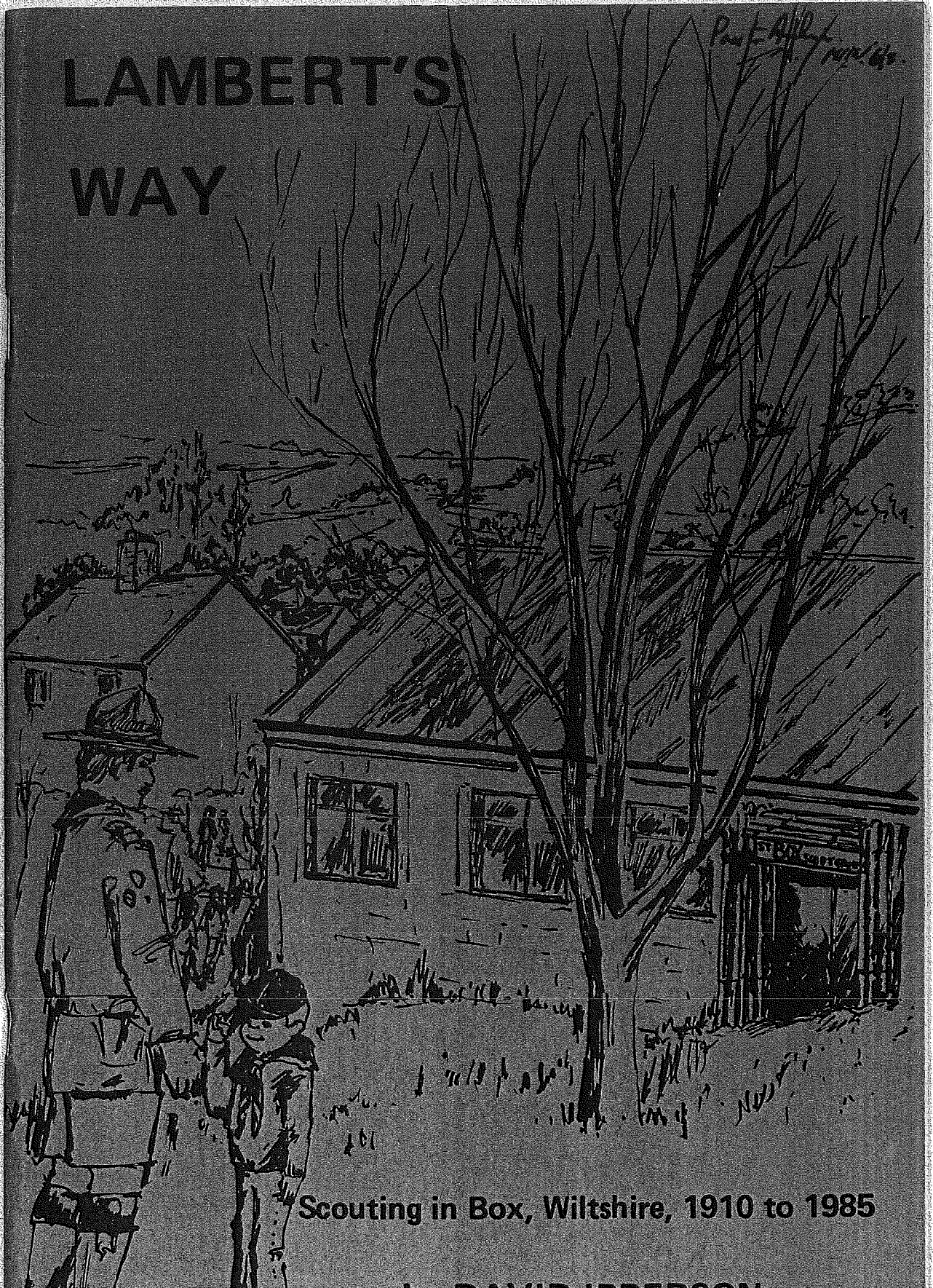


LAMBERT'S WAY

Paul Alley 1985



Scouting in Box, Wiltshire, 1910 to 1985

by DAVID IBBESON

TC/244

Foreword

This booklet was written to commemorate 75 years of Scouting in Box and extracts from it were first published as a series of articles in the Box Parish Magazine.

Having embarked on this task I soon realised that more than a simple history was emerging - here was a story with many ingredients and having all the diverse characters that make a good novel. Sadly, space does not permit the use of all available material, neither do I have the skills to exploit it to the full; nevertheless, one hopes that this modest publication gives a flavour of the Box Scout Group's history and will encourage others more competent than I to dig a little deeper into the origins of their own local organisation.

It would have been impossible to write this history without the help of Phil Lambert, lately GSL 1st Box; consequently it is to him and all Cubs, Scouts, Rover Scouts and leaders past and present that this booklet is dedicated.

D Ibberson
Scouter-in-Charge
1st Box Scout Group



September 1985

ALL PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE OF THE BOOKLET WILL GO
TOWARDS BOX SCOUT GROUP FUNDS

Introduction

In 1907 Major-General Baden-Powell C.B., later Lord Baden-Powell, held the historic camp on Brownsea Island that led to the formation of the Scout Movement. Less than three years later, the Box Scout Group was born; born into a society so different from that which is known today that it is worthwhile placing the occasion into a time perspective.

The Great Western Railway was in its 75th year; Halley's comet was due, following its meandering in deep space, and the Boer War was still a vivid memory, with boys at play re-enacting the siege of Mafeking or of Ladysmith. Victorian values still prevailed within the class structure of the Landed Gentry and patriotism, as embraced within the phrase 'For God, England and St. George' was rife in the belief that the British Empire would survive for eternity.

Box was not immune to events; nestling in a valley virtually surrounded by hills, with woods, copses and streams, it might easily have become lost in time had not the London Road passed by. As it was, it provided a perfect arena in which to put into action the concept of Scouting as described in Baden-Powell's book 'Scouting for Boys'.

This, then was the setting; how they fared is recorded in the chapters of this book. I hope it makes interesting reading.

* * * * *

Acknowledgements

A debt of gratitude is owed to

Phil Lambert	For being such an avid collector of the material on which this book is based
Martin and Elizabeth Devon	For publishing this book and for their continued interest
Andrew Jackson	For illustrations
Valerie Patterson	For correcting later scripts

and all of those people including my wife who have listened to the stories of Box Scouts which I had repeated so many times before.

