

4th Worcester Park Scout Group

Friends of the Fourth

Newsletter

Christmas Edition 2008

No. 22

Editorial

This year we celebrated the Group's 75th Anniversary and what a year it has been! Under the leadership of our Group Scout Leader, Paul Green, we have seen a highly successful weekend camp based at the headquarters and a first class Anniversary Dinner. The camp was an amazing sight, looking at all the patrol tents lined up along the Sandringham Road boundary with many activities on site and many more away from the headquarters. The Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers had a brilliant time. We then had our 75th Anniversary Dinner also held at headquarters where many Friends were present. The speaker was Lord Baden-Powell, grandson of the Founder. He was mightily impressed with what we are doing at the Fourth. You can read more about these events later in the newsletter.

We would encourage you to drop us a line, phone us, or e-mail with news or recounting stories from your time in the Fourth. Details of how to contact us are at the end of the newsletter, and also please continue to encourage former members of the Group with whom you are still in touch to join the Friends - the £2 a year subscription is their only commitment. Please also let us know your views on a possible Friends' Reunion suggested by **Tony Hadfield** - see under "News from Members" below.

We wish you and your families a very Happy Christmas and health and prosperity in the New Year.



Barrie Spelling

1943 - 2008

It is with profound regret that we advise that Barrie died quite suddenly in the USA where he has been living and working for many years. Barrie was a superb Queen's Scout whose work in a very senior position in industry did not prevent him from devoting much energy to the underprivileged. We offer our sincere sympathy to his family in the USA and in this country.

News from the Group

Apart from the excitement of the 75th Anniversary celebrations, the Group continues as a flourishing organisation in Worcester Park. Numbers are up and the programme of events is excellent. The past few months have seen another first class Summer Fair, then a fabulous, if wet, fireworks display and an excellent turn-out for the annual Remembrance Day Service and parade at Christ Church with St Philip. The Group paraded with colours at the Church, then at the War Memorial where we laid a wreath, and then paraded down Central Road to the Royal British Legion headquarters where we had refreshments.

We recently held another successful Christmas Bazaar and we will be holding our annual Christmas Party for local Senior Residents shortly - this will be attended by the Mayor of Sutton. We have a new Akela for Anglia Pack - Mark Dennis, although we are still seeking Beaver Leaders for Birch Beaver Colony.

Christmas Eve Service

If you are in Worcester Park on Christmas Eve, you are welcome to attend the traditional Service led by the Fellowship in the Rover Den at 7.30pm and which will be followed by mince pies and punch. The event does not last long as most have other commitments, but you are very welcome.

75th Anniversary Camp by Paul Green, Group Scout Leader

What a camp! Nine months in the making, 107 young people from our Group, over 30 tents, a Service Crew, five minibuses and a coach, water sports, visits to the farm and an Activity Centre along with craft, team building, a camp fire and fireworks display all squeezed into one weekend. I am truly proud of what we achieved. Everybody worked so hard to make it happen and I am very grateful. I must say a special thanks to the Tigris Service Crew from 1st North Sutton. This Group did most of the planning and organisation and without them it would not have happened. They provided all the food and drink, they all worked very hard and just because they enjoy it! There are many more for me to thank but not enough space. Now we have shown what we can do we need to carry on the good work. We are a big Group with some big ideas and only by us all working together and helping out when we can will we achieve our goals. I have had some special comments made to me by various old and young members of the Group and District:

- *"I have not seen this field like this for 40 years" - A Fellowship Member*
- *"Will I see my big friend from the Explorers again?" - A Beaver*
- *"Excellent. Well done to you and your Group" - District Commissioner*
- *"Very impressed, Very well done to you and your team" - Group President*
- *"Thank you so much for letting me be a small part of your camp this week end. What a fantastic bunch of young people, leaders and helpers you have. You should be very proud of them all. They obviously think the world of you - and it was a pleasure and a privilege to be involved. Your young people do you proud." - District Member*

75th Anniversary Dinner

GSL Paul Green and his wife Steph and their families, with some help from members of the Group, spent hours decorating the main hall with the Group colours. It looked magnificent. Andy Marshall (the Group Quartermaster) and his team erected a huge outdoor marquee adjoining the HQ while the caterers occupied the whole of the Apeldoorn building for preparation and serving. The proprietor of the catering firm, a former Scout Leader, led the team which provided the dinner for no less than 130! The menu of broccoli soup, shank of lamb, roast potatoes and vegetables, lemon medley, cheese boards, coffee and mints was excellent.

