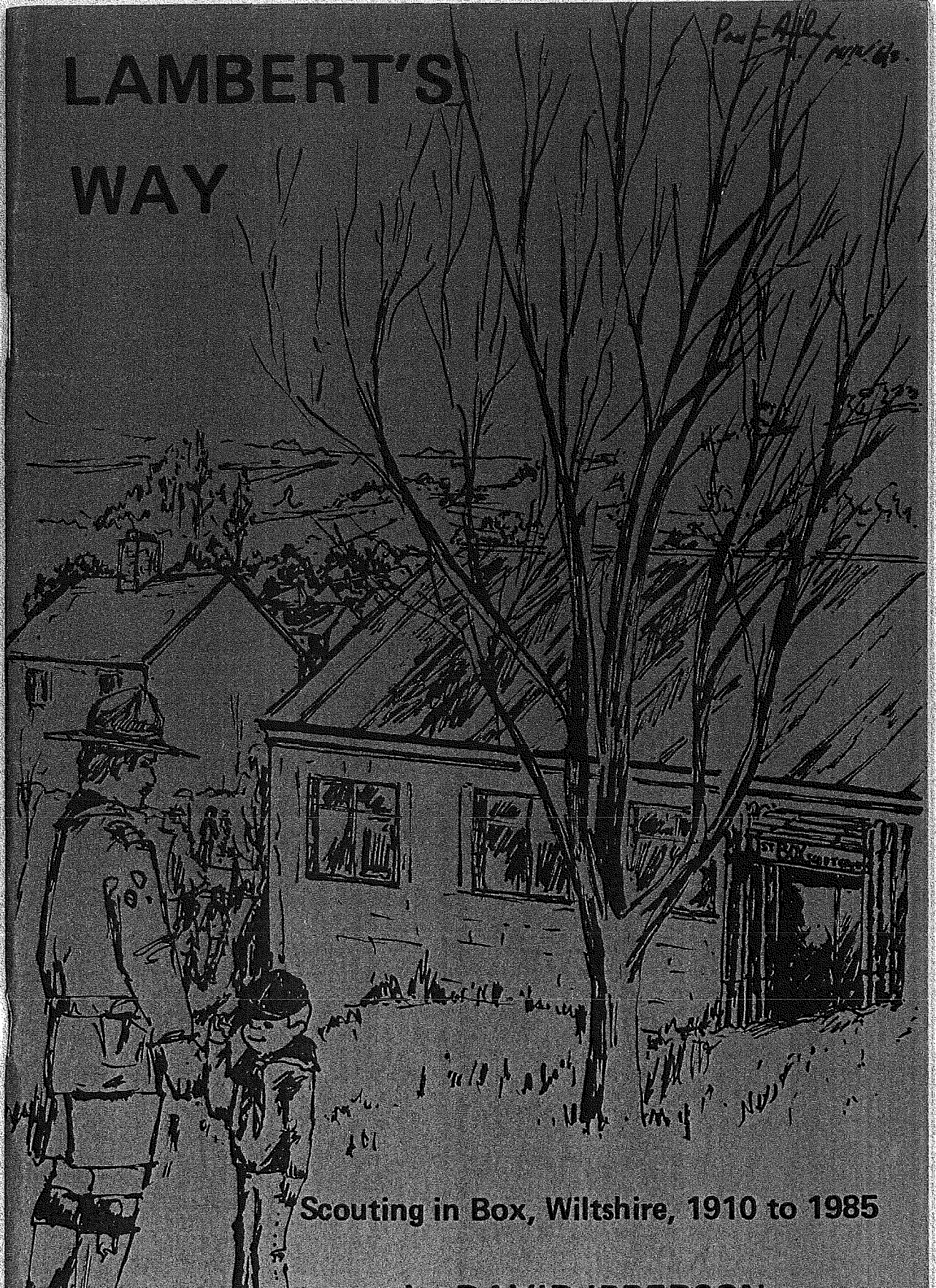


# LAMBERT'S WAY

*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:-

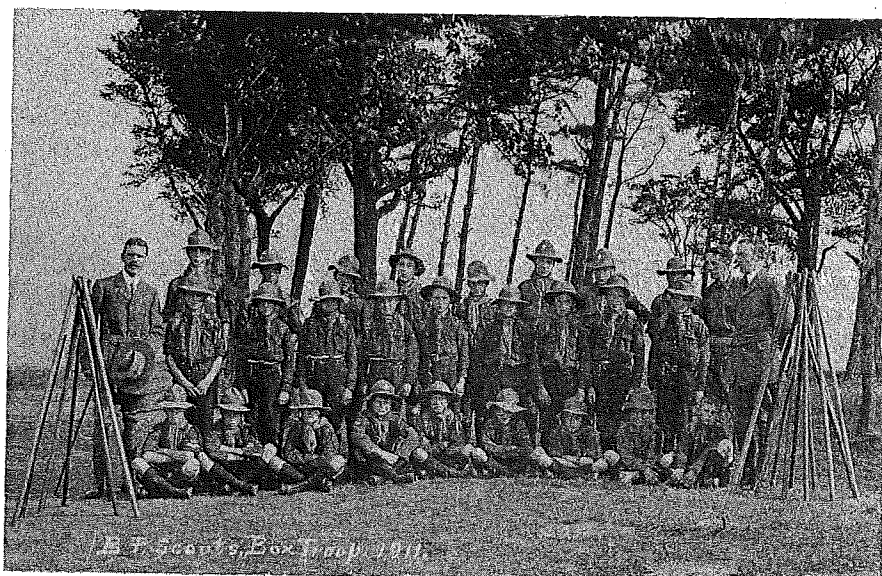
Patrol Leaders	Corporals
J. Stiles	J. Gale
W. Bateman	F. Shepherd
S. Street	F. Hillier
C. Lambert	B. Hinton
L. Bence	

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**



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.

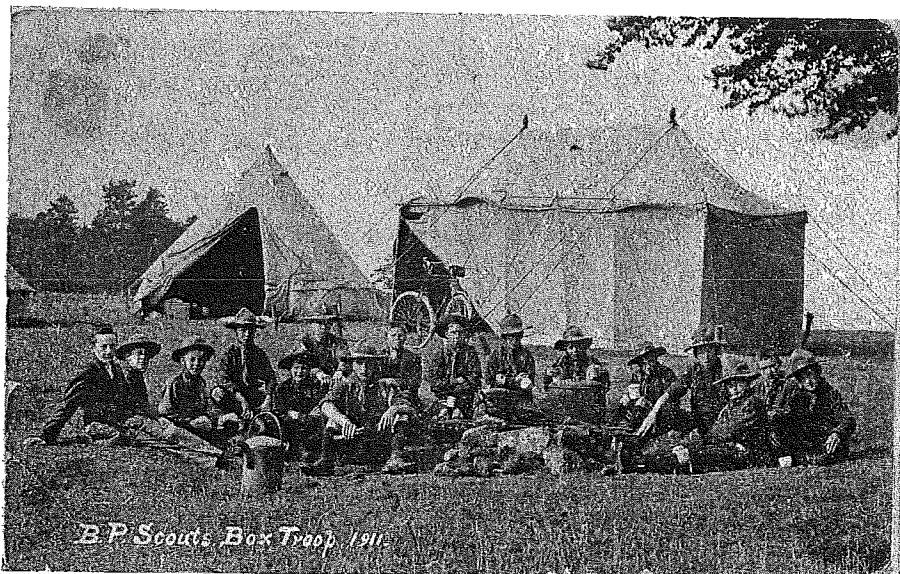


The thought of going away for the day or spending a week away from home would not send ripples of excitement through today's Scout Troop, or Cub Pack for that matter, but 70 years ago things were altogether different. A day out or a week away from home would be preceded with much excitement and anticipation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

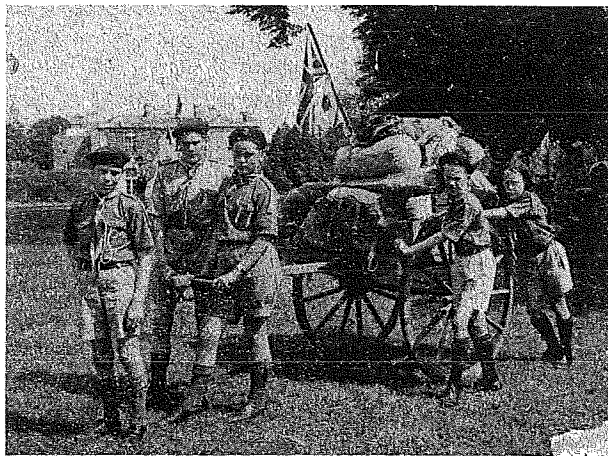
It was to be some 3 years before Box Scouts, in the charge of Scoutmaster R. Davies and assistant Scoutmaster C. Lambert were to return to Kingsdown. War was only a week away when the camp commenced on July 31st 1914. The weather was most unfavourable. However, this did not dampen their spirit and many 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.)