* * * * *

The reader will understand that the information presented here has been compiled from a multitude of fragments from as many different sources. Consequently, although the author believes that matters given as fact are substantially correct, he would be pleased to hear from anyone who is able to supply any differing, or indeed any further, material.

1. The Beginning.

The Box Scout Group was 75 years old on 23rd February 1985. To have survived for that period is in itself an achievement, but to have survived two world wars and to remain active in a society that bears little resemblance to that which existed 75 years ago would have given much pleasure to the worthy residents of Box who gathered at a public meeting in the National School (Box Primary) on 23rd February 1910.

At that time the Corsham Scout Group was already in existence and they were invited to give a display: this they did under the scrutiny of their Scoutmaster, Mr. Alf Butt. Whatever the contents of the display, it impressed those present, and a decision was taken to form the Box Scout Group. Officers elected were:-

Mr. G. Northey	President
Mr. W.R. Shewring	Secretary & Treasurer
Mr. R.J. Davies	Scoutmaster
Dr. J.P. Martin	Assistant Scoutmaster
Mr. S.M. McIlwraith	Assistant Scoutmaster

These five men were to lay the foundation of Scouting in Box.

Mr. George Northey was a local landowner whose family owned much of the land surrounding Box, including Hazelbury, Ditteridge and Kingsdown. He lived at Cheney Court, a large Jacobean residence in Ditteridge, previously owned by the Speke family - it was near Box that the explorer of that name was accidentally shot. Box Scouts became regular visitors to the Court, partaking of traditional English teas served by the many servants required for a house of that size. Mr. Northey's wife, Mabel, was the daughter of a Royal Navy Captain who, I am reliably informed, possessed the air of authority characteristic of that breed.

Dr. Martin, by contrast, was a local general practitioner who also lived in some grandeur at Fogleigh House. He was very active in village affairs and was a member of the Rifle Club. This enabled him to arrange for the Scouts to use the Club's land for drill and ultimately as a site for the erection of their headquarters, (digging in the vicinity of the headquarters can still reveal some of Dr. Martin's medicine bottles). He is not remembered necessarily for his medical skill, but more for the horses he rode whilst visiting patients. (In those days there was always a measure of uncertainty as to whether the clatter of hooves heralded the arrival of the doctor or the undertaker.)

It would have been surprising if at least one of the committee members had not been involved in the stone trade - Mr. W. Shewring was a contracting mason working from Box Station; unfortunately he died a few years after the Group was formed.

Later chapters will make reference to Messrs. Davies and McIlwraith; suffice it to say that they did much to further the Scout movement in Box during its formative years three-quarters of a century ago.

That same evening 30 boys gave their names to become members of the Box Scout Group. These same 30 boys attended the first 'drill', held on 7th March 1910, at the rifle range (at the rear of Scout headquarters, Devizes Road). Patrols were formed with a patrol leader and a corporal to each:-

Patrol Leaders	Corporals
J. Stiles	J. Gale
W. Bateman	F. Shepherd
S. Street	F. Hillier
C. Lambert	B. Hinton
L. Bence	

Of these young men, seven went on to become King's Scouts in 1913.

As the history of the Group unfolds, we hope to tell of idyllic tea parties held during those long, hot summers of yesteryear, of the local gentry, (very much the early benefactors), of

the tragedy of war, and hopefully some of the joys and sorrows known only to those who were present in those far-off days. Thus it was that the Box Scout Group began, and whilst the Scout movement has adapted to changes forced on it by a changing society, the guiding principles as expressed by Baden Powell live on, embraced within the motto -

BE PREPARED



B.P. Scouts Box Troop 1911



B.P. Scouts Box Troop 1911

Camp Site on Kingsdown, August 4th to 14th 1911

2. Getting Organised.

Having formed the Group, then (as now) the first priority was to raise funds. Ralph Reader's Gang Shows were many years away, so the organising committee chose a Concert and Dance to be held at the National School on Friday 22nd April 1910. The 'Revellers Concert Party' from Bristol provided the entertainment, assisted by Corsham Scouts. By all accounts the function was much enjoyed, continuing until 4 o'clock in the morning. Since most of the village people would have been required to work on Saturday, one must assume that it was heavily patronised by the local gentry. One can picture the carriages arriving to collect their owners and the clatter of horses' hooves as they hurried home. (No doubt the local quarrymen were just getting up to go to work.)

The Concert and Dance remained a popular vehicle for fund raising and whilst the 'Revellers Concert Party' appeared the following year, (on 3rd February 1911), the format was changed on Wednesday 4th December 1912 to a 'Social Evening and Dance' with Mr. Avons from Melksham providing piano music.

Getting organised also involved establishing relationships with other groups. This was accomplished at camps and rallies or through sporting challenges which often resulted in the Box Scouts reflecting on the need for a good trainer or manager.



Camp Site on Kingsdown, August 4th to 14th 1911

The first District Camp commenced on Friday 2nd July 1912 when Box joined the Trowbridge, Bradford, Chippenham, Corsham, Castle Combe and Colerne Troops in Castle Combe. Equipment for the camp was provided by Lord Islington, Col. Gibb and the Sergeants' Mess of the 4th Somerset Yeomanry, (Col. Clutterbuck's old Regiment). During the week Box won most of the sporting events - this must have been more by luck than skill!

Regular football fixtures arranged following this Camp resulted in consistent defeat for Box Scouts. Patrol Leader Stiles reached the peak of his sporting career when, on 15th February 1913 and playing as outside left, he scored a goal. Records suggest that this was the ONLY goal Box ever scored. (Colerne were protected no doubt by a mythical donkey.)

If Colerne could not be beaten at football then some other means had to be found. It was arranged that on Easter Monday 1913, Box Scouts would attack Colerne village, (which would

be defended by the Colerne Troop), the objective being to retrieve a flag placed in the centre of the village. The exercise was planned with true military precision, an advanced marauding party being despatched at 0800 hours only to arrive at Colerne to find no defenders and no flag. Meanwhile the main body of Scouts were enjoying a game of football followed by a consolatory tea provided by Assistant Scoutmaster Browning who had received (rather late) a telegram calling off the event - the Post Office has not improved much in 75 years. Relationships with Colerne must have been somewhat soured as the minute books from that day make no reference to Colerne's existence.

