David John Smith

This is your Scouting Life

Contents

Introduction

1. David's early days
2. Formation of the Group
3. The Formation of the Parent Association
4. Fund Raising
5. The first few years
6. Establishing a Headquarters
7. 31st Gloucester (Highnam) Scout Troop
8. The new look to Scouting
9. A Trip to the Forest
10. A period of growth
11. In conclusion

Introduction

We are gathered here to pay tribute to David Smith on the occasion of his retirement as Group Scout Leader.

I would like to spend a short while recounting very briefly 30 years of Scouting in Highnam, but before I do, let me set the scene with an outline of David's early Progress in Scouting.

1. David's early days

David started his career as a Wolf Cub in the 2nd Gloucester Group. The Cubmaster was Mrs Murray. I said Cubmaster, as the old joke goes, Cubs were not allowed mistresses in those days. Mr and Mrs Murray were well known and respected figures within Gloucester District, and as a mark of respect the District Headquarters bears their name.

KING'S SCOUT

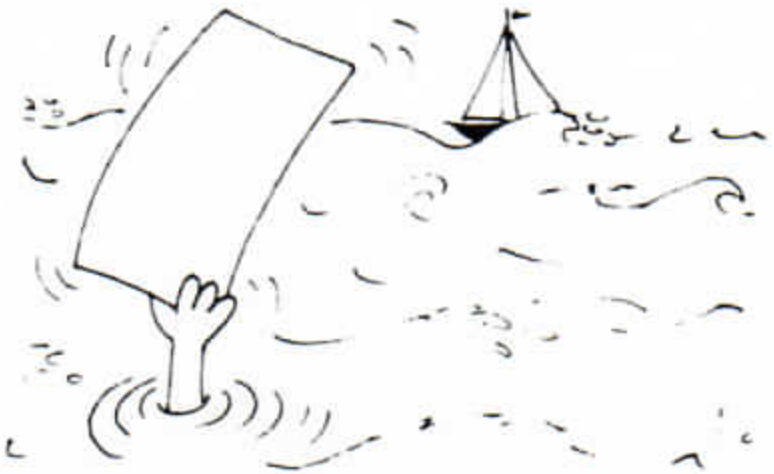
For those of you who can remember the terms, I believe David was a Wolf Cub, a Boy Scout, a Senior Scout and a Rover Scout, and gained the highest award the Kings Scout (now known as the Queens Scout Award for obvious reasons).

From 1944 to 1952 David was Assistant Scout Master of the 2nd Gloucester Scout Group, and then Group Scout Master until 1963.

WOOD BADGE

David gained his Advanced Training Award, the Wood Badge, in 1954. The Wood Badge consists of two beads on a leather thong, and entitles the holder to wear the Gilwell Scarf. David's Wood Badge has the No. 235.

In 1954 the troop went to the Scily Isles. On the boat trip over to the islands, everyone suffered from seasickness, with the exception of Win. At this stage it is worth stating that Win has always been supporting David, and this evening is as much a tribute to Win as to David.



This camp was also memorable for another reason. Can you remember, David, when a Scout dropped a bar of soap into the village pump. It took you 5 hours to clean it out before the pump could be used again.

2. Formation of the Group

The story of Highnam Scout Group begins on the 6th of May 1960 when the Eagle Patrol, a country patrol of the 2nd Gloucester Scout Troop, first met in the back garden of 113 Maidenhall. The patrol consisted of eight boys who were :-

Adrian Creeper
Paul Dando
Chris Earp
Peter May
Richard Pepperd
David Pryce-Jones
Guy Pryce-Jones
Esmond Turner

They were joined shortly afterwards by :-

Terence Salisbury
Michael Stait
Michael Waite

The patrol started to meet regularly in the Village Hall, or to use the correct title, Highnam Parish Rooms.

3. The Formation of the Parent Association

Early in 1961 the inaugural meeting of the Highnam, Rudford and Tibberton Boy Scouts Parents Association was held at 113 Maidenhall, attended by ten parents (more than we get now). By that time the troop had increased to 13 boys, and there was also a demand for a Wolf Cub Pack.

Three main requirements were identified :-

- Finances to pay the hall rent and provide equipment.