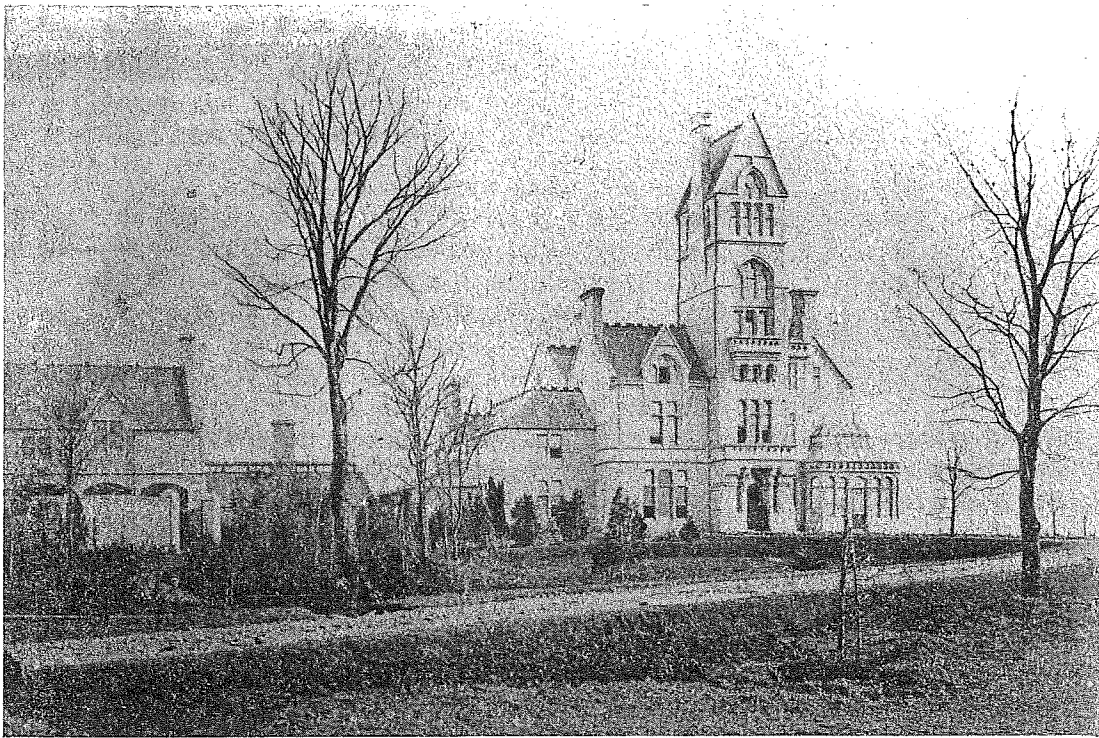
Fund raising still formed a major part of activities but for a different purpose. Thirty shillings (150p) was raised each week to maintain a cottage housing Belgian refugees. The cottage was located where Vine Court now stands.

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.

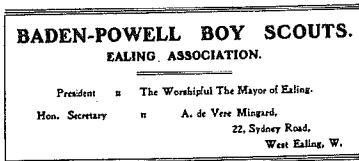
Some newspapers carried little snippets entitled 'An Old Boy's Message to Scouts', some of

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!



14<sup>th</sup> 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.  
1<sup>st</sup> 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



Box Troop on Parade, Coronation Day, 1937

miscellaneous tent pegs, ropes and signalling flags. This information was gleaned from a report submitted by J.A. Browning, Patrol Leader, Peewit Patrol.

As planned, the Group set off at 3.15p.m. on 30th May encouraged by the applause of a watching crowd. (The word 'crowd' must not be misconstrued - in Box terms a crowd covers any number greater than one). The jamboree held that year was the first to be experienced by the Box Group and was, by all accounts, enjoyed by everyone. During the first night, R. Ramsey gave a display of ballet and snake dancing- something of an unusual combination one would think, but having appeared in many Scout Shows, nothing surprises me. I only hope that the snake, if real, escaped.

In January 1938 Dr. James, the County Commissioner, visited Box accompanied by a young and enthusiastic Scouter, the Earl of Buckingham. He was described as a travelling commissioner and is yet another name to be added to the long list of distinguished people who have had a passing acquaintance with the Scouts of Box. That year, 1938, appears relatively inactive, the Scout committee meetings being held on only one occasion; perhaps more sinister events yet to come were occupying people's thoughts.

Early in 1939, the committee met, for what would be the penultimate meeting until 1941, to announce that Rovers had been formed and plans were in hand to start a Wolf Cub pack. Here, then, was the complete family of Scouts, catering for all ages from eight to eighty, and having at its head Phil Lambert. The Rovers were given a room in the old Rifle Club which was described as their 'Den'. The occupants of that room, many of whom will be familiar to readers, are shown in the following photograph.

That these young men held the 'Colonel' in high esteem is apparent from notes in the 'Rover Log'. Only a few years later, when they were dispersed throughout the western world and the 'Colonel' had left Box, contact was maintained through written correspondence. The next chapter deals with this in more detail.

In the Box Parish Magazine of November 1939 the 'Colonel's' departure shortly after the outbreak of war was recorded thus:-



Box Rover Crew 1940

E. Sheppard, Chapel Lane  
M. Gregory, 3 Fairview  
A. Sheppard, Chapel Lane  
N. Bence, Lorne House  
A. Cogswell, High Street  
G. McTaggart, Middlehill  
P. Armstead  
C. Sparrow, The Retreat, Bradford Road

'Philip Lambert, Scoutmaster of the Box Group which includes Cubs, Scouts and Rovers, has recently accepted a post at Shrewsbury and consequently has had to resign his job as the Box 'Chief Scout'. It is only after years of patient work and keen interest that Mr. Lambert has built up the Box Scout Group to the flourishing thing it is now. The news of his impending departure came as a severe blow to the Scouts' Committee and to the boys themselves, but out of sheer gratitude for his services to the Group they are going to carry on and keep the flag flying.

A presentation was made to Mr. Lambert, the 'Colonel', on Christmas Eve. It took the form of a bronze Scout and the plinth bore a silver plate suitably inscribed. Mr. Lambert will be missed in the Church's life as a choirman, a member of the Parochial Church Council, a Server and also as a member of the Box Choral Society. In any of these capacities and offices he will always receive a welcome when he returns to Box. In the meantime we wish him all success in his new post and thank him for his public and influential work at Box.'

This was not the end, only an interruption; the 'Colonel' would return.

Scoutmasters, committee members and others involved with Cubs or Scouts at a local level are not paid; they give of their time freely. What, then, makes people like Phil Lambert devote so much time and effort? I believe Her Majesty the Queen came close to explaining why in a speech she made shortly after her Coronation when she said:-

'Above all, we must keep alive that courageous spirit of adventure that is the finest quality of youth, and by youth I do not mean just those who are young in years; I mean too all those that are young in heart, no matter how old they may be.'

The 'Colonel' has that spirit of adventure.

Phil, in this the seventy-fifth year, the Box Scout Group salutes you and assures you that, as long as there is a 1st Box, it will be Lambert's own.

## 9. Life in the 'Den'

On Monday 9th January 1939, 8 young men from Box (together with 14 from Bath and Chippenham) met to conduct the investiture ceremony of the 1st BOX ROVER CREW. Such an event justified a celebration and Box Girl Guides were at hand to provide not only feminine charm but also refreshment in the form of bread, cheese, hot cocoa and beer. Some of these Guides may be seen in the photograph on page 24.

These 8 young men of Box have, I believe, left an almost unique record of their activities. Events were to make these records of short duration, covering just 2 years, but even then one short article cannot do them justice.

The Rovers met twice a week and on each occasion they followed an established routine, which tended to illustrate the intellectual nature of the young men present. A book - 'Rovering to Success' - formed the nucleus of the evening's work; chapter by chapter, the book was read and discussed. If not discussing this book, heady debates took place - the range of topics would do credit to our ancient seats of learning; as an example, debates scheduled for 1940 were -

- That Japan was justified in invading China;
- That the Scout Law could not be kept in wartime;
- That Scouts' and Guides' movements be amalgamated;
- That one should not risk one's life to break records.

Music and literature also formed an important part of activities; regrettably my own lack of education precludes me from pronouncing the composers' names, let alone spelling them!

Intellectual skills were interspersed with physical ones; games were played including the notorious British Bulldog which was guaranteed to provide a few bruises and bloody noses. Rope work was also important and, like cooking in the open air, became useful when finally the young men took the 'call to arms'.



Rover Moot, Scotland 1939  
attended by Box Scouts

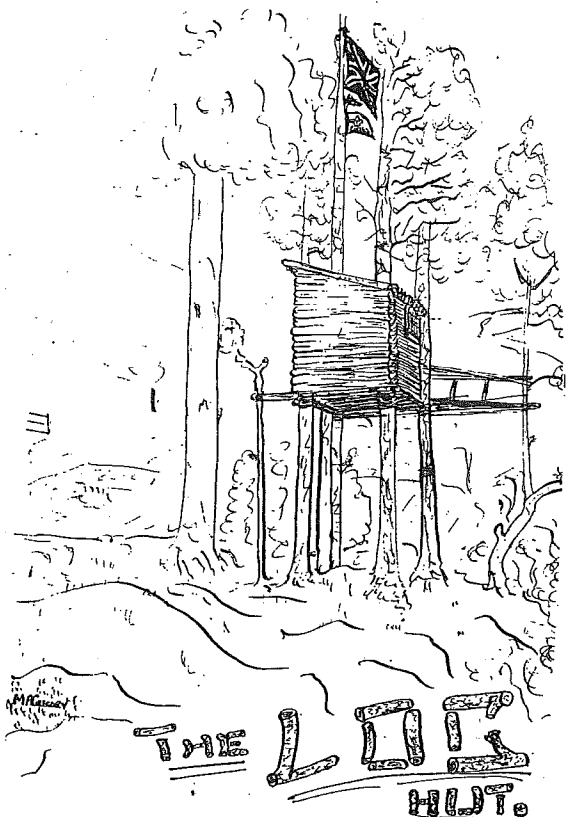
Outdoor activities were dominated by hiking but, unlike their younger 'brothers' in Scouts, their jaunts included visits to almost every licensed premises in the district, excluding those in Box. Those hikes must have been jolly occasions:-

On Sunday 15th June 1939, Alan Sheppard and Chris Sparrow followed the stream through Weavern, Slaughterford and Ford to Castle Combe, heading for the 'Castle' (at that time the only licensed premises); unfortunately, this establishment was crowded; undaunted, they went to the 'White Hart' which sold only non-alcoholic beverages. The landlady, sympathetic to their plight, offered some extra-fizzy ginger beer, which, whilst not having the same effect on the head as beer, still produced similar effects on the digestive system, no doubt necessitating several excursions behind hedges on the return journey.