Activities were enhanced by the support given by the local dignitaries, the Hon. Mrs. Twisleton, being but one example. This marvellous lady lived at Heleigh House, Middlehill and, being of independent means, charitable works occupied much of her time. Presenting prizes and badges at local functions, financing excursions out of the village and providing teas were just some of the good works credited to this lady. In appreciation of her help and guidance Patrol Leader Bateman, on behalf of the Troop, presented her with a gold 'Thank You' badge on Tuesday 12th July 1912. She must have been touched by the sentiment for the letter in her own hand responding to the presentation, which is reproduced below, uses the grammatically unusual sentence - 'I feel I did not half tell the Scouts how delighted I was with their present . . .'. The letter may well have been delivered by hand using the carriage drawn by two black horses which became something of a personal hallmark of the Hon. Mrs. Twisleton.

HELEIGH HOUSE,

July 30 1912

BOX,
WILTS.

Dear Mr. Davies

I feel I did not half
tell the Scouts how delighted
I am with their present! -

It took me so entirely by
surprise, and I felt touched
beyond words at their
charming thought of giving
me such a present! -

I shall prize it immensely
and be proud to bear it -

always. It is many a long
day since - if ever - I received
a present which gave me
so much pleasure to receive.

Will you tell them how from
me? -

I hope you will all have
a very pleasant camping out
and fine weather during the
time.

Believe me
Yours sincerely
J. S. Twisleton

A Grand Rally was held at the Chippenham Skating Rink on January 22nd 1913. The programme is reproduced here. During the proceedings Patrol Leader King of the Castle Combe Troop was presented by Lady Suffolk with a Certificate for his bravery in rescuing a woman who had fallen into the Castle Combe Brook during a flood.

The Palace Theatre in Station Road Chippenham was formerly the Skating Rink. Built during the roller-skating craze which swept the country around 1908, it subsequently became a picture house, hence Palace Theatre. It is now a snooker hall.

PROGRAMME

3.30 and 7.30

GRAND RALLY.

Bridge and Hut Building

BOX and CASTLE COMBE TROOPS.

(During the performance at the back of the hall).

3.35 and 7.35

Indian Clubs and Song ... *Stage*

CHARLTON TROOP, MALMESBURY.

3.45 and 7.45

Gymnastics ... *Hall*

DEVIZES TROOP.

4 and 8

Camp Fire Scene ... *Hall*

CORSHAM TROOP.

4.20 and 8.20

Physical Drill ... *Stage*

CASTLE COMBE TROOP.

4.30 and 8.30

Ambulance ... *Hall*

CHIPPENHAM No. 2 TROOP.

Signalling ... *Stage and Hall*

BOX TROOP.

4.40 and 8.40

Boxing ... *Stage*

CHIPPENHAM Nos. 1 and 2 TROOPS.

4.55 and 8.55

Gymnastics ... *Hall*

CHIPPENHAM No. 1 TROOP.

4.10 and 9.10

Stage Play, "Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son"

BIDDESTONE TROOP.

CARRIAGES AT 5.30 P.M. AND 9.30 P.M.

If Box Scouts were to flourish it was considered essential that they should have accommodation in which they could train and of course, organise. At the General Meeting held on 7th April 1913, funds boasted the princely sum of £7 9s 9d (approx. £7.58) and it was proposed that the classrooms from Ashley Manor be purchased for £80. It does not take a mathematician to realize that such a purchase would leave a considerable deficiency. Not surprisingly Mr. T.H. Lambert (who chaired the meeting) exercised the Lambert caution, (inherited by Phil), and postponed a decision. The classrooms were finally purchased and re-erected in Devizes Road and the official opening took place on Saturday 25th October 1913, (more of this in later chapters).

And so it was that the Scouts of Box obtained a place in which to shelter from the storms and from which they could set forth to new adventures in decades to come.

3. Getting Away From It All.

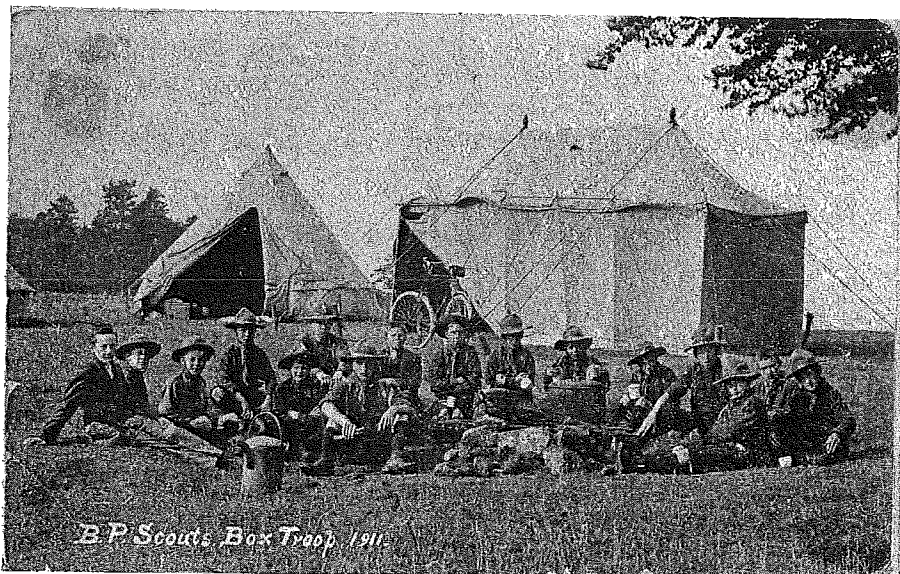


The thought of going away for the day or spending a week away from home would not send ripples of excitement through today's Scout Troop, or Cub Pack for that matter, but 70 years ago things were altogether different. A day out or a week away from home would be preceded with much excitement and anticipation considering the many adventures, real and unreal, yet to come.

Scouting enabled many youngsters to experience a holiday, although the primitive nature of camps at that time would, to the modern Scout, be like turning back the clock to the

stone-age. (Possibly a slight exaggeration!). Transport was not a major problem since most camps were held only a few miles from the village, consequently transportation was by a well-proven form of mobility - feet. It must have been a familiar sight in bygone days to see a troop of Scouts, wearing their traditional Baden-Powell hats, shorts hiding grubby, grazed knees, laden with haversacks and bedrolls marching proudly through the countryside.