- A leader, as David could not be released from the 2nd Gloucester troop until a replacement was found.

- A permanent headquarters.

4. Fund Raising

On the finances, the Parent Association started organising whist drives, coffee parties, Jumble Sales, etc.

On the subject of Jumble Sales, can we please rely on yours and Win's continued support, as you are the only ones who know the drill. Also the tape around the neck looks most professional.

The main fund raising of 1961 was the skittles week on Highleadon Green. Skittles were played from 7pm each evening, finishing with a small fete on the Saturday afternoon. This event boosted funds by £35.

In 1962 Mr F.Hulbert organised a Variety Concert which raised the sum of £12-12s-6d. Tickets were priced at 3/6 and 2/6, with children half price.

The first Bob-a-job week raised £32-12s, a magnificent amount. As a point of interest, did you know that the first Bob-a-Job week was in 1949.

On the headquarters front, a number of options were being explored, more about that later.

A number of social events established during these early days became regular events, although they have now ceased.

The bonfire nights were very popular, with the whole village attending, for hotdogs and fireworks. One of the conditions of this event was that the refreshments had to be arranged to allow the ladies see the fireworks.

The annual Harvest festival was held at Lassington Church, with the steps to the church being illuminated by rows of candles in jars. I believe that the organ needed a strong arm on the bellows, and that it was your job. Unfortunately both the organ and church have since disappeared. All that remains is the tower.

5. The first few years

MEDAL OF MERIT

Also in 1961, David was awarded the Medal of Merit for 15 years outstanding service to Scouting. The Bar was added in 1971, following 25 years service.

By September Richard White had become Assistant Scout Master, Ken Lardner had expressed interest, and Janet Frost was interested in helping with Wolf Cubs.

The troop had doubled by the end of the first year to 17 boys, and had started to use the School in preference to the Parish Rooms. The troop met on a Friday evening, so that on Saturday they could make the school tidy for Monday lessons.

The troop had a number of camps during the first year including one at May Hill. The first summer camp was held at the Heritage, Crickhowell with the 2nd Gloucester troop. At this camp, as well as at many future camps, David was accompanied by Win and the young Roger and Kate. Early Scouts recollections of David at camp were of his strictness, especially on the first night of camp. After a number of attempts to quieten the boys down, the threat of taking them home next morning soon did the trick.

6. Establishing a Headquarters

As mentioned earlier, the main priority was to establish a permanent headquarters for the troop, especially as there was a third class at the school, and the facility might not have been available much longer.

A number of alternative sites were considered before it was eventually agreed in September 1962 to site a hut at the rear of the Village Hall. This was also approved by the Parish Council and Village Hall Committee. The next problem was to obtain a hut. Adverts were placed in the Citizen, and the "menfolk" investigated a number of leads.

Eventually a hut was found, but problems were still to be encountered, as recorded in the minutes, and I quote :-

> *"A hut from Smiths Sections had been ordered, but at the last moment it had been discovered that the one allocated was not theirs to sell"*

In April 1963 a tender of £155 was submitted for a construction workers hut at Berkeley Power Station. Following the completion of the Power Station, the construction company were required to clear the site, and this included 8 wooden huts most of which were used for accommodation. The tender was accepted and the hut chosen was the one used as the drawing office, complete with wiring and heating.

The hut was dismantled over three weekends by willing volunteers. The next weekend it was loaded onto a Williams and James Lorry and transported back to Highnam. By this time the site had been levelled, and the foundations laid, and the building was largely reconstructed over the weekend. Fitting out took a little longer, and the keys were not officially handed over until 1964.

The Group appointed the following Trustees for the hut :-

F.Hulbert

D.J.Smith

A.Jones

F.H.Watts

A.J.Waite

L.J.Creeper

H.C.May

R.G.White

As an interesting point, the hut has survived the last 30 years fairly well, although it has had one end rebuilt, and the roof re-felted Berkeley Power Station on the other hand.....

7. 31st Gloucester (Highnam) Scout Troop

On the 27th of May 1963 the troop was registered as the 31st Gloucester (Highnam) Scout Group, Registration No. 36550 with David Smith as Scout Master and Richard White as Assistant Scout Master. According to our Warrant Secretary, David was first Group Scout Leader of this new group from 1963 until 1975.