A hike to Sandy Bank in March 1940 took the Rovers to St. Catherine's Church where they admired a wooden cross inset in the walls commemorating a local hero who fell on Flanders Field. They did, perhaps, return home rather more subdued remembering that above them the Battle of Britain was being fought.

Youthful exuberance emerged during these hikes - Edwin Sheppard, for example, had a remarkable ability to charm cows and this was demonstrated at Salt Box on the way to Castle Combe on Sunday 21st April 1940. By using his so-called 'devil stick' he made the cows do everything but dance. Not wishing to be sceptical, one suspects that they either completely ignored this latter-day cowboy or hurtled off in sheer panic. Continuing the hike, an unfortunate rabbit was found attempting to pass its last few hours on earth in peace; the creature was clearly distressed and, after some debate, it was decided that the kindest act would be to put it out of its misery. This task having been accomplished, they then proceeded to conduct a post-mortem. The head pathologist (Chris Sparrow) concluded that it had been poisoned. Further along the river they came across a bridge clearly marked 'UNSAFE' - this of course is like the proverbial red rag to a bull; consequently they crossed it twice just to prove that the sign was inaccurate.

Such excursions did not leave the war behind; guards were posted on many roads prohibiting access to the more sensitive military areas. The Rover Crew themselves contributed to the war effort in many ways - collecting paper, profits of 5/- (25p) from the tuck shop were given to the Spitfire fund, a dance to raise money for the Mayor of Bristol's Air Raid Relief Fund (music being provided by Arthur Clark and his Pump Room Orchestra) in the Bingham Hall on 24th March 1941.



Help of a more practical nature was given to Box's answer to Captain Mannering - one Mr. W.V.D. Skrine, Platoon Commander of the Box Home Guard. A Rover Scout had slept at Kingsmoor each night for the purpose of alerting residents and the Home Guard in the event of parachutists being landed. (Exactly how he would alert residents whilst he slept escapes me; however, the word 'slept' recorded in the 'Rover Log' was, I'm sure, used as a figure of speech.) Due to depleting numbers, this activity ceased: however, a log cabin being built at 'The Firs' for use by the army was completed and a sketch of this cabin (the work of M. Gregory) is included here.

Whilst the numbers of Rovers from Box diminished as the war progressed, new blood was being injected from service units:-

D. Wynne-Jones from London, serving with the RAF and nicknamed 'Shakespeare' because of his ability to recite by heart extracts from the Bard's books.

Cliff Lydell from Walsall, serving with the Army, who (with J. Browning and M. Gregory) organised dinner for servicemen on Christmas Day 1940.

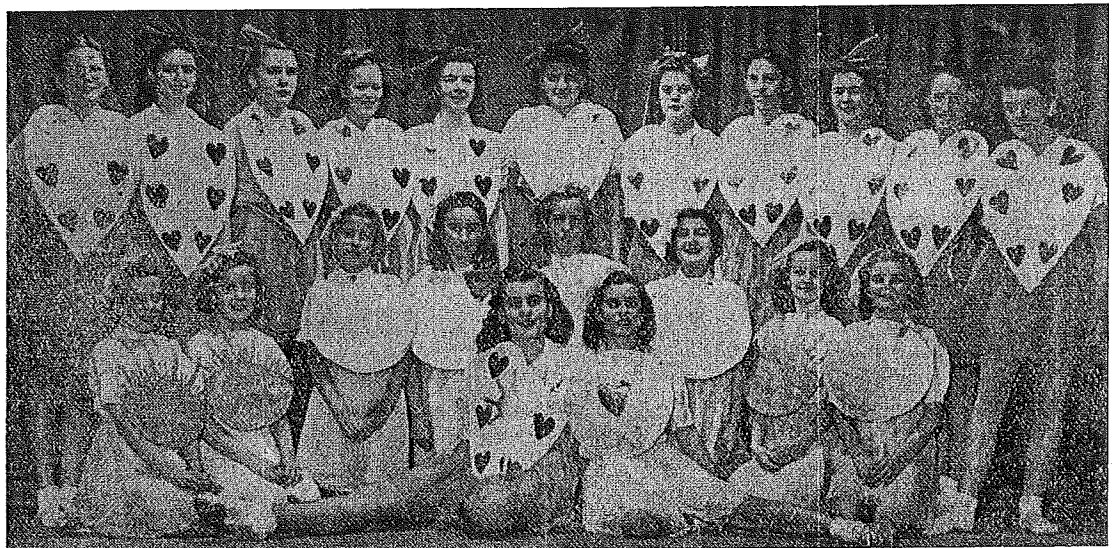


This chapter would not be complete without singling out 2 men - Alec Cogswell and Christopher Sparrow. Alec ultimately became Scoutmaster of Box Scouts, masterminding the rebuilding of the Scout headquarters in 1955; he was finally awarded the Medal of Merit for services to Scouting. Christopher Sparrow is still active in Scouting, and was awarded the Silver Acorn in 1984, this being one of the highest scouting awards.

Of the others I know little, but having read the 'Rover Log', as short as it is, I thank them all for transporting me back to another age, an age of conflict but still an age when its youth possessed that zest for life and that ability to get much pleasure from simple companionship within the walls of their 'Den'.

On Wednesday 8th January 1941, a short statement in the 'Rover Log' records the death of Lord Baden-Powell, Chief Scout. It is unlikely that he knew of scouting activities in Box; had he done so, I am sure he would have been well pleased.

Box Girl Guides Variety Concert, "Here We Are Again"  
Bingham Hall, early 1940s



Standing, from left-

(1) ?

(4) Janice Cannings

(7) Joy May

(10) ?

(2) Jean (Lucy) Reece

(5) Eva Clifford

(8) Thelma Cannings

(11) ?

(3) Veronica Miles

(6) Violet Stevens

(9) Audrey McEwan

Kneeling, from left-

(1) Beryl Boulton

(4) ?

(7) ?

(2) Maureen May

(5) ?

(8) ?

(3) ?

(6) Jean Dancey

Sitting, from left-

Audrey Eyles, Anne Hayward (?)

## 10. Scouts Have Wings.

The last but one entry in the 'Rover Log' was made on Friday 2nd May, 1941, by which time the numbers had gradually dwindled to the point where the Rover Crew could not function. Just as in 1914 the young men of Box had departed to fight in the Great War, so it was that the Rover Crew dispersed to serve in HM Forces or to carry out vital war work far away from the village of their youth.

Young men going to war had become a feature of life, and the situation facing the Box Crew was being mirrored nationwide; one aspect, however, I believe made Box unique. That was the number of Rovers who trained as pilots. Records are incomplete, but the young men known to have gained their wings were:-

A. Cogswell	-	RAF pilot	Catalina flying boats
A. Sheppard	-	RAF pilot	Sunderland flying boats
M. Gregory	-	Naval Air Services pilot	
M. Maltin	-	RAF pilot	Mosquito pathfinder (ex Scout)

All could not be pilots; of the others:-

N. Bence	-	RAF
J. Browning	-	Cheltenham College
G. McTaggart	-	RAF
E. Sheppard	-	not known
C. Sparrow	-	RAF

It would thus appear that the fledgelings had flown their nests and gained their wings in one way or another.

Whilst the names mentioned formed the nucleus, there were others:-

Pete Armstead, who, I believe, went into the Royal Navy and served until retiring in the 1960s;  
Fred Baxter, a civil servant;  
'Skipper' Brooke from Surrey, a member of the Mercantile Marine;  
Phil McTaggart -

and no doubt others who remained unmentioned in the records of the group.

In previous chapters, it has been stated that the 'Colonel' has an incredible memory for obscure facts; he also possesses the collector's instinct which simply does not allow the disposal of letters, papers etc., as a result of which some remarkable letters are preserved. Examples of these are reprinted in full below.

\* \* \* \* \*

April 25th 1941

Dear Brother Rovers,

As this is the first letter to absent members of the 1st Box, we feel very inexperienced and would therefore welcome criticisms and suggestions for future improvements: but we do need news of yourselves. We hope, if we have the news, to send you this every month which means starting a stamp fund to cover postage etc. so if, when you write, you could contribute . . . . .

News

The Rover Dance (in place of the Gang Show) went off well and Bristol Air Raid Relief Fund benefitted by £8:9:8. Nigel had arranged everything and posted bills far and wide but was called up before the night of the dance; Chris was M.C. and ran the dance well The band was Arthur Clark's from Bath: Mr. Oatley auctioned a jar with onions inside and raised over 30s and

Flying Off. Walker performed musical feats on the piano while the band were fortifying themselves.

Rover Meetings are on both Mondays and Fridays now; the latter for more social activities. One Friday we hoped for a debate on Socialism after the war but only four turned up. On Chris's last Monday 14 came and were present at the investiture of Cliff Lydell; we ended with a very good camp fire. Our Rover Mate is now in the RAF and is stationed quite near us. We hope to see him sometime.

Our log hut is nearly finished now and already Chris and Coggie have slept a night there: there are three bunks and room on the floor for a fourth. We tried to make a rope ladder for it, but having used it once, we decided that the way up the tree was safer.

Hikes! The Crew went to Lacock one Sunday, spending the time playing 'cut-cheese' or at the Harp and Crown. Easter Sunday, Rover Communion was at eight and afterwards four of us hiked (or gandered) upstream to Biddestone via Slaughterford and the bridge which is now merely two rails held up by concrete blocks. Memories of 'Ricety Puds'.