Kingsdown was the first venue for the Box Scouts summer camp to which 25 Scouts set forth on August 4th 1911. (See the photographs in chapters 1 and 2). The camp was to last for 10 days and was, by and large, uneventful. However, true to form, the weather proved as unreliable as ever; it rained throughout the second day almost bringing the 'holiday' to a premature end. Fortunately the remaining 8 days brought a mini Indian-summer. How pleasant it must have been to look over the valley on a world free of motor vehicles, caring not about exchange rates, inflation, prices of petrol etc., but just to gaze through the summer haze on to a green and pleasant land. Returning to reality, and in recognition of the harshness of the times, it is worth noting that some Scouts could only stay on camp overnight; during the day they had to go to work, probably in the 'underworld' of the stone mines.



Camp Site on Kingsdown, August 4th to 14th 1911

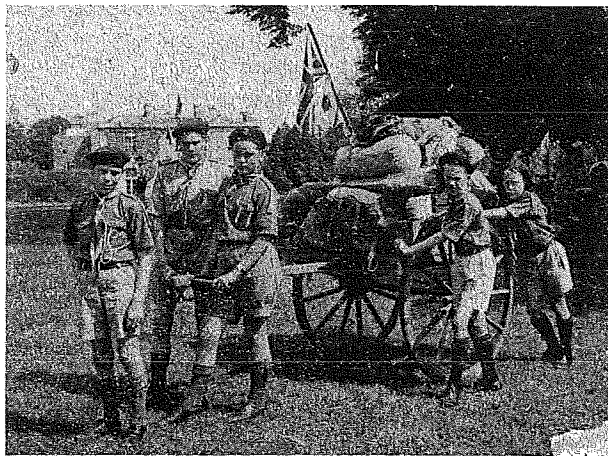
It was to be some 3 years before Box Scouts, in the charge of Scoutmaster R. Davies and assistant Scoutmaster C. Lambert were to return to Kingsdown. War was only a week away when the camp commenced on July 31st 1914. The weather was most unfavourable. However, this did not dampen their spirit and many Scouts were successful in obtaining, most appropriately, their Signallers Badge. The highlight of the week was the 'Friendly Society Fete' when 5 prizes were won in the obstacle race by Scouts Pike, Ford, Chaffey, Shewring and Sheppard. It is sad to ponder, quoting Brooke 'There is a corner of a Foreign field' to which some of the early Scouts departed, full of hope for the future, only to have their lives shattered on the battlefields of Europe.

1913 saw finances at a particularly low ebb and only Assistant Scoutmasters Chaddick and Lambert attended the 'Great Birmingham Exhibition and Rally' from July 2nd to July 10th. These worthy gentlemen expressed much criticism of the organisation. However, the strict daily routine provides an insight into the military flavour of camping in those early days.

6.00 a.m.	Roll up tents and air bedding
6.30 a.m.	Wash
7.35 a.m.	Parade for prayers and salute the flag
8.00 a.m.	Breakfast
9.00 a.m.	Stow bedding, followed by general cleaning
10.30 a.m.	Inspection
12.45 p.m.	Dinner. Fall in single file 8 deep facing the cookhouse. The leading 2 of each 8 will take the food and march into the tent followed by the remaining 6.
5.30 p.m.	Retreat
6.30 p.m.	Supper
9.30 p.m.	Last Post
10.00 p.m.	Light out. No talking

A visit to the 'loo' must have been an adventure in itself as illustrated in Camp Standing Orders. 'Scouts must on no account foul the ground in or near the camp. Urine tubs are placed at the ends of the lines each night and are marked by lamps.' - red, no doubt!

This article would not be complete without reference to the King's Rally of 1911. 12 Box Scouts were among the 30,000 gathered at Windsor on July 4th to be reviewed by King George V and the then Chief Scout. The Box contingent travelled by train from Box Station departing at 5.30 a.m. returning home at about midnight. Expenses for the trip were paid by the Hon. Mrs. Twisleton who was at the station to see them off. What a truly remarkable lady she must have been.



Box post-war Scouts with traditional handcart, taken in the 60s



4. And So To War.

The outbreak of the 'Great War' was recorded in the Box Scout Group log as follows:-

'War was declared on August 14th 1914 between the Allies (Britain, Belgium, France, Russia and Serbia) and the German Empire aided by Austria and Hungary. The failure of negotiations for Peace came as a great shock for the nation but immediately preparations were made on a large scale as it was foreseen that hostilities would last over an extended period. The Germans were prepared; we were not, except for our Navy.'

And so began four years of war during which the Scout Movement as a whole found a new sense of purpose which gave full meaning to our motto, 'Be Prepared'. The Scout movement was in effect requisitioned by the Government and the following communiqué was published in the Daily Telegraph on 14th August.

1. Headquarters will pay no allowance for Scouts performing public services unless the specific authority of Headquarters has been obtained for their use in each case.
2. Scouts have been recognized by the Government as a non-military body and no Scout or Scout Officer in uniform must on any account carry arms. All Scouts must wear the Fleur-de-Lys.

No time was wasted in deploying Box Scouts to useful enterprise. The first task to befall them was to guard Widdenham Pumping Station. 8 Scouts were duly despatched on August 17th, remaining on station until 31st. Disregarding the possibility of a fifth column at work and a boy's ability to let his imagination run riot, this must have been quite a pleasant 2 weeks.

In total contrast, willing or unwilling victims were required to act as dummies to enable hastily formed ambulance classes to practice their medical skill, or lack of it. This they did on unsuspecting Scouts. (The writer confesses that on more than one occasion he has been tempted to apply tourniquets around the necks of cubs.)