Our principal guests were Lord and Lady Baden-Powell. Lord B-P (Grandson of the Founder) spoke briefly but eloquently. Speeches were limited to the District Commissioner and GSL to allow adequate time for chatting with old friends. Dancing followed with a live band in the hall. There was also a fun casino and time for meeting and catching up with news in the marquee extension. This was a wonderful opportunity for a renewal of acquaintances of former members without the responsibility of preparation and clearing up after the dinner. No less than five former GSLs in addition to the current GSL Paul Green were present - Fred Fletcher, Keith Daly, Bob Prescott, Les Prescott and Peter Kinton. Current leaders included Neil Oxley, Anne Mays, Carol Salter, Valerie Street, Sally Coates, Mark Dennis, Ben Alembick, Sally Washington, John Humber, Alan Avery, Geoff Morris, Leigh Wicks and David Sweetland.

Among those attending were Alan Barnard, John Pryke, Sheila Kinton, Graham Stroud, Stuart Cornish, David Zinzan, Paul Dovey, Brenda, Mick and Simon Hunt, Patrick Jacobs, Martin Richardson with his Explorer Scout twin sons, Paul Washington, Ron Kinton, Simon Hedger, Pat Worrall, Neil Oxley, Andrew Root, Brian Yearley, Claire Hobbs (Wilkinson), John Hall and Andy and Dawn Casali.

News from Members

Tony Hadfield was unable to attend the dinner, but he did join us at the Anniversary Camp for the celebration campfire and fireworks. He is interested in the possibility of a "Friends" Reunion and suggests a lunch time. If others are interested, please let us know and we will see what we can arrange. We were also very pleased to see **Ellen Bolton** and her scout family attending the campfire. Ellen was formerly Akela of Anglia Pack.

We were pleased to be able to help Richard Baldwin, son of **John Baldwin** and grandson of the late **Wally Baldwin**. Richard contacted us through the Friends of the Fourth e-mail address (fotf@4wp.org.uk). Richard is currently a Scout Leader at 1st Claygate, and his Dad's 60th birthday was imminent. He was planning to surprise his Dad with some old photographs of him as a Scout in the Fourth in the early 1960s at his 60th birthday party and we were happy to oblige!

Also through the Friends' e-mail address, we heard from Nina Jukes, daughter of **Andrew Craton**. Nina and her sister accompanied Andrew to the Summer Fair in 2007. Nina was keen to get her father a 4WP sweatshirt which members of the Group Fellowship were wearing at the Fair and which he had admired. Sadly these are currently out of stock but we were able to supply a set of 4WP badges and a Group scarf which we understand Andrew is very happy with.

We've heard again from **Alan Rush** on the Isle of Man. He has sent us a press cutting from the local paper - the Manx Independent - about Scouts helping out at the Isle of Man TT races. In essence, Cubs, Scouts and Explorer Scouts assist at the races with a 94-year old scoreboard. There are several tasks to do, but the main one is a system which has been in use since the mountain course was introduced in 1914 and Scouts have operated it in all that time! The system requires hand painting lap times, average speeds and race leaders on wooden boards which are quickly hung on nails on the main scoreboard. Scouts also help with the collection of data using more modern equipment - installed just 35 years ago! Thanks for sending us the cutting, Alan. It makes fascinating reading.