Jimmy Browning and Akela (Gen. Barker) are now full-blown Rovers.

Saturday last, Aggie, Grog and David went to the North East Somerset Rover Moot at Darlington Wharf, Bath: a feed, British Bulldogs, and the George, ending with a camp fire (which needed more support). Harold Davis asked us to find a site for the next Moot, a weekend camp, but various permissions have to be given by various people about which we know little. We hope to have it at Slaughterford.

I think that that is all for the present. Please send us your news, also questions about the Box Troop and Crew, (1st Box Rover Crew, c/o D.A. Sparrow, The Retreat, Bradford Road, Box, Wilts). This letter will, we hope, keep you in touch with the Box Crew.

All the best in Roving 'till we see you again in the Den.

1st Box Rover Crew

STOP PRESS . . .

Slaughterford Stay Stopped . . . . . Jimmie Browning has received a letter from Ponting, Slaughterford Farm. 'Regret . . . Government . . . asked not to allow camping on the farm . . . wait . . . better conditions . . . etc.' so that, as one might say, is that. We will try Lacock and Raybridge and hope that one at least will offer us a place in which we may lay our heads.

\* \* \* \* \*



3 Fair View,  
Box, Wilts  
10th September, 1941

Dear Brother Rovers,

Since our last news letter nothing has been heard of the Crew but that does not mean it has gone out of existence.

Meetings are held every Monday from 8 p.m. until 9.30 at the Den, so don't forget to look us up when you are about. Unfortunately the Tuck Shop is a thing of the past but we are doing our best to make it a thing of the present again. There are only two or three who can get to Rovers regularly now but these are supplemented by the Forces who attend if they possibly can.

Ted Sheppard registered on Saturday for services with the Forces, so he may be the next one

to leave us. I expect you know that Coggie went last Monday to Lords Cricket Ground (London) for the RAF. I hope he has the luck to get a game or two in while he is there but I doubt if he will.

Gordon has now been moved from Weston-super-Mare but up to now I haven't had his present address.

Alan has somehow got into the Air Force and seems to be enjoying himself. Skipper Brooke has been home on leave but went back on Wednesday (today). He tells me he hopes to go to Canada to get some shaving soap etc and then south of the equator for the winter as he is afraid he may be troubled by rheumatism if he stays on the east coast. N.B. Rheumatism is a bigger enemy to him than Hitler could ever hope to be.

Apparently some Crews arrange a rota of letter-writers which is arranged that every member of the Crew writes one letter each week and receives one. This seems a brilliant idea and if everyone agrees I will see what can be done about it.

Ralph Reader put on a show at Corsham a short while ago in the Town Hall. It was his gang show but of course all the crowd were missing but he had his 'famous few'. The Crew were well represented by Phil Parker, Cliff Lydell, 'Lol' Rush and myself. In spite of the lack of facilities they put up a good show.

The Troop is still functioning though quality is our aim instead of quantity. I have started a scheme so that Troop meetings are run by the lads in case I have to leave.

David Sparrow is unable to come to Crew meetings now as he is swotting but he is quite well and hasn't forgotten us. As for myself I missed the last registration by 25 days so it'll be my turn next.

I am sorry there is little news of the rest of the Crew but I have told you all I know about them (or nearly all). If when you answer this letter you will let me know all the news about yourself I shall have something to talk about in the next news letter.

Don't forget to let me know what you think of the idea of having a scheme for a rota of letter-writers.

I should like to wish you all you wish yourself and the best of everything until we all gather again at the Den for a celebration of Victory so Cheerio,

Yours in all Scouting,

*Mervyn (MacGogon)*

\* \* \* \* \*

'Maycroft'  
Station Road, Corsham  
2/12/41

Dear Colonel,

I am in receipt of your letter of 29th inst. and it was a very great joy to me to have amongst my many letters one from you, the greatest Scout I ever knew, (this is not soft soap by the way). You are of course forgiven for your letter being late (as you said it was) because in the mad rush of our move (you will note our address differs) I forget, or rather lost my paper of people to whom I had to write and thus I don't really know which letters are late and which are not.

I don't think you can have heard of our big move. We now live in a new house at Station Road and we moved here on 4th November. Well! I don't know if you have ever moved house but I myself think that I'd rather go into Box Brook in the Christmas Holidays. For about a week after we actually moved in we were all falling over books, pianos, violins, piano-accordians,

clocks, etc. etc. and everything that we wanted was lost, (my list for instance) and everything that was not wanted was in the way. Anyway we've got here and thus our address will be as above in future.

Alan is doing fine if you ask me. I had a letter from him about him the other day and although he told me a lot of quite interesting things I think that most of them would not interest you. He is rather annoying in places because he spends about a page in each letter about food, food and still more food, and then on top of this he keeps interrupting himself with things like 'pass the peach pie waiter'. I am certain that he has no regrets as to his change over from the army.

I am afraid that your praise was not due to me (about helping to run the troop I mean) as I haven't been to a meeting at all since I came up here. Please don't think that I am a slacker only I cycle to work every day (Corsham to Combe Down that is) and when I get home I don't much like the idea of cycling back down to Box. I may do this sometimes however as the scouts in Corsham seem to be, well, not too good and there are no Rovers at all. Say not another word about the Gang Show as even before I thought of leaving the kids didn't seem to want one at the last moment and Grog said that we had better not have one if that is how they feel about it. I expect that he told you all about it and I guess that by this time you will know more about it than I do. I told them that if they changed their minds and wanted one in the end they could count upon my valuable support but as I have heard nothing I fear the worst.

I had a letter from Joan of the clucking egg today, and although there was very little real news in it she did mention that she was now a Guide with 2nd Class, 8 badges (all explained) and she said that she intends to go in for her first class in the early spring. So if you go to see the Smiths be sure you read your Scouting for Boys and light a few fires before you go. Be Prepared.

I hope that I shall be able to see you when you come in December. It would be a great pity for you to come and go again without my seeing you as it is years (literally I think) since I last saw you and you did at least keep me in the straight and narrow in my younger days.

Rajah Brooke is now home on leave and expects to be here for at least two weeks. This leave is prior to his going deep sea again and he hopes to go on his Canadian trip in order that he can get himself some razor blades and a few more odd things. (I hope that you knew that he was coasting before or all this will seem double Dutch to you.)

Give my kind regards to your lady-friend (I daren't say love or I'll get a thick ear from you) as I know that she must be a swell person to be a good friend of yours.

Looking forward to seeing you in Dec.

I remain as ever,

*Ted.*

P.S. You did not put anything in for Alan so I will forward you his address and your empty envelope.

\* \* \* \* \*

The turmoil of events surrounding 1939 - 1943 did not stop the Scout Committee from carrying out its duties - arranging the installation by the Electric Light Co. of electric light in Scout Headquarters being but one example. This in itself created some minor problems. The occupants of the headquarters at that time were not just Scouts - Guides and the Box Home Guard also used the building. These two lodger groups posed rather different problems - the guides had a separate room and naturally when planning the electrical installation little thought had been given to the girls (they are happier when left in the dark) so equally naturally they didn't want to be left out. (For a charge of 26/- (130p) lights were installed.)

The Home Guard on the other hand used the building mainly at night and, unfortunately, and despite the blackout, appeared to burn much midnight oil. This resulted in rather higher bills than expected. Mr. Skrine (Commander of the Home Guard) agreed to contribute to the payments.

It was not until the meeting held on 10th March 1942 that it was announced that the Rovers had finally closed and had vacated the 'Den'. In the years 1939 - 1942 the Rovers had helped maintain Scout and Cub activities. Cubs had been formed in 1941 under the leadership of Cub-master Barker (nicknamed General Barker) with Rovers as assistants. Similarly, temporary Scoutmaster or Troop Leader F.T. Baxter (himself a Rover) maintained Scouting activities.

The war lumbered on and at a meeting on 23rd April 1942 the Vicar (Rev. Maltin) announced that an emergency committee had been formed in the village. This might have been indicative of the anxiety felt regarding the possibilities of invasion. It comprised himself, Mr. Finnes (The Bassetts), Mr. Wilkinson (Ashley House) and Mr. Chapman Webb. Box was thus prepared to face any eventuality. Not surprisingly, the Scout Headquarters was chosen as the building to house the committee, making it, by and large, the focal point of village defence.

Meanwhile, the Scouts themselves were making their own contribution by assisting the Civil Defence, the Home Guard (mainly on exercises) and manning emergency centres following the blitz of Bath.

'Winds of Change' were again beginning to blow - the Hon. Mrs. Shaw-Mellor had resigned, roughly coincident with the formation of the first Cub-Scout pack. By the end of 1943, both Mr. Jupp, the Scoutmaster and Mr. Barker had departed, signalling the end of nearly a decade of scouting activity. Rovers, Scouts and Cubs were no more, but the building lived on to be used by the Home Guard until the end of the war.

In 1945 the new Vicar, the Rev Scott, proposed that Scout Headquarters be used by the Youth Club under the auspices of their leader Mr. Earl. So it was that the Headquarters, built 30 years earlier, continued to provide accommodation for the youth of Box.

The Scout Headquarters in Devizes Road had served the village well for nigh on 30 years. Men bend easily to the change of time; buildings however, have a permanency. It is that permanency that suggests that as long as Baden-Powell's movement continues and the Headquarters exists, Scouts will sooner or later return, if only to recapture those memories of youth.

\* \* \* \* \*

Since the publication of an abridged version of this chapter in the Box Parish Magazine, in which an enquiry was made as to the identity of 'Joan of the Clucking Egg', the following letter has been received:-

80 St. Ina Road  
Heath, Cardiff  
29th December 1985

Dear Mr. Ibberson,

Talk about one's past catching up with one! May I introduce myself? I am that 'Joan of the Clucking Egg' you referred to in your recent article on the history of Box Scouts. My Mother and I recently enjoyed a happy day with our old friends Mary and Phil Lambert who showed us the December issue of the Box Parish Magazine and asked if by chance we could throw any light on the reference. What a multitude of happy memories came flooding back!

