

1ST HEMEL HEMPSTEAD'S HISTORY

FORWARD

On the grey, damp, winter afternoon of Sunday 29th November 1992, a short service took place at Phasels Wood Scout Camp site to dedicate a wooden seat built by cubs of 6th Hemel Hempstead to commemorate the memory of three former scouts - Charles Brooks, Charles Mitchell and Eddie Duckworth. Charles Brooks had been associated with Phasels Wood from its very beginnings as a scout site in 1937, so a memorial there was most fitting. In the providore afterwards I mentioned to Mike Watson that amongst my late father's papers I had found two draft histories. One concerning scouting in the Hemel Hempstead District, the other the history of the first seventy years of the 1st Hemel Hempstead Scout Group.

It is the history of the 1st Hemel Hempstead which is presented here. Undoubtedly much has been left unsaid. Much of what happened at different times undoubtedly went unrecorded. Memories may be mistaken. Events perhaps become confused. However this is not an academic treatise. I have merely sought to edit the draft that Charles Brooks wrote and which due to today's desk top publishing techniques now becomes easier to reproduce.

When the old St. Paul's group was forced to close, I myself became a scout in the 1st Hemel Hempstead in 1958, becoming PL of the Peewit patrol and then a Senior Scout and Queen Scout until I headed to Birmingham and university in 1965. So for some of the history I can vouch myself. And certainly not included there are plenty of stories and anecdotes that we all will have that could fill several books.

At one time District records did not clearly identify the official start of 1st Hemel Hempstead as being in 1907 and of its founder Allen Foxell nothing was known. I do not know quite how he was tracked down, but Charles Brooks at last managed to contact him and persuade him to attend the seventieth anniversary of the group. Allen Foxell died a few years later, peacefully, in Exeter Hospital on 16th June 1982 about 6 months after his ninetieth birthday. He should be remembered not only as the first scoutmaster, but founder, of the 1st Hemel Hempstead troop.

Charles Brooks joined the 3rd Putney scouts at the age of 10 in 1920. He came to Hemel Hempstead in 1932 and joined the 3rd Boxmoor, becoming Rover Leader in 1936. After war time service with the RAF he returned as Assistant District Commissioner becoming District Commissioner for Hemel Hempstead in 1947 until 1964. He became an Assistant County Commissioner for Seniors, then for Handicapped Scouts until 1969 and in 1979 President of the Hemel Hempstead District Scout Council. Charles Brooks was Chairman of 1st Hemel Hempstead from 1966 for 10 years and then its president until 1990. He was awarded the Medal of Merit and Silver Acorn for his service to scouting and the Scout Thanks Badge for his work with 1st Hemel Hempstead. He died a few months after his eightieth birthday on 24th August 1991.

I hope that this simple record in the life of one scout group may be of interest and serve as a small tribute to all the people, largely unremarked, who have devoted so much time, freely given, to contribute to the continuance of the group.

David Brooks; Leighton Buzzard, Easter 1993

1st HEMEL HEMPSTEAD GROUP BOY SCOUTS -THE FIRST SEVENTY YEARS -"

How it all began

In the year 1907 an enthusiastic young man named Allen Foxell - mainly inspired by the first camp

held on Brownsea Island by Baden-Powell and the fortnightly publication 'Scouting For Boys' - gathered boys to start the great outdoor life of Scouting. With his natural enthusiasm he soon became known as the ""Commander"". He was assisted in his task by Charlie Butcher, who was later killed at La Bassee in 1914 during the First World War. Numbers grew to sixty three, meeting in the lanes, with no headquarters and little sympathy from the public. The boys were regarded as something of a laughing stock, carrying their six foot ash poles cut from the hedges and wearing an assortment of long knickerbocker shorts. Allen Foxell received his warrant (which is now in the museum at Gilwell Park) as Scout Master in 1910. It was that year, 1910, that scouting became an organised association. Allen Foxell was to lead 1st Hemel Hempstead until he answered his country's call to arms, joining the City of London (Rough Riders) Yeomany in 1914.

The first great gathering of scouts was held at Crystal Palace in September 1909 with several members of the troop attending the Rally. The keen scouts were recorded as O'Dell, Percy, Hancock and Ralph Mead, who featured in a neat little band of twelve scouts applauded by B-P himself during the march past. By this time the group had formed three sections known respectively as the 'Cycle' troop, the 'Bull' troop and the 'Hound' troop. Another land mark was the attendance of the 1st Hemel Hempstead group at the Windsor Rally in 1911, an event which attracted over 26,000 scouts and was reviewed by King George V.