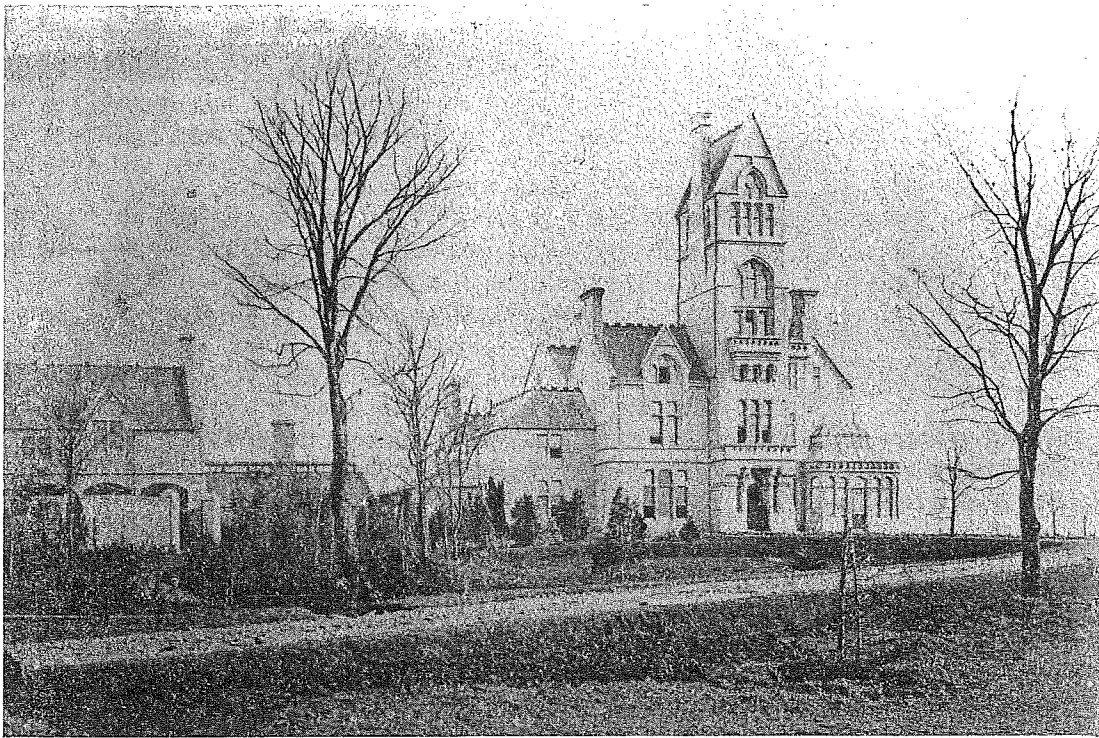
Fund raising still formed a major part of activities but for a different purpose. Thirty shillings (150p) was raised each week to maintain a cottage housing Belgian refugees. The cottage was located where Vine Court now stands.

Five pounds was also raised to equip a bed in the Box Ward of Corsham Red Cross Hospital; the ward was opened on 14th July 1916. And so it went on - the Scouts performing a whole range of tasks to the public good. The Royal Navy wasn't neglected for it seems that 4 Scouts had the job of collecting fresh vegetables each week to be despatched to the Fleet by Mrs. Hickworth of Ben Mead House.

Much to the credit of Scoutmaster Davies, throughout the war years he endeavoured to continue the normal round of Scout functions. Visits to Sherbrooke House (now Rudloe Park Hotel) at the invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Langten for tea and sports on 26th June, 1915 and again on August 12th 1916, ensured that at least some of the early Scouts had their names recorded for posterity. Names listed are J. and D. Eyles, M. Ford, L. Baker, R. Hancock, A. Sheppard, W. Pinniger and F. Lambert. (Should you have wished to telephone the Langtens during the war, their number was Corsham 8!)

A letter of apology was received in 1917 which expressed regret that Mr. and Mrs. Langten would be unable to entertain the Scouts that year. It did, however, thank the Scouts for raising £53.19.3d as a result of an event described as 'Our Day'.

The name of Twisleton was now disappearing from the Scout Troop records and new names beginning to emerge. Miss Brame of Sunnyside paid for 30 Scouts to visit the official pictures



Rudloe Park, formerly Sherbrooke House, about 1850.
(The tower was struck by lightning and not fully rebuilt).

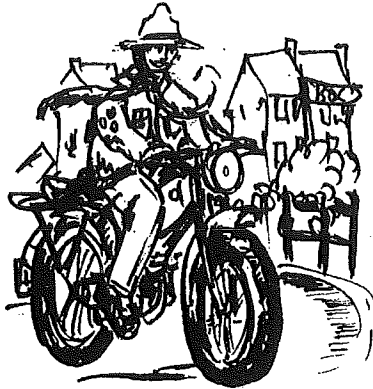
'Britain Prepared' exhibition at the Pump Room, Bath. This exhibition was by all accounts something of a morale boosting exercise displaying photographs of troops under training. The date was April 1st, 1916.

And so the war dragged on to its conclusion. The record of Box Scout Group is one of which today's Scouts should be proud, a record of dedication, upholding the traditions of a great movement.

Just as the war started suddenly so did Assistant Scoutmaster Reginald Hancock die, not by the gun, but in the great influenza epidemic which claimed so many lives. Having enlisted in September 1918, he died in Ireland on Sunday 3rd November. The same young man, as a Scout, had only 2 years previously achieved 2nd place in the high jump at Sherbrooke House. Reginald Hancock was buried with full military honours on 9th November in Box Churchyard.

'He was a good Scout and a great leader,
he will be sadly missed.'

And so ended the war to end all wars.



5. A Land Fit For Heroes.

The first Scout Committee General Meeting following the 1914-18 War was March 18th 1919. Colonel H.C.D. Spenceley was elected Chairman; he was able to boast that the accounts showed a balance of £3.9.3d. For the times this probably represented about a week and a half's pay for the average worker - a princely sum indeed. It was at this meeting that Scoutmaster Davies announced his resignation, having led the troop for the first nine years of its existence. Mr. Davies lived at 2 Elmsleigh Villas and was by all accounts an Excise Officer. (Man's ability to remember obscure facts is remarkable; on speaking to Phil Lambert, he informed me that this erstwhile gentleman rode a Triumph motorbike registration number AM 2318. True to form Phil did not consider it at all unusual remembering such facts.) Mr. Davies' son Arthur was also in the troop. He is still living, having retired from practising medicine somewhere in the West Country.

For the first time in nine years Box was without a Scoutmaster and it was not until the meeting on September 23rd that Mr. C. Lambert was elected Scoutmaster with A. Davies, F. Lambert, W. Bradfield, D. Lord and J. Shewring as Assistants. At the same meeting Colonel Spenceley was replaced as Chairman by the Rev. Tidy of Ditteridge, ('the pen is mightier than the sword', perchance!). This worthy cleric cut a dashing figure, so I am informed, parading with a 'thumb stick', (a long walking stick, the thumb resting on top, above waist height), as if he had escaped from the 'Barchester Chronicles'. A more unusually named cleric was the Rev. Dr. Sweetapple who visited the Scouts at their summer camp on Kingsdown in 1921. Unlike the Rev. Tidy, the Rev. Sweetapple had a distinct stoop, his head moving from side to side in rhythm with his legs as he progressed through the village. Being aware of the innocent cruelty of children, we can picture the Reverend walking happily along, blissfully unaware of a line of children following him attempting to emulate his movements.