It was in the summer of 1938 when my parents and I camped in the New Forest, alongside a

stream in the Wootton Enclosure; shortly after our arrival a small party of Large Scouts, crammed into 'Colonel's' tiny car, turned up and pitched their tents on the other side of the stream. We made friends and so began one of the happiest holidays we can recall. The group consisted of Phil 'Colonel' Lambert, Alan 'Scum' Sheppard, Ted Sheppard, Gordon McTaggart, Philip McTaggart and- I'm afraid that I can't be sure of the sixth member, perhaps Phil Lambert can identify him from the photographs in his possession; it was possibly Pete Armstead or Fred Baxter. How kind they all were to a tomboyish 10-year old girl who tagged along on their trails through the woods; they let me join in their games, taught me knots and tracking signs and, on one memorable evening, we all joined forces to 'haunt' the occupants of a nearby caravan who had been a bit stuffy about our noise! Most days we all piled into Phil's and my Father's cars and went down to Christchurch Bay to bathe and, on the way back, we would buy fish and chips by the bucketful, re-heat them on the caravan stove and have happy impromptu sing-songs and stories with lads sitting on the floor of the small caravan or round a campfire.

The 'clucking egg' incident occurred early one morning when I crept across the stream and stealthily inserted my mechanical toy 'egg' under the skirt of one of the tents, between the sleeping heads of two Scouts. This egg, when wound, jerked and rolled about whilst emitting a raucous clucking sound. As they were thus rudely awoken I beat a hasty retreat but was eventually forgiven and even had my egg back! A new chorus was added to that song about the Drunken Sailor:

'Don't put a clucking egg in his ear-hole,  
Ear-ly in the morning!'

At the end of their camp the Scouts very generously gave us all gifts- my Mother had a pretty paper parasol, my Father had a smoke-proof ashtray in the shape of a barrel with a gnome on top and I had a super blue-and-white speedboat which went like a rocket around the pool we had created by damming up the stream. Those lads could not have had much pocket money and their gifts were deeply appreciated and treasured for many years; as you see, they are still remembered with much affection. Also, on their final evening, they put on a special Camp Fire at which I was proud to be enrolled as an Honorary Member of the 1st Box Troop and received a specially-designed 'Certificate' which stated that a condition of my membership was that I should, '-at all times and in all places maintain that the 1st Box Troop is the toughest Troop in England'. This I have always done and I am sure it is still so. I still have that 'Certificate', along with the green Scout scarf, leather woggle, fawn lanyard and horn-handled knife with which I was 'invested'. Among the other souvenirs of that memorable holiday are the gnome-topped ashtray, various photographs of the group - and the clucking egg which still rolls and jerks but seems, alas, to have lost its 'cluck'.

We kept contact with some of the boys, especially Gordon McTaggart and Ted Sheppard, for a while but the War came and they dispersed. We often wondered how they had fared. Phil Lambert remains a valued friend and eventually my Parents became Godparents to his elder son, David. My Father died in 1959 but my Mother, at 83, still recalls vividly that very happy holiday so long ago. Thank you for reminding us.

Our very best wishes to you and the 1st Box Troop (the toughest Troop in England and don't deny it) for a happy and successful 1986.

Yours sincerely,

*Joan A. Smith (Miss)*

alias Joan of the Clucking Egg

## 11. To Build for the Future

The year 1948 closed with a meeting at the Vicarage with the new Vicar, the Rev. Lendon Bell, and Mrs. Browning, Mrs. Milsom, Mr. and Mrs. Bence and Messrs. T. Bence, A. Vaughan, Martin and Lambert in attendance. The meeting had been convened with the intention of re-starting the 1st Box Scout Group, but it was not until a meeting on 20th September 1949 that Messrs. P. Lambert and N. Bence were able to announce that a Cub Scout Pack had been formed, with Miss Joy May as Leader and Mr. Weeks as Assistant. It was also announced that Cdr. Jolliffe OBE, RN and Mr. B. Vaughan were willing to run a Scout Troop.

Although not aware of it at the time, they were embarking on a long period of activity; Scouts would continue almost uninterrupted until 1970 and Cubs to the present day, the latter adding up to 35 years.

Miss May lived at 2 The Wharf; she must have been very dedicated - attending courses and taking copious notes, some of which still exist. On the front cover of one notebook is a verse by Rudyard Kipling, on whose 'Jungle Book' cubs are based. It reads -

'Who hath smelt woodsmoke at twilight?  
Who hath heard the Birch Log Burning?  
Who is quick to read the noises of the night?  
Let him follow with the others: for the young men's feet are turning  
To the camps of proved desire and known delight.'

This verse captures the spirit of Scouting - one can almost smell the fire and feel the tranquility of a remote camp site free from all worldly cares.

The notebook itself does, I believe, refer to a training course at Monkton Combe, as the following verse suggests:-

'We've come to Monkton Combe,  
As eager as can be  
And we hope to go from here,  
One of the wood badge family.'

The wood badge was awarded following a period of training in outdoor activities.

Cubs at that time were female-dominated; however, the attitude towards the gentle sex offers some amusement. For example - 'Cub mistresses should not participate in boisterous games and on no account demonstrate forward rolls'. There are very few male leaders that I know who would be prepared to demonstrate forward rolls, and most 'sane' leaders find a safe haven during boisterous games. One other amusing entry states - 'training should be organised to stimulate all senses except taste'. One concludes that they must have considered children's sense of taste as overdeveloped.

Miss May stayed with the Group until 1954 when she married. The photograph on the next page shows Miss May (now Mrs. Bailey) with the group outside the new headquarters in 1955. Note how fashions change. I have yet to work out whether the cubs had failed to grow to expectations due to an undeveloped sense of taste or whether the trousers were purchased for their older brothers. (The boy shown front, fifth from left, clearly had fears that he might be identified or had taken an instant dislike to the photographer.)

The contribution made by Miss May to the 1st Box Group should not be underestimated. She, and her assistant Mr. Weeks, who subsequently became Cub Master, established the foundation of 'cubbing' in Box.

Whilst the Cub mistress was no doubt occupied in planning her wedding, the Scout Committee, Leaders and older Scouts were preoccupied with less-romantic activities. Commander Jolliffe gave up the post of Scout Master in November 1950 and was in effect replaced by Mr. Vaughan,





Miss May and the Group outside the new Headquarters, 1955

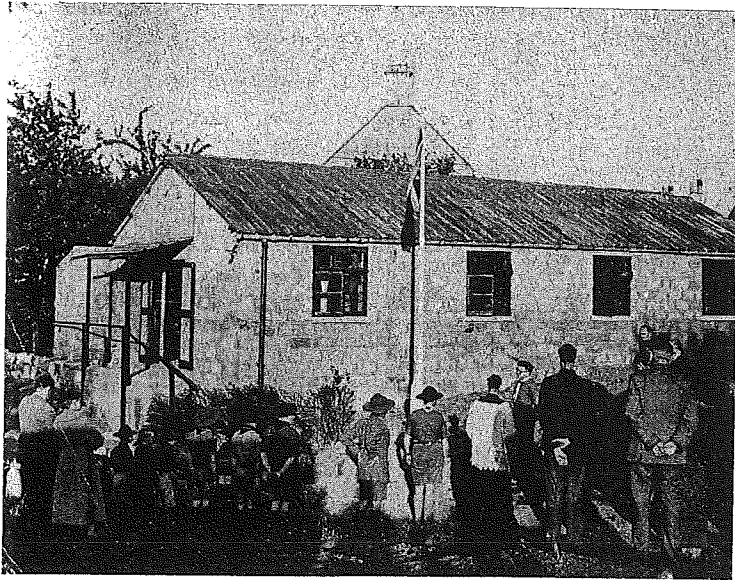
who in turn was assisted by the then Group Scout Leader Phil Lambert (no longer called the 'colonel'). Mr. Vaughan, however, considered himself to be a 'caretaker' to await the emergence of a new Scout Leader; he had to wait three years until Alex Cogswell, the then Group Treasurer, announced that he would take up the post at a meeting held on 19th August 1953.

This of course was Coronation Year, and the Scouts participated in village activities, including a 'Coronation Gateway' temporarily erected at the entrance to the recreation ground, and a beacon built on Barn Piece as part of a district chain of beacons.

Alex Cogswell, however, was concentrating his energies on the single objective of replacing the existing Scout Headquarters, which was now in a poor state of repair, with a brick structure, purchased for £12, (presented and, I believe, donated by a Mr. Cox, a committee member, from Ashley). This was a gigantic task requiring demolition, transportation and re-erection on site in Devizes Road. But for the enthusiasm of Alex Cogswell and the hard work of many helpers, this work would not have been accomplished. As it was, the hall represents three long, weary years of hard labour, culminating in the official opening by the County Commissioner on 15th May 1955. The photograph on the next page captures the historic occasion and it is a great pity that one cannot distinguish the people present. However, for the more curious, the tall, dark-haired cleric might be none other than the Rev. T. R. Selwyn-Smith.

Whilst it is not fair to single out individual contributions in respect of the Headquarters builders, it would be equally wrong were I not to mention the contribution of Scout Bob Hancock, who not only gave a lot of time to this project, but was also ready to assist Scout Leaders in the ensuing years. Having been chased and threatened for walking over the cricket pitch, I can personally vouch for his ability to 'get people moving'! In addition to Bob Hancock, other Scouts of the day were Phil Martin, Paul Phillips, Dickie Pinker, Mick Betteridge and Rodney Brickell.