Early in 1964 a Wolf Cub Pack was formed with 15-16 boys, after a number of false starts, at one stage even suggested as a Saturday afternoon activity.

In June 1964 the Brownies start to use the hut, followed by the Guides a year later. This led to the Parents Association being renamed to "the Highnam, Tibberton and Rudford Scout and Guides Parents Association" and a constitution drawn up.

At the Annual General Meeting held in November 1966, "Skip" Smith reported that there were more guides than scouts. There were 8 senior scouts and 14 scouts. The group may have to visit neighbouring parishes to increase the numbers as the new look to scouting laid down a minimum number of 100 members for a group.

The first District Swimming Gala attended by Highnam scouts was held on 26th February 1967, with M.McCarthy gaining a second and third place. This was to be the first of many successes for Highnam over the years.

The Summer of 1967 was memorable for the county camp at Miserden, attended by the then Chief Scout Sir Charles Maclean. The event was a complete washout, with everyone up to their knees in mud. From a personal point of view, I can always remember the relative comfort of the Patrol leaders club, where good music played and drinks (soft of course) were readily available.

8. The new look to Scouting

The new look to scouting was introduced from the 1st of October 1967, with new tests, badges and uniforms. Greater emphasis was placed on the outdoor activities, aiming to get away from the knot tying image of scouts, and bringing it more into line with the youth of the 60's.

Later that year David was appointed District Commissioner for Gloucester District, a position he was to hold until 1978.

On the 31st March 1968 the new banners were dedicated at Rudford Church. It was reported in the minutes that Rudford Church was chosen in preference to Highnam Church to *"dispel any possible impressions the surrounding district may have that activities were exclusively concentrated at Highnam."*

Over the next few years, a number of leaders came and went, but David was always on hand to fill the gap. By 1973 the situation was getting pretty desperate, and at a meeting in October the plea went out.

> *"Mr Smith expressed his great concern about the shortage of leaders. Something must be done about this problem, as Mr Smith is unable to continue taking Scouts, Cubs, and also district work."*

At this stage there were 24 cubs in the pack, with David and his daughter Kate running it on their own.

9. A trip to the Forest

In 1975 the Group was transferred from Gloucester District to the Forest of Dean District. After numerous meetings and letters to the County and District Commissioners, the group eventually returned to the Gloucester District in 1978. The Group's neckerchief was changed at this stage from Black and Yellow to the Gold worn today.

SILVER ACORN

In 1976, David was awarded the Silver Acorn, which is worn on an orange ribbon around the neck and is awarded for specially distinguished service over a considerable period.

In 1979 David returned to the group as Group Scout Leader. From this point in time until the mid 1980's saw a significant growth in the size of Highnam, and also in the size of the Group.

10. A period of growth

By 1984 a second cub pack was required to accommodate the large increase. They were called the Kestrel Pack and The Eagle Pack.

In 1985 the Scout Association introduced Beavers for the younger boys, aged from 5 to 8 years, and one of the first Beaver Colonys in Gloucester was started at Highnam. At the Annual General Meeting in April 1985 it was reported that

> *"the Beaver Colony was at full strength, 24 boys, and there was a waiting list until 1990"*

That statement was true in 1985, was true in 1990, and will continue for the foreseeable future, showing that the movement is still as popular as ever.

11. In Conclusion

To summarise the last 30 years, Highnam Scout Group has given fun and enjoyment, as well as training in a number of different activities, to many boys. To achieve this has required dedicated service from a number of leaders, and the support of many parents.

Leaders have come and leaders have gone, but David has always been there to fill any gap, ensuring that Cubs and Scouts at least have survived throughout the period. David without your dedication and unselfish devotion to the Scout movement in general, and Highnam Scout Group in particular, I believe that Scouting in Highnam would have disappeared years ago.

David's Scouting Career

1944 - 1952	Assistant Scout Master
1952 - 1963	Group Scout Leader
1954	Wood Badge No 235.
1961	Medal of Merit
1963 - 1975	Group Scout Leader
1969 - 1978	District Commissioner
1971	Bar to Medal of Merit
1976	Silver Acorn
1979 - 1991	Group Scout Leader