scale exercises in Scout-craft were of B-P's devising, and were part of Scouting from its beginning on the Isle of Wight. They were usually played by day. Ours were held in the evening.

After dark, Skip, our Scout Leader, and perhaps one other adult or older Scout, would climb to the peak of a nearby ridge, or a hill-top. Here, Skip would hang a couple of lit Tilly-lamps (kerosene pressure lamps that shed a very bright light) from the branches of a tree. Then, arming himself with a powerful flashlight, he'd blow three sharp blasts on a whistle to start the Game.

We assembled in the bush below. The objective was for each Scout to make his way up to the peak, and to tie his scarf to the lamp-lit tree, without being spotted by those 'on guard'. If a Scout was seen, usually by being caught in the torch beam and having his name called loudly, he had to make his way all the way back to the Start Line, and begin again. Some cheats didn't go all the way back! Oo-wah.

Pushing silently through the scrub, scrambling over boulders, dropping into gullies, at night, and without a torch or an O.H. & S. policy, meant we suffered a few grazed knees, scratched arms, bruised bums and the like, but one didn't notice these in the excitement of the quest. Wide Games at night were thrilling, and something else I was good at. Apart from the challenge of moving carefully and quietly, I loved the craftiness of choosing just the moment to make that final dash to

the target tree. I usually waited until Skip's back was turned, as he patrolled up and down, or better, when he spotted someone else and kept his torch trained on him while calling his name loudly.

### *Camp Fire Songs and Skits*

Like the Cubs, we gathered at the camp-fire after dinner, for singing and skits, but I can't recall any of our Scout gatherings. Perhaps we were too tired from bush-bashing to make much of a show!

We sang, of course, *Ging-gang-goolie*, the nonsense song created by Baden-Powell so that Scouts of all nations, no matter what their native language, could sing it together without having to wonder at its meaning; it had none.

We also sang rounds like:

*Fire's burning, fire's burning  
Draw nearer, draw nearer  
In the gloaming, in the gloaming  
Come sing and be merry.*

... and that old Service favourite, the interminable Quartermaster's Store, to which everyone tried to contribute a newly invented verse:

*There was gravy, gravy,  
Enough to sink the Navy,  
In the store, in the store.  
There was gravy, gravy,  
Enough to sink the Navy,  
In the quartermaster's store (ore-ore).*

*My eyes are dim, I cannot see  
I have not brought my specs. with me  
I have... not... brought... my-eye  
Specs... with... me.*

### *The Rafting Weekend*

I did not attend a later adventure, when the Troop built rafts upstream, and came all the way down the George's River on them back to Oatley Bay. I hope one of the other OBSS lads will write about it in detail, I was so sorry to have missed such fun.

Rob Hodge observes: *The Easter raft trips [were] from the Chipping Norton gravel pits back to the Hall. I have photo of a raft, Scouts armed with a mixture of home made paddles and cut down oars and wearing blue and white striped knitted beanies.*

### *1964 - USS Enterprise visits Sydney*

This aircraft carrier arrives during Operation Sea Orbit, circling the globe as part of a nuclear-powered 'good-will' strike-force. 1st Oatley Bay Sea Scouts, along with about 100,000 other Sydneysiders, are invited to visit. We all think fellow Sea Scout Wayne Dean is a big *poseur*, because while our troop, in uniform, shuffled aboard over the Public gangplank, Wayne comes aboard, in civvies, over the VIP footbridge, lines up with the Special Guests, and has his name ticked off in, or even signs, the Enterprise's visitors book. This is all due to his father working for

the Navy. We bet it was in some dockyards, deskbound capacity, surely nothing heroic or seamanlike.

One American sailor offered to swap caps with me; ours resembled the flat, oval caps of the Royal Navy, theirs being the infamous and rather shapeless cotton or duck 'Gob' hat. I was shocked; little did he realise how much this cap had cost my parents, how many hours of scrubbing with a nail-brush and Lifebuoy it had taken me to keep it snowy, how long it had taken me to coat the band inside with layers of dust and Brylcream.

I refused timidly, and thinking of it later, realised that my small cap would have perched on top of his big adult head like a bottle-cap, and also, that he could requisition himself another Gob from his store-keeper within hours, whereas I would not only be out of uniform, and look ridiculous with a cotton cap hanging down around my ears (he was BIG man), but would have to sacrifice who knew how much pocket money, until I could buy another.

Did we have fun on all these occasions? Were they unforgettable? I think the answer is obvious. Also obvious is the worth-whileness of the efforts all those adults made on our behalf. You cannot equip a child for life much better, than to provide him with a host of happy recollections.

### **Farewell to Scouting**

Just about then, *circa* 1965, puberty struck, and I became deeply absorbed in the study of girls and their purposes, and thrashing a guitar while warbling in a garage band, neither activity available in a Scout Troop. I also let my hair grow long - long for 1965, at least - in the hope of resembling a Rolling Stone.

This was not The Scout Way! Indeed, I recall one of the older OBSS scouts (no names, no pack drill) sneering that I 'looked like a girl'. Girls were bad things, according to that macho mob.

This was ironic. The first place I'd ever heard smutty talk was after 'lights-out' at Scout Camps. Elderly fellows, some of them 15 years of age, would deliver disquisitions on Girls and their Purposes, boasting of their knowledge and bragging of their intentions in that direction. All this, recited in the most tumescent detail.

B-P had written some straight-from-the-shoulder stuff about this kind of thing, in his *Scouting for Boys*. B-P had prescribed cold water and vigorous exercise as a prophylactic. We'd chanted that desideratum of his promise, 'A Scout is clean in thought, word, and deed', many times.

Yet, it seemed these world-weary 15-year-old Scouts hadn't read that Chapter. Perhaps there was a Badge they needed to work for: Cold Water and Vigour Award, Second Class. B-P himself hadn't married until he was 55. What strength of character! What a lot of cold water.

Well, Mick Jagger was never a Scout. And one Saturday in 1965, on my way to an OBSS working bee, one of my hairy, teenaged friends jeered, 'You still in the Scoutie-Wouties, Gardy?'

Scouts? Or cool and groovy guys with hair in their eyes, slashing at guitars to make girls swoon?

Hmmm.

No contest. I left OBSS, in quest of girls and guitars. But that's another story.