Alex Cogswell was to remain Scout Leader for eight years until 1951, when Mr. A. Wilsden 'took the reins', but in December 1954 Alex was back, serving until 1970, when Scouts closed down after 21 years of continuous activity.



Official opening of the Hall, 15th May 1955

Cub Scouts, however, continued under a succession of leaders. Following the departure of Mr. Weeks in 1963, Miss Wilson became Akela, but only for one year; she was replaced by Mr. Wallace, who was in turn followed by Mrs. Dark. She stayed until 1968 when Paul Cheadle arrived on the scene. Paul stayed with the Group until 1975, when Dave Mason became Akela - it is Dave who must be credited with re-starting Scouts in 1975.

Amidst all of these changes I unearthed a remarkable coincidence. In 1963 the Scouts attended a camp in Hampshire. One Air Vice-Marshal Bilney visited the camp. He was particularly interested in the Box contingent since his wife, (whose maiden name was Perrin) came from Box. Could it have been the music-maker or a member of her family?

The advent of the seventies was to bring many changes, not the least that, for the first time, the Scout Headquarters was solely used by members of the Scout movement. Its importance as a village amenity had diminished, the Home Guard had long gone and the Guides and Brownies had moved to the relative peace of the village school or some other haven of tranquillity.

## 12. The Swinging 'Sixties'.

The fiftieth anniversary of the Group passed unnoticed and unheralded in 1960. Scouting had changed little in all those years, but young people were beginning to find a new freedom and affluence and sought to express that freedom with dress and behaviour certain to shock their more conservative parents. Before the end of the decade the Scout movement - noting events of change - was to discard its traditional Baden-Powell image, (visibly reflected in the wide-brimmed hat and shorts) in favour of a beret, a shirt in forest green plus long trousers to hide the most comical part of one's anatomy, (young men and boys were determined to retain their modesty whilst the girls, in mini skirts, were equally determined to dispose of theirs).

Then (as now) the Group Chairman was the Rev. Tom Selwyn-Smith, who followed in the footsteps of Tidy, Sweetapple, Foster, Maltin and Bell in exerting a profound influence on the Group. The Rev. Selwyn-Smith epitomises all that one expects in a country Vicar - tall, rather distinguished, but possessing that common touch which endears him to young and old alike; a man with an enormous capacity for kindness and understanding as expressed in his generosity and desire to see in everyone those things that are best in the human spirit. (In recent years the revered Reverend has become notorious as a result of his remarkable inability to keep his car free from dents and scratches due, of course, to other drivers failing to leave him adequate room!)

For centuries, man has expressed himself in music and dance, but nothing since the Charleston has created such a sensation as Rock and Roll; and so whilst young people danced into the sixties, Box Gay Nineties Club, (a club which met weekly to provide tuition in all forms of traditional dancing) danced into history and donated its remaining assets to Box Scouts in September 1960.



Whether or not the Scouts themselves were 'tripping the light fantastic' remains a matter of conjecture; that they were more mobile is undisputed - several times during the sixties they travelled to Guernsey for summer camp. The camp in 1960, for example, cost £156 (including rail and sea fares). This amounted to approximately £10 per Scout. Contrast this with the time when quarrymen's sons struggled to find a few shillings for camp on Kingsdown. Summer camp provided pleasant interludes, while other activities occupied much of the Scouting year. A canoe was being constructed by Senior Scouts, possibly to show their Sea Scout brothers in Colerne and Corsham that land Scouts were equally competent on water. It is the lot of kings and queens to launch ships and of vicars to launch canoes. So it was that the Rev. Selwyn-Smith launched the canoe on 10th September 1960. Box Scouts' canoeing skills were tested to the full in 1967 when, on Good Friday, Senior Scouts Anthony Fry and Pete Baldwin participated in the annual Devizes to Westminster race and were one of the few pairs to complete the course.

The sixties brought other changes - large country houses were coming under the auctioneer's hammer to be purchased, not by retired Service Officers or titled ladies, but by companies and hoteliers. The traditional haunts of Sherbrooke House and Cheney Court were but two local casualties. It was towards Fogleigh House, (the home of Mr. and Mrs. Brailsford) that the Scouts now turned. Nestling on Box Hill with its garden extending down the hillside to Box Brook, it provided an idyllic setting in which to raise funds. Fetes were held there in 1966 and 1967 with great success but of Mr. and Mrs. Brailsford we know little, other than the fact that Mr. Brailsford met a premature death in (it is believed) a flying accident.

Public awareness of the need to preserve the rights of individuals to walk through the countryside resulted in the Scouts - at the request of the Parish Council - walking footpaths to preserve the right of others to gain access.

Money was raised for the Metropolitan Police Fund for families of officers killed whilst on duty, thus continuing a tradition of good works which had started half a century before.

The District Commissioner, Mr. Hudson, was very familiar with this little corner of Wiltshire and used Box as a venue for district activities: a Patrol Camp on the Recreation Ground in 1962, District Sports on 10th July 1965 and the St. George's Day Parade in 1969. This Parade was repeated in 1983 when over 400 Scouts, Venture Scouts and Cubs paraded proudly through the main street of Box.

By the end of the decade, however, Scouting had ceased after 21 unbroken years, and (by some coincidence) the Bingham Hall had been demolished to make way for the Selwyn Hall. The Bingham Hall is now just a memory - for so long it had been the focal point of village social functions and scouting activity, echoing the voices of the Hon. Mrs. Twisleton and the Hon. Mrs. Shaw-Mellor, the Revs. Sweetapple and Foster and countless other parishioners of Box. But in one way the Bingham Hall lives on - its gas heaters still provide warmth on cold winter nights in the Scout Headquarters. They warm the timbers - the last remains of a classroom built a century ago at Ashley Manor - and the stone blocks of a barrack room transported from Ashley thirty years ago.

If walls and timbers could speak, they would have so much to tell; but who would have believed that as a result of a soldier being besieged in a small town called Mafeking in a different country, in a different age, the three would be linked together.

### 13. The Smell of the Greasepaint - The Roar of the Crowd.

The years 1977 to 1983 were dominated by one man who stamped his own personality on the Group; indeed, he became only the second Group Scout Leader in the Group's history. Alan West needs no introduction, and those people who may be unaware of his scouting activities will no doubt always remember his remarkable performances as the Dame in village pantomimes, or the series of Scout Shows in the years 1978-83 which he produced and directed. This was a period when Scouts and Cubs were highly active with as many as 40 Cubs and Scouts in regular attendance.

As in previous years, Scoutmasters were often changing - Dave Mason departed in 1980 to be replaced by Greg Bodkin, who stayed until 1983 when John May and Pete Hartless took the reins. Sadly, Alan left in the same year. Cubs, on the other hand, had found some stability - Sandra Callaway who joined in 1978 is still with us, instilling fear and foreboding into myself, and everyone else for that matter. Seriously, we are grateful for all the work she has done for Cubs and also in her role as secretary of the Group Committee, joining the Rev. Tom Selwyn-Smith (Chairman) and Mrs. Beryl Roberts (Treasurer) as the present officers.

Those were memorable years, focalised in that one annual event when, with nervous anticipation, the whole Group 'trod the boards' with the single desire to entertain; proving above all that in each and every boy there is a talent which, given free rein, can burst forth and blossom.

There is an old saying, 'there is nothing new under the heavens' - so it is with Scout Shows. Ralph Reader made Scout Gang Shows a byword in entertainment. Not surprisingly, Lord Baden-Powell himself was very capable of 'doing a turn', as he ably demonstrated both in India and South Africa when producing shows to entertain the troops. Short sketches and cabarets had been a feature of fund-raising events since the early days, but it was not until 1938 that the Box Group embarked on its first full-scale show.

Records of the time are somewhat confused and even Phil Lambert's impeccable memory is clouded; however, my information suggests that in November 1938 a poster advertised 'A Programme of Melody and Mirth' to be held at the Bingham Hall on 18th November, seats one shilling (5p) and programmes tuppence (0.8p). Familiar names appear both as organisers and members of the cast - Cogswell, Sheppard, Sparrow, McTaggart, Browning, Gregory, Armstead, Hall, Bence, Vaughan, Frances. These named individuals were supported by a chorus line of Scouts singing such favourite songs as 'Crest of a Wave', 'With a Twinkle in your Eye' and 'Flat Foot Floozle', (the word 'favourite' is a quote - I've never heard of the last two songs). The acts were quite varied - striptease with John Sparrow and Phil McTaggart, a sketch entitled 'Boadicea' enacted by Ted Sheppard, a short play 'West of the Khyber' and much, much more. The programme also boasted an orchestra under the direction of Percy Head, who also provided the musical accompaniment for the 1939 show held on 23rd and 24th November at the same venue. The programme is shown on the next page.

Many of the 1938 cast appeared in the 1939 show; however on this occasion they also benefitted from having Cubs in the chorus line. A photograph of the whole cast appeared in the 'Wiltshire News' on 4th November - this must have been the last time that the Group would be photographed together. This photograph is reproduced on page 38.

The Scout Show of 1978 did not boast an orchestra but it did boast Mrs. Liz Porter on the Selwyn Hall piano. The evening itself produced many surprises, not least that it was a pay-on-entry show and we found ourselves having to turn people away, as even the standing room had been taken. This, of course, did nothing to improve the nervous condition of the cast - for my part, another tot of whisky did little but increase the anxiety. As it was, the show was a success and gave the necessary impetus to 'have a go' in 1979.

What must have been the highlight of the '78 show, to be repeated every year thereafter, was



The 1st BOX SCOUT GROUP

present

A

# "GANG SHOW"

in

*The Bingham Hall, Box*

on

Friday, November 24, at 7-30 p.m.

Saturday, November 25, at 2-30 p.m.