Senior Scouts

We've mentioned that several former Group Scout Leaders were at the 75th Anniversary Dinner, but it was also noted that nearly all the former leaders of the Senior Scout Troop and its successors were present. The Senior Scout Troop came into being in 1949 when several older Scouts approached Peter Kinton to ask him to become the first leader of the new Troop. Peter continued in that role until 1965 when he was asked to become Assistant County Commissioner (Senior Scouts) for the new county of Greater London South West. Brian Yearley, who had been Peter's Assistant, took over and ran the Troop and oversaw the transition to Venture Scouting. Senior Scouts (and Rovers) were superseded by Venture Scouts following the Advance Party Report of 1966. Venture Scouts were aged 16 to 20, while Senior Scouts had been 15 to 18 and Rovers 18 to 24. There was therefore now no training section for the over-20's.

In 1969, Brian relinquished his role as Leader and later became Group Quartermaster. Brian's assistant, Les Prescott, took over as Leader for the next 17 years. During his time as VSL, he also acted for five years as ADC (Venture Scouts) and also helped at Venture Scout Leader Training courses. He remembers, during his early twenties, advising potential Venture Scout Leaders that they should seriously think about their role as VSL's after the age of about 40 - which was "ancient" to him then! So, in 1986 when Les was 40 himself, he decided to take his own advice and stepped down, taking over the GSL role from Peter Kinton.

Alan Avery then became VSL for many years, followed by Patrick Jacobs. Les had been a Senior Scout when Peter was SSL. Patrick had been a Venture Scout when Les was VSL! Patrick led the Unit for a good many years until family commitments led him to step down and Alan again took the helm until Headquarters decided to review the age range again, 40 years after the Advance Party Report. The age range for the new Explorer Scouts were to be 14 to 18 - back to the old Senior Scout age range (nearly). Albert Short became the new Explorer Leader for a while, then Leigh Wicks, who had been a Cub, Scout and Venture Scout, became the new Explorer Leader and is currently running the Unit. It is now managed by the District, but for all intents and purposes remains firmly a part of the Fourth. There is also now a section covering the age range 18 to 24 (the old Rovers) called the "Scout Network". This is managed by the County. We wonder whether the time will come when things turn full circle and we have a Group attached "Scout Network" as successful as the old 4WP Rovers were under the leadership of RSL **John Humberstone**?

The Pianise

In 1975, the Venture Scout Unit planned a summer expedition to Italy. The idea was to spend a week in the Italian Dolomites, as the Senior Scout Troop had done successfully as part of the County sponsored "Trans-Dolomite Venture" (TDV) nine years earlier in 1966. However, the Unit also wanted to relax a bit after some strenuous walking in the Dolomites and had heard that Dr Derek Pollard, who had been Assistant County Commissioner for Senior Scouts in Surrey back in 1966 and had been involved on the TDV, had recently taken some Scouts to Lake Garda. The Unit therefore contacted Dr Pollard who introduced us to Dr Lil de Koch, a retired scientist living at Porto di Brenzone on the eastern shore of Lake Garda.

Dr de Koch was a truly interesting person. Of German origin, she had fled the Nazi regime in the 1930's and had become an eminent scientist in Scotland, retiring eventually to Italy. In her retirement, she had been working with the World Wildlife Fund in creating ecological areas on Monto Baldo - the mountain range running down the eastern side of Lake Garda. There was an old shepherd's hut halfway up the mountain which the WWF in Italy had acquired, and Dr de Koch had persuaded some Italian Scouts from Verona to use it as a base and help in conservation work in the nature reserve being created on Monto Baldo.

The old shepherd's hut was called the "Pianise" (pronounced *pee-an-ease-ee*). It was very basic. Water was from a little stone built reservoir which collected rainwater. The route up to the building was on a narrow winding mountain road which was mainly at 1 in 4 and steeper in places. On this first visit in 1975, the minibus refused to make it, so we walked up with kit - over an hour in strong sunlight. We later found an old mule track in the shade through the woods going straight down the mountain to the Lake. The problem was finding your way back!

The Pianise was used as a base for spending the last few days of many expeditions in the following years. It was ideally placed for swimming in the lake (using Dr de Koch's private jetty), speed boating, visits to Verona, Venice and the nearer town of Malcesine and walking on the mountain ridge of Monto Baldo. It was an altogether magical place and many happy expeditions over the following years were concluded there.