About 1913 the troop met in a building situated by The Bury and history records a 'wide game' when the troop were called on to pit their wits against the Church Lads Brigade of the district. The idea was for the Scouts to get into the mansion which stood in Gadebridge Park with the Brigades defending. The scouts had several successes including one enterprising scout concealed in a milk churn. Two places were used for outdoor scouting activities - Bazells Wood and the Grove, located behind Picotts End school.

The First World War

With continued advice arriving from Scout Headquarters and the regular parts of 'Scouting For Boys', this new 'game' continued to grow and flourish until the outbreak of war in 1914. During this period little is recorded of scouting in the area. Another troop had started in 1913 at Apsley and was known as the Kent's Own, later to become the 3rd Boxmoor. In 1916 the 1st Hemel Hempstead attended a party given by E.H. Lidderdale, Scoutmaster of the 3rd Boxmoor, who had been invalided out of the Armed Services. Also gathered on that occasion were the 2nd Boxmoor troop.

Later that year a recruitment drive was held with scout bands from 1st Hemel Hempstead, 2nd Boxmoor, 3rd Boxmoor and 9th South West Herts leading a parade of 160 scouts. Towards the later stages of the First World War a Mr Earlam took over the running of the troop. Earlam had a toy manufacturing business established in George Street and the boys would meet at the end of his workshop. But in 1917 he was called up for military service and the boys struggled on with the Patrol Leaders at the helm until Fred Holness arrived on the scene, supported by Mr. Earlam's son.

Scouting in the 1920's

About 1919 or 1920 Earlam junior found that small boys were wanting to join as Wolf Cubs (they had been officially recognised by Scout Head Quarters in 1916) so in 1920 he approached Dora Bathe to help. Wolf Cubs represented a new type of game with training based on Rudyard Kipling's book 'The Jungle'. Dora was later assisted by Sis Holness and struck up a partnership which was to continue until 1931.

Fred Holness then became Group Scout Master being known as GSM in 1932. At the nearby St. Paul's Group a young scout, Eddie Epethite, began to emerge as a future leader. He had been chosen to sound the 'Last Post' at the memorial service held at St. Mary's Church following the end of the 1914-1918 War. Links began about this time between the 1st Hemel Hempstead and St. Paul's Troops with Eddie Epethite showing an interest in the Cub Mistress, Dora Bathe and becoming Rover Mate at the 1st Hemel Hempstead. Rovering for scouts over eighteen had begun to

take its place in the movement around this time. The core and foundation of the Group's future stemmed from this association. Dora and Eddie married and Dora later became District Cub Mistress in Hemel Hempstead and the first President of the Group. Eddie meanwhile was content to remain in the background, being occupied with running the family clothing shop in the High Street, but later becoming Chairman and then President himself. He was the mainspring and inspiration in later years, when as one of the Trustees he helped raise money for building the Group's Queensway Head Quarters. On the active side Fred Holness and the ACM Sis Epethite also married and the great association kept the group alive. Fred became GSM and Chairman and his wife ACM, secretary and a devoted worker on the committee. Their services to the Group will always be remembered.

The troop moved to a hut in Bury Road and during 1921 they took part in the District 'Semples Trophy' which four troops entered :- 1st Hemel Hempstead, 1st Bourne End, 3rd Boxmoor and St. Pauls. In 1922 the troop hired a charabang (motor coach) to attend a County parade at St. Albans, where over 2000 scouts were inspected by Lord Hampden. 1st Hemel Hempstead finished second in the swimming gala and representatives attended the gathering at Alexandra Palace when 4000 scouts were inspected by the Prince of Wales. Competitions, camping and scoutcraft formed the basis of keeping the district together, which at this time extended from Apsley to Tring

In 1923 the troop won the district swimming gala and E.H. Lidderdale (GSM of 3rd Boxmoor) was officially appointed as District Commissioner for Hemel Hempstead.

In 1924 the Wolf Cub Flag competition started with the 1st Hemel Hempstead Pack finishing runners up to 3rd Boxmoor. The troop meanwhile retained the District swimming trophy.

1925 saw the troop win the Salinger Trophy which they won again in 1926, but lost their hold on the swimming trophy which they were later to recapture in 1928.

A major highlight of 1927 was attendance at the Hertfordshire County Rally at Hatfield Park, when over 3000 scouts were present to greet the Chief Scout, Lord Baden-Powell.