1939

Programme



Twopence



### Overture—Songs from the Show

- 1. CHORUS { "On the Crest of the Wave"  
"Three Little Fishes"
- 2. CROSS TALK ... "Abou Ben Kayshes"
- 3. DRAMA .... "Set a Thief"
- 4. CUB PLAY .... "Taught by the Elves"
- 5. CHORUS { "Sing a Song of Sunbeams"  
"Flying High"
- 6. RECITATION .... "Sam's Medal"
- 7. POTTED PANTO "The Babes in the Wood"
- 8. ROVER ITEM
- 9. MORE PANTO .... "Bob's yer Uncle"

### INTERVAL

- 10. PLAY .... "The Ghost that Gibbered"
- 11. "SWING QUARTETTE"
- 12. SKETCH .... "If it comes to this"
- 13. CHORUS .... { "That Song in my Heart"  
"Sing, sing, sing, sing"
- 14. SKETCH .... "In Town To-night"
- 15. MONOLOGUE .... "Bygone Days"
- 16. LOG CABIN EPISODE
- 17. FINALE .... "Bye-bye Blues"

GOD SAVE THE KING



"BE PREPARED"

Orchestra—Under the direction of Mr. PERCY HEAD



Cast of the 1939 Gang Show

the arrival of Mrs. Plant, the caretaker. With eyes flashing she would survey the debris and berate us for not having cleaned up, the fact that we hadn't as yet started being immaterial. This ritual reprimand was awaited each year with nervous anticipation; nevertheless, in true Scouting spirit we would stand with heads bowed, looking shamefaced, and express our apologies. (Well, that might be stretching the truth - Mrs. Plant's view may differ).

The 1978 Show was held on 18th February; acts included a pianist billed as 'Liber-Archie', the Alan West Singers, a beauty contest and a puppet show produced by the then assistant Cub Mistress, Lucy Ashley. No scenery was used and the cast, especially the Cubs, flatly refused to wear make-up - that was for Brownies.

Arising from the success of the show in '78, succeeding shows in '79, '80, '81 and '82 developed to include both an orchestra, (under the direction of Sue West) and Guides to add charm and culture to the rather boisterous antics of the Scouts and Cubs. One important aspect of all shows was that everyone from the most junior Cub to the most ancient leader (Sandra Callaway) did a turn. Hence, the audience was not too shocked to see Leaders in leotards and tu-tus doing their bit as Sugar-Plum Fairies, dressed in furs as Ancient Britons, or (as in the case of Brigitte Davies, Assistant Cub Mistress '81-'83) grass-skirted as Pacific Islanders.

The true satisfaction of these shows to me will be the Cub with learning difficulties who lived for the time when he could stand on the stage and for once have people listen to him.

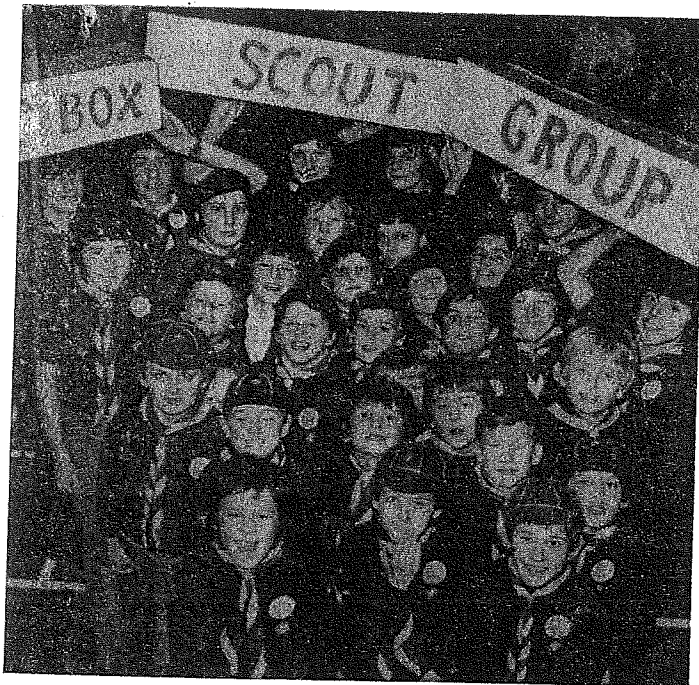
The departure of Alan was a blow to the artistic aspirations of the Group; however, two ex-Scouts Robert Reece and Andrew Kettleby - with the help of Andrew Baugh (a Cub Instructor) were to carry in the traditions in 1984 and 1985.

In all of these shows each and every participant was a star for a night. There also emerged one or two superstars, who (intentionally or unintentionally) raised the roof - Neil West and James Woosnam, who were all-round performers; Nick Bunting who, as a magician seeking audience participation, chose a young lady who knew all of his tricks and insisted on telling him and the audience (he slew her with an icy stare); Darren Green, who, suffering from an attack of asthma, went on to read the news or the weather forecast; young Jonathan Roberts, with his

angelic voice, supporting himself on crutches hidden under a clerical cloak; Richard Hartless who, before singing solo on stage, could not eat or sleep for days; Martin Woodland (the Kenny Everett fan); the Palmers charges, Jason, Michael and Paul, the last being the most 'innocent' rogue I have ever met but also a remarkable impersonator of pop singers; Matthew Lavington who, despite an operation and some discomfort, wanted to appear.

Like icebergs, Scout shows as seen by the public represent only a fraction of the total effort needed to reach the point of actual performance and many people put in an awful lot of time which goes unnoticed and unheralded - it is they who finally determine the failure or success and thus deserve much praise.

There were 40 years between the two series of shows, probably because it requires a particular type of leader with the courage, determination and necessary talents to get the best out of others; one hopes that the young men involved in the '78-'83 shows will return to bring back someday that little bit of magic that was the Box Scout Show.



The Gang Show, 1978

The Gang Show, March 1983

Martin Woodland as  
Kenny Everett's 'Gloria'.





#### 14. Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow.

In 1984, after only one year, John May (a civil servant) left the area; fortunately for the Group, John Bolwell (again assisted by Pete Hartless, an RAF Sergeant) agreed to become Scout Leader. This meant that the Group has had 4 Leaders in as many years and it is at times like this that we are most vulnerable. History suggests that when faced with so many changes the Scouts have eventually ceased to exist - one hopes that history will not repeat itself as far as the Box Group is concerned.

The Scout Hall in Devizes Road was subject to major work in 1980 and further maintenance was undertaken this year (1985), so whatever the future might bring it is hoped the Hall will remain both a permanent feature of village life and a legacy from all of the people who over the last 75 years have had some involvement in ensuring that Scouting continues.

The survival of the Scout Hall is, however, closely linked with the future of Box Rifle Club - the land on which the Hall is built is leased from them and so the link which has existed for 75 years will remain only as long as they are prepared to renew the lease. Not only has the Rifle Club allowed the Scout Group to build on its land, but it also provided accommodation while the Hall was being re-built in 1953-56. So, as with many organisations and people, we owe them a debt of gratitude.

Just as two generations of Scouts had their war, so many of today's Scouts (1985) had theirs. I, for one, will always remember the 1982 Rogation Sunday when prayers were said by a former captain of HMS Sheffield for the men of both sides involved in the Falklands War.

There is, however, another war albeit one without weapons - this is the war for the survival of the Scout movement, and I must express some concern about the movement's ability to survive to enter the 21st century. We live in a technological age when the simple pleasures of our forefathers have little meaning amidst the hustle and bustle of modern society. Adventures and excitement are pre-packed in the shape of films and videos, tapes and discs and it is not until middle-age approaches that we yearn for an earlier, simpler age which found equivalent adventure and excitement in the natural wonders that surround us.

We live in a highly mobile society and consequently ex-Scouts often leave the place of their youth, not as in 1914 and 1939 to join the Services but to find employment, and thus future potential leaders are lost to the local movement. Additionally, local-authority sponsored organisations pay their part-time youth leaders, thus tending to deprive charitable organisations of potential helpers. That is in no way a criticism - financial pressures often dictate our destiny - but it does not bode well for the future of organisations dependent upon voluntary help.

The future of the Box Scout Group is by no means certain; the fact that it has survived for 75 years does not guarantee a future. John Bolwell, Sandra Callaway and Pete Hartless are the investment for the future - we should all wish them well.

As you walk along the Devizes Road in Box, stop awhile and cast your eyes towards the Scout Headquarters. Do not view it simply as bricks and mortar, but more as a living entity with a heart that started beating 75 years ago. It has history and tradition and it has given something that cannot be purchased, something that is of incalculable value - a sense of belonging not only to the Box community but to the worldwide brotherhood of Scouting.