Dr. Sweetapple owned an estate in Hawkridge on the edge of Exmoor to where Box Scouts set forth during the summer of '22. Today, a short two-hour car journey down the M5 to Hawkridge is no more than a day's outing; Box Scouts found the journey rather more arduous. They left Box Station at 8.30 a.m., connected at Bath for Taunton at 10.00, changed at Taunton for Dulverton arriving at 2.00 p.m., and marched from Dulverton to Hawkridge, a distance of about 5 miles. (One would need to come home for a rest).



Rock Pool Camp.
Dulverton 1922

from left-
George Goodhind (15)
Jack Tottle (12)
Ted Cogswell (15)
Reg Cogswell (14) standing
Phil Lambert (14)

The next two weeks were spent among the country gents of Devonshire, out and about with the stag hounds, shooting rabbits, bathing, gorging themselves on at least one occasion on two pounds of Devonshire cream. To the participants this was indeed 'a land fit for heroes'. During this camp Assistant Scoutmaster Lord was informed that his mother had died; he left for home leaving Assistant Scoutmasters Webster, Mullins and Chaffey.

Several visitors were recorded, among them the Box Choir and Messrs. Benjamin, Brunt, Hyde and Swaffield. Two Scouts, Toy and Tottle, distinguished themselves by walking to Winsford and thence to Dulverton, a total distance of 24 miles. One would like to think this was to buy gifts for their families but there may well have been other motives.

Visits to Sherbrooke recommenced in 1919 but one suspects that these visits were establishing a reputation since Mr. Browning and Mr. C. Oatley, both committee members, also attended.

Cheney Court again emerges as a popular venue, as does the Northey Arms. Not, one hopes, to drink ale but to participate of the excellent suppers provided by Mine Hosts Mr. and Mrs. Moody.

13th August 1920 took the troop back to Kingsdown, where several Scouts were successful in obtaining their Poultryman's Badge. Exactly what one had to do to obtain this Badge I have no idea; however I am informed on good authority that foxes have a lot to learn. During the last few days of camp an event occurred which baffled a generation of Box Scouts. This was the 'Great Cod Mystery'. It would appear that great pains had been taken to boil a cod for breakfast. It was then put in a safe place until the following morning. At breakfast, 19 Scouts waited in great anticipation to consume the unfortunate fish, only to be told that it had disappeared during the night.

After much research, the writer is pleased to announce that the mystery has been solved, albeit it has taken 65 years. The fish had been kept confined to camp for some 10 days and since this was midsummer it is not unreasonable to assume that it got a little 'high' and left of its own accord!

The ability of Scouts to come into direct conflict with nature is uncanny; during a camp at Kingsdown in 1923, Scouts Cogswell, Gilham and Toy accompanied by Scoutmaster Lord (C. Lambert must have resigned the previous year), went on bicycles to Weston-super-Mare. During that ride, Gilham's path was blocked by two sheep which lacked the agility normally attributed to that species. It took great skill to avoid a collision, but fortunately no injury resulted except to the pride of the drover, who expressed, in rural English, much displeasure.

Scoutmaster Lord remained in charge until about 1925 when Mr. Baxter was appointed. Things did not fare well. The minutes of the meeting held on 28th April 1926 record that attendance of Scouts was poor and irregular and it was proposed that the troop be suspended until September. Whether or not that suspension took place is not known, but by 1927 Mr. Baxter had been replaced by Captain Legard, who had in turn resigned.

Thus it was that the troop entered its wilderness years.



6. What The Papers Said.

Early Scout groups benefitted from a great deal of press coverage; this was to be expected since the movement was still in its formative years. Baden-Powell was still very much alive and no doubt had considerable influence among the important and powerful people of the day. Events associated with Scouting were often patronised by local and national figures. Not surprisingly, therefore, they attracted considerable interest from the media.

What makes old newspaper cuttings so interesting, however, is not only what they said but the way they said it. Furthermore, articles and advertisements reflect the social conditions of the time, giving rise to considerable amusement and curiosity. For example, advertisements in the Wiltshire Gazette in 1911 tell us of Clarke's B41 Pills at 4/6d. These must have created considerable alarm amongst the medical profession, as they cured every conceivable complaint originating in the lower half of the body, thus effectively eliminating the need for medical help. No doubt there are still many older residents who attribute remarkable cures to such tablets.

On the other hand, Bath City Fathers were reported in the same paper as being locked in deep debate concerning the purchase of a steam roller at a cost of £481.4s. What exactly the 4s purchased remains a matter of conjecture, but I have concluded it was the whistle!

Situations Vacant columns reflected the shortage of servants and farm labourers, particularly those possessing the attributes of physical strength coupled with a high standard of hygiene. Today a paper would not accept an advertisement asking for a domestic servant who must be 'clean and strong', or a farm labourer who 'must be a good milker'. (This latter advertisement has caused me much anxiety, having decided my knowledge of human anatomy is seriously wanting!)

The first article of note appeared in the Wiltshire Gazette on September 28th 1911. This article tells of a 'Grand Rally' held in Chippenham and organised by Colonel Clutterbuck of Corsham. Such rallies were filled with patriotic fervour, as demonstrated by the address given by Sir Audley Neeld, who used a well-worn phrase designed to make every Scout stand a good inch taller, to quote: "England expects every man and every boy do do his duty". He continued: 'It may be in the course of your lives that the existence of this great Empire may be in danger.' How prophetic those words were- the Empire is no more and many of the Scouts present did their duty in the two world wars. The Duchess of Beaufort was expected to present prizes, but she had to leave early to meet her son returning from India. She excused herself saying, 'when leaving England, I promised that I would be at the dockside to meet him on his return. Like a good Scout, I must keep my promise'.

To the Scouts present, the highlight of the rally must have been when an unfortunate milkman with his horse-drawn float happened to pass by. The horse, having progressed along the same route every day of its working life and being suddenly confronted by a mass of boys, decided to take evasive action and bolted. The situation was not improved when many of the Scouts present set off in hot pursuit, being thankful for a timely diversion from such formality. As to who won- the horse, the Scouts, the milkman or the float- no record exists, the whole exciting incident only warranting three or four lines of print.

Box Scouts present, in the charge of Assistant Browning, were second in strength only to Malmesbury, the former numbering thirty Scouts, the latter forty-two.