The Challenge of the Inter-War Years

The 1930's started with appeals for help to the Rangers with Alice Francis answering the call to take over the cub pack in 1931 , continuing to 1939 and giving the cubs a long period of stability. A Mr Hinton, who apparently worked in London and ran a confectionary shop, took charge of the troop and had to provide a guard of honour as one of his first tasks. Amongst the twenty or so boys taking part were Gardner, whose father was a photographer based in Alexander Road, John Gibbons son of a local Plumber and Heating Engineer, also with premises in the same road, Norman Sage whose father's opticians practice was in the High Street, Bill Minty and David and Jack Collier.

Changes were continuing in 1932 when Alec Pearce took over as Scout Master for a short while and Norman Grimes a 3rd Boxmoor Rover became ACM. In 1933 another marriage, this time between Eric Storrow, who had taken over the troop and Cub Mistress Alice Francis served to restore stability to the group. But once more the group's headquarters were under threat with Mr. Guard the GSM standing firm when the owner of the property wanted the cubs and scouts to leave. Mr. Guard an unemployed painter found alternative premises at the back of a corn merchants in Bury Road and also started a club for unemployed people. Problems of storage of equipment and difficult financial circumstances gave a troubled time for the group and for Fred Holness who took over as GSM from Mr. Guard.

Summer camp in 1934 was held in the Isle of Wight, led by Eric Storrow and including cubs, scouts, rovers and leaders. Bert Storrow had joined the group as Rover Leader and in 1936 the Rover Crew helped with the construction of the Jubilee Bonfire, built on Roughdown Common. To

protect the huge fire the Rovers camped on the site they also assisted in selling National Jubilee programmes and in the evening participated in the Borough torchlight procession.

The 1937 summer camp was held in Herne Bay and it was that same year the name Phasels Wood became a household word in the Rover's programme. The District Commissioner Mr. Norman Stenhouse appealed to the Rovers to help plan the recently acquired 43 acres of woodland and field into camp sites for patrol camping. Many hours were given by the crew with week-end camping used for clearing fallen trees, clearing overgrown bushes and brambles and mending fences to prevent horses getting in and churning up the paths.

During the 1938 to 1939 period the troop continued their activities but without success in competitions and young Rovers began to accept more responsibilities in leadership positions. The Rover Moot held at Monzie Castle, Scotland in 1939 was the last big event before once more the world was plunged into war and the call up of young men and leaders again caused disruption to the group.

War brings the group new problems

With the outbreak of war the group's headquarters were requisitioned by the Army, their equipment dumped outside and enquiries met with only abrupt retorts. Once more the group were homeless. St.Pauls helped out with storage of equipment, but were unable to oblige with a meeting venue. During the war years meetings were held in various places; the Toe H room off the High Street, the Christ Church Hall, the cellar of Bathes shop in the High Street and Alice Storrow's home at 71, Deaconsfield Road. Leadership shortages presented another challenge. Alice Storrow kept the Wolf Cub packs in the district going between 1939 and 1945 and eventually became DCM. Eric Storrow helped keep the scouts alive until 1942 when the Rev. A.J. Alban took on the task and held them together until 1946 when scouring in the district at last began to return to normal.

Lord Baden-Powell the scout movement's founder and Chief Scout was called to higher service in 1941 and a memorial service conducted by the Rev. C Hamilton assisted by an old scout the Rev Angus was held at St. John's church.

The December 1944 report of the Boy Scout Local Association said ""There has been no easing of the difficult conditions during the last twelve months, but with the war in Europe and Japan ending, it is hoped that the gradual return home of the Forces will at least help to relieve the present shortage of leaders in the Movement"". The accounts showed a balance at bank of £95, cash in hand £6; the funds having been depleted due to the 3rd Boxmoor's headquarters being burnt down. Total income from subscribers was £45

A New Town for Hemel Hempstead and Scouting flourishes

1946 saw changes once again as Leslie Boarder took over as District Commissioner relieving the hard-pressed and ageing Eustace Lidderdale; then Charles Brooks was appointed ADC and the pattern of Scouting in Hemel Hempstead began to readjust itself. It would seem appropriate at this stage to record thanks to those who kept Scouting alive from 1939 to 1945; names now but memories, but their work lives on. Rev. Alban, Holmes, Len Holt, Champion, Dora Epithite, Fred Holness, Alice Storrow, Dr. Jonus and Eustace Lidderdale. There are others who gave help but unfortunately no records of their names are available.

A period of finding new leaders, training and re-starting camping, competitions and a headquarters plus money followed. The group with the kind permission of the Rev. Keith Antrobus moved into the hall in Christ Church Road and a young team of leaders got the group running again:- Mary

Critchley (later moved to New Zealand), Judy Vincent (later moved to Tasmania), Derek Lea, E.Streeter and A. Mitchell.

District competitions were restarted and a sports day was held at Shendish by kind permission of John Dickinson