### Leaders of the Box Scout Group

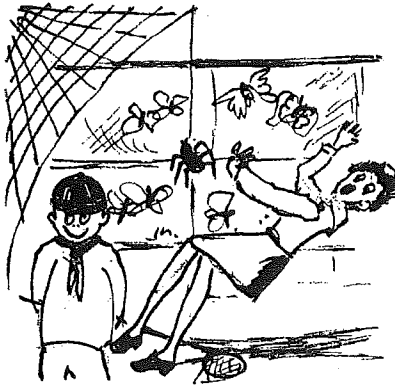
Years	Rover Leader	Scout Leader	Cub Leader	Group Scout Leader
1910-19	-	Mr Davies	-	-
1919-22	-	Mr C Lambert	-	-
1922-25	-	Mr Lord	-	-
1925-27	-	Mr Baxter	-	-
1927	-	Capt Legard	-	-
1927-34	-	closed	-	-
1934-35	-	Mr Rogers	-	-
1935-39	-	Mr P Lambert	-	-
1939-42	Mr Sparrow	Mr Jupp	Mr Barker	-
1942-49	closed	closed	closed	-
1949-50	-	Cdr Jolliffe	Miss May	Mr P Lambert
1950-53	-	Mr Vaughan	do.	do.
1953-54	-	Mr Cogswell	do.	do.
1954-61	-	do.	Mr Weeks	do.
1961-63	-	Mr Wilsden	do.	do.
1963-64	-	Mr Cogswell	Miss Wilson	do.
1964-65	-	do.	Mr Wallace	do.
1965-68	-	do.	Mrs Dark	do.
1968-70	-	do.	Mr Cheadle	do.
1970-75	-	closed	do.	do.
1975-78	-	Mr Mason	Mr Ibberson	-
1978-80	-	do.	do.	Mr West
1980-83	-	Mr Bodkin	do.	do.
1983-84	-	Mr May	do.	-
1984-?	-	Mr Bolwell	do.	-

## 15. Tales of the Unexpected.

Observers of children cannot fail to recall some humorous incident which they remember long after misdemeanours are forgotten. To conclude this story of the Box Scout Group, I have recorded some of these events which years later raise a smile on my lips and which serve to link the generations in the timeless sentiment 'Boys will be Boys'

### 1) Outings

1977 - Butterfly Farm, near Yeovilton, Somerset  
The Horizontal Cub Mistress.



Visiting a Butterfly Farm is a pretty harmless pastime which one would expect to pass uneventfully. However, this was not to be. To the average boy butterflies are pretty dull, offering none of the attractions one finds in woodlice, daddy-long-legs etc. Consequently our long-suffering guide, sensing a potential hazard in bored Cubs, decided to show them something more to their liking. Placing his hand in a large, glass-covered container he withdrew the largest, fattest spider in captivity. A muffled scream broke the silence followed by a loud thump as the equally large Cub mistress fainted. If the poor lady expected sympathy, none was forthcoming. She spent the rest of the day in complete misery as successive Cubs threatened to produce the offending spider from his pocket.

1979 - Longboat on the River Avon  
All Adrift

An afternoon on the River Avon proved a relaxing occasion until, on the return journey, the engine spluttered and stopped. After much colourful language employed in a fruitless attempt to persuade the engine to start, the 'Skipper' steered the boat to the bank. To one particular Cub this incident was the high point and being unable to contain his excitement he requested that it be repeated. Our unfortunate Boatman whose temper was already frayed clearly mis-understood. He simply repeated his previous rhetoric by questioning the marital state of the boy's mother and adding derogatory comments regarding the size of the Cub's brain.

### 2) Camping

1981 Widdenham Farm  
Appetite

One diminutive Cub was famous for his appetite, devouring like a locust all that was available. Sunday lunch at Widdenham offered a particularly exciting menu of potatoes, beans and fish fingers followed by a Wagon Wheel biscuit. Recognizing our small Cub's non-discriminating appetite, the Wagon Wheel was topped with two fish fingers, covered with baked beans and finally garnished with mashed potatoes. The meal was rapidly devoured without comment and, having cleaned the plate, the boy expressed his enjoyment with the small reservation that the meat was difficult to cut!

1982 - Windsor Safari Park  
The Windsor Bee

A day's outing is fraught with hazards; consequently we are always pleased when parents agree to join us. During a visit to Windsor we were fortunate to be accompanied by several parents eager to enjoy the pleasures of a hot summer day. As we alighted from the coach, a particularly large Bee took an instant dislike to the visitors from Wiltshire and commenced an aerial bombardment. Intelligently, the bee ignored the boys in green and concentrated its energies on a less agile parent. The sting was rapidly deposited. Equally rapidly, the unfortunate parent was rushed to the local hospital exhibiting all the symptoms of a sting allergy.

We collected the patient on the way home. He was much sadder and wiser for his short experience with the Box Scout Group.



### 3) Cooking on an Open Fire

1983 Scout Hall  
The Suicidal Woodlice



Cooking on an open fire has been an important feature of Scouting life for generations, yielding both culinary disasters and considerable amusement. Frying pans available in the Scout Hall serve two functions, the first being a receptacle in which to cook and the second, when not in use, a safe haven for a host of insect life.

One Cub, having lit his fire, obtained a frying pan and commenced cooking some grubby objects which he described as sausages. In moving from the Hall to a frying pan sausages usually follow a hazardous route via dirty hands, dusty floors and muddy ground.

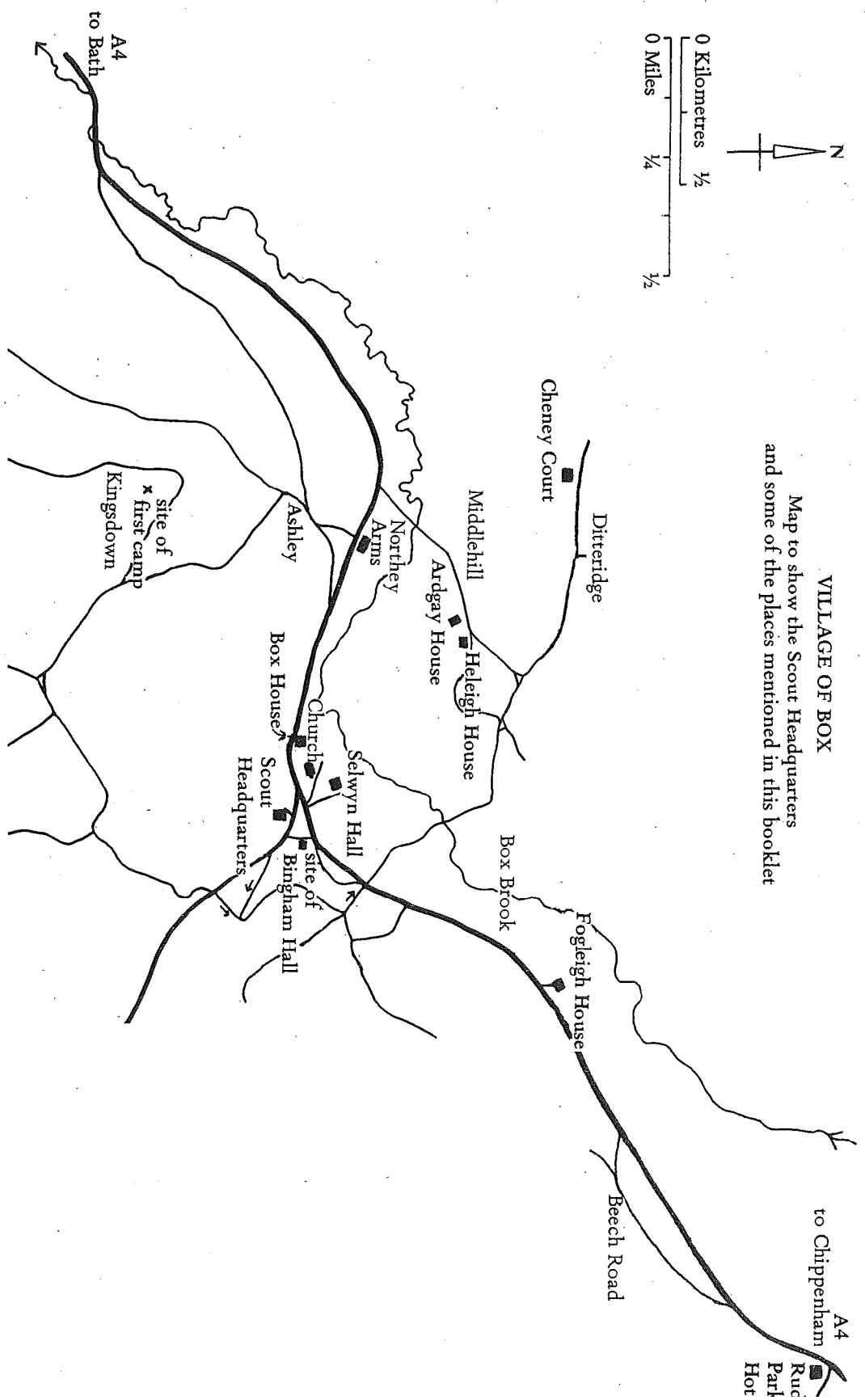
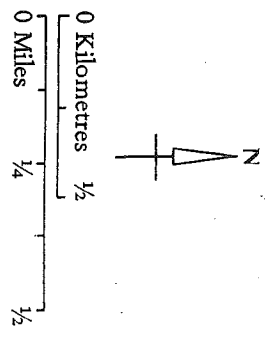
Being engrossed in cooking our rather hungry Cub had failed to notice that some woodlice had decided to leave their comfortable home in the hollow handle of the frying pan, (which by now was being centrally heated) and scurried along a suicidal path down into the hot fat. Having dived into the fat the unfortunate woodlice rolled into balls in preparation for being 'cooked to a turn', so to speak.

On observing the round objects, the Cub enquired as to what they were.

'Currants', I replied, jokingly, and promptly forgot the incident. Sometime later, my young friend approached me excitedly and said that whilst he had enjoyed the sausages he much preferred the currants!

A4  
to Chippenham  
Ruc  
Parl  
Hot

VILLAGE OF BOX  
Map to show the Scout Headquarters  
and some of the places mentioned in this booklet



### Postscript

The writer of these very interesting and comprehensive items of history, and of the extracts previously published in the Box Parish Magazine, has until now remained anonymous.

I feel that, now the full collection has been completed and published as a book of excellent reading, the name of the Author should be disclosed!

David Ibberson, our current Group Scout Leader, recently awarded the Medal of Merit for ten years of loyal service to our excellent Cub Pack, somehow found time and energy to 'dig out' all the interesting facts and episodes from a mountain of paper - logs and minute books, letters etc., which I as a hoarder of such things was able to pass on to him.

We are very grateful for his diligence and applaud the success he has attained.

Phil Lambert,

alias 'Colonel'