Some newspapers carried little snippets entitled 'An Old Boy's Message to Scouts', some of

Sir F. Carruthers Gould (political cartoonist) 'Patriotism is not believing that one's country is the best, but trying to make it so'.

Viscount Falmouth C.B., K.C.V.O. (Coldstream Guards) 'Boy Scouts, whether at work or play-Play the Game'.

The Bishop of Liverpool 'Love thyself last'.

Articles relating to Box also appeared in the Hanwell Gazette. A link must have developed between the Box Scoutmaster, Mr. Davies, and the Hanwell leader, A. de Vere Mingard. The Hanwell Scouts occupied the Kingsdown campsite in August 1912 and the following article appeared in the Hanwell Gazette on Saturday 31st August 1912: 'Nearly forty boys attended a service at Box Church. All were attentive and well behaved'. Such articles led one to speculate that such behaviour was rather unusual. The same article reported a landslip on Kingsdown following a heavy rainfall. This apparently caused a large bowl of porridge to roll down the hillside, attempting to emulate Vesuvius, no doubt!



BADEN-POWELL BOY SCOUTS.
EALING ASSOCIATION.
President " The Worshipful The Mayor of Ealing.
Hon. Secretary " A. de Vere Mingard,
22, Sydney Road,
West Ealing, W.

14th Sept 1912

Dear Mr. Davis/ when we were at camp I informed you that my boys had asked me to send to the Editor of "The Scout" an account of your great kindness to us on our arrival and during our stay at Kingsdown.

I enclose a copy of the current number of "The Scout" and you will find the account on p. 48. I may say that I had an interview with the private secretary to the Chief Scout and it is at his express wish that this account has been inserted. He thought that such very "scoutlike conduct" ought to be publicly noticed

as an a token of thanks to you and also as an encouragement to others to go and do likewise.

You will be pleased to hear that notwithstanding the shocking weather we experienced, all the boys returned well and hearty, and quite in love with the place and the people.

With every good wish to you and your boys

I remain

Yours sincerely,
A. de Vere Mingard.

S.M.
1st Hanwell Group.

One of the most important events in the history of the Group was the opening of the first Scout Headquarters. This was reported in the 'Wiltshire Times' on November 1st 1913; it is worth quoting in full:-

'The Boy Scout movement in Box received a decided stimulus on Saturday when the new Headquarters in the Devizes Road were opened. For some time past it had been recognised that the local troop were in need of permanent Headquarters and the committee seized the opportunity offered them of the purchase of a building exactly suited to their needs. The proceedings on Saturday opened with the members of the troop marching through the village under the command of Scoutmaster Davies and Assistant Scoutmasters Browning and MacIlwraith. They were afterwards joined by contingents from Chippenham and Batheaston and were formed up in front of the building.

'Mr. G.E. Northey as President expressed the pleasure he felt at being able to do anything to forward the Boy Scout Movement in which he had always taken great interest. He could always tell a Scout by the way he carried himself and the respect he always showed to others. It gave him great pleasure to present the flag and flagstaff they saw there, and which he asked Mrs. Northey to unfurl. On Mrs. Northey's doing so the boys all saluted it.

Major Steele (County Commissioner) gave a brief address urging all present to be loyal to the King, to themselves and to the flag. Scoutmaster Davies paid tribute to the late Mr. W.R. Shewring who some three years earlier had started the troop.

Subsequent proceedings included a tea and an earnest and inspiring address given by Colonel Tilgate of Ardgay.'

The last press report prior to the outbreak of war in 1914 gave details of the Annual General Meeting at which Dr. Martin presided. This, however, was pretty dull stuff since the same column made reference to a cycle accident:-

'Whilst cycling on Thursday evening in Box, a girl, Hilda Eyles collided with another cyclist and falling awkwardly, broke her arm. She was taken to Dr. Symes' surgery where attention was given her and satisfactory progress is being made.'

It was also reported that Miss Nellie Perrin gained a Diploma A.R.C.M. at an examination held in London. We hope, Nellie, you are still making music and Hilda, having achieved the impossible, resigned yourself to walking. Many of the people to which the press referred have long since passed away and sadly are possibly forgotten, but let it be something of a memorial, because whatever the future might bring, they started a tradition that has lasted 75 years.

In the changing fortunes of time this is indeed a great achievement and a fitting epitaph.

7. The Wilderness Years 1927-1934.

By 1926 the Box Scout Group had declined to the point of closure. Why this should have happened is uncertain. However, it is noticeable that the decline coincided with the time when the leadership was in a state of perpetual change. Like any family, the family of Scouts needs stability.

Attendance at committee meetings had also declined. Gone were the wealthy and influential patrons of pre-war years, leaving S.A. MacIlwraith, E. Toy, A. Chaffey, C. Lambert, B. Vezey, W. Webster and no doubt others unrecorded in the Group diary, to try and ensure that the Group survived. In 1927, after 16 years, Scout activities ceased; the fire had burnt out but the ashes remained warm.

A final appeal to attract boys to the Scout Group was made by Mr. Drewitt, the Schoolmaster. This appeal having failed, the Committee, chaired by Mr. MacIlwraith, turned its attention to the practicalities of managing the Group's assets which amounted to the Headquarters, (now in a poor state of repair) and a bank account containing some £13.

At a meeting held on 29th June 1927 which Mr. MacIlwraith chaired, a resolution was passed that Mrs. Shaw-Mellor should be interviewed in her capacity as President of the Guides Committee with a view to letting the Hall to the Guides, and possibly seek financial assistance to re-furbish the Headquarters.



The word 'interview' although recorded in the Minutes, would seem inappropriate. Anyone familiar with Mrs. Shaw-Mellor would agree that she was not the type of lady one interviewed - one merely listened. The daughter of Lord Alverston, lately Lord Chancellor, Mrs. Shaw-Mellor should, observing the rules of etiquette be addressed as 'The Honourable', a title she seldom used. She lived at Box House which, as parishioners know, is a large and imposing structure. This description, as if by coincidence, matches exactly the lady's own. Being at this time rather mature in years she ill-advisedly wore very high heels which, whilst doing much for stature, did little for her balance.

Consequently, when becoming a regular visitor to the Scout Headquarters, she required the services of an escort to ensure safe negotiation of what was then, and still is, a tortuous trail.

Following the meeting, an arrangement was drawn up which, in effect, handed the Scout Headquarters to the Girl Guides Movement. The terms of the agreement required the Guides to pay £10 towards the £15 repair bill submitted by Mr. V. Milsom of Old School, Box; to pay 5s per annum to the Scout Committee and to be prepared to vacate the premises within one year should the Scouts be re-formed. And so it was that yet another bastion of male dominance fell to young ladies who might well have been daughters of suffragettes.

The next meeting of the Scout committee on 1st May 1931 took the final step of appointing trustees. They were Mr. Davies of Bristol (the first Scoutmaster), Mr. MacIlwraith of Devizes Road (formerly Assistant Scoutmaster) and Mr. Oatley of Quarry Hill.

It was to be three years before the committee met again at a public meeting held at the Bingham Hall on 22nd March 1934. This meeting had been convened by yet another unusual cleric, the Reverend George Foster, Vicar of this parish. While the Reverends Tidy and Sweetapple were products of the Victorian age, the Rev. Foster was very much a product of the twentieth century. Had he not been called to the Ministry, he would in all probability have pursued a career in the theatre. He was Chaplain to the Palace Theatre in Bath, (now a Bingo Hall and Social Club) which, unlike its 'posh' neighbour, the Theatre Royal, staged variety shows.

Many of the artists appearing came to Box Vicarage for tea. Among them were Tex McCloud (spinner of ropes and yarns) and Claud Dampier (pianist) who by all accounts started his act conventionally but concluded, by some remarkable feat, underneath the piano. He was accompanied by a beautiful young lady. Exactly what function she served, other than being decorative, is not clear but the purveyor of obscure facts, from whence this information was obtained, seemed rather more interested in her than in poor Claud, or for that matter, Tex. (Whilst not wishing to disclose the name of my informant, having mentioned this young lady, I noted a gleam in his eye and a spring in his step as he turned to return home to 'Moonrakers'!)

Interestingly, another visitor for tea was a Mr. Foster who was described as 'The Vicar of Mirth'. Is it possible that the Rev. Foster saw something of himself in his namesake? (After much research I must conclude that the resident of 'Moonrakers' is the last remaining fan of the artists mentioned since I cannot find anyone who has in fact heard of them. Is it remotely possible, I wonder, that the spinner of ropes and yarns, Tex McCloud, is none other than the former Scoutmaster? He is certainly a master of knots and well known for his speeches.)

Apart from the theatre, the Rev. Foster's other interest was in TOC H and it was that organisation that was instrumental in finding a new Scoutmaster, Mr. F. Rogers. The Public Meeting was called simply to rake the ashes and re-start the fire which had once burnt so brightly, and this it did. A new committee was elected that evening - namely J. Milsom, A. Cogswell, A. Brooks, T. Bence, L. Parsons, A. Vaughan, F. Ford (secretary), A. Gray (treasurer), Rev. Foster (chairman) and of course the Hon. Mrs. Shaw-Mellor who proved a worthy successor to the Hon. Mrs. Twisleton. What of the Scouts? Few names are recorded but among them are E. Rogers, A. Sheppard, G. McTaggart and N. Bence who would appear to have joined in 1934. Interestingly, in the Minutes, the name of A. Cogswell is recorded as having received his Carpenters Badge. He was to make good use of it in 1955 when re-building the Scout Headquarters.

Sadly, history was about to repeat itself. In Germany, Hitler was coming to power and all Europe followed the fateful paths leading to yet another terrible conflict. Many of the Scouts of '34 would find destiny leading them to the four corners of the earth, not to fight in the horrors of the trenches, but to fly aircraft over countries which to the Scouts of 1911 might just as well have been light years away.

8. Enter The 'Colonel'.

Scoutmaster Rogers stayed with the Group for a little less than one year, after which he escaped to the relative peace of H.M. Constabulary. (He must have assumed that patrolling the streets at midnight was infinitely preferable to, and safer than, facing a group of Scouts on troop night).

Observing the events of 1934 was a man whose name is synonymous with Box Scouts - one **Phil Lambert** - the purveyor of obscure facts, who even today, half a century later, appears on pack and troop nights to impart his invaluable knowledge and experience. At a meeting held on 19th March 1935, Phil became the Scoutmaster of Box Scouts and with that came an involvement with youth that spans generations.

Somewhere along the line Phil became known as the 'Colonel'. How this nickname started, or when, I do not know, nor have I asked - far better to speculate. Could it be his military bearing, or perchance his facial hair, or perhaps the way he swings his stick? On reflection, all of these I discard and come to the conclusion that it results from his meticulous attention to detail in the planning of Scout activities. This is reflected in the reports given to the Scout Group Committee, from which much of the material for this history was extracted.

The years spanning 1935-39 were years of stability; scouting activities followed the pattern established decades earlier - camping on Kingsdown, (courtesy of Mr. Northey) or at Slaughterford, hikes through the valley to Colerne, Weavern, Ford and Marshfield, training in semaphore, pioneering, map-reading and much, much more. At a meeting on 15th April 1937 the following successes were announced:-

Tenderfoot	G. Bence
2nd Class	K. Holmes
1st Class	N. Bence

Service Stars - 3rd Year

E. Rogers, A. Sheppard, G. McTaggart, N. Bence

Service Stars - 2nd Year

Baxter, Holmes, F. Sheppard, Cogswell, Browning
Gregory, P. McTaggart, Stevens

Service Stars - 1st Year

G. Bence, Martin, R. Holmes

Results such as these reflect not only the interest of the boys (now very mature men) but also the dedication of the 'Colonel'.

1937 was a Coronation Year - King George VI was crowned on May 12th. To commemorate the occasion the Box Scout Group, following a suggestion made by the 'Colonel', redesigned its neckerchief - the plain green having a yellow trim added; that neckerchief has been worn ever since. Coronation Day saw the Scouts selling souvenir programmes for 1/- (5p) each at Box, Lacock and Colerne and joining a lantern procession through Box village in the evening.

The year preceding the Coronation - 1936 - was also an eventful year for the Box Scouts. The Rev. Foster was replaced both as Vicar and as Chairman of the Scout Group by Rev. Maltin.

A jamboree was planned for 30th May at Spye Park which the Box Group was to attend, but first there was the question of funds. Mrs. Milsom agreed to organise a whist drive which was held on 13th May; this raised £4.8s. If anyone is curious to know what could be purchased for that sum, he might be surprised to learn that it was 4 billycans, 4 frying pans, 4 tea infusers, 2 hike tents, 1 canvas bucket (I thought those went out with Nelson), 1 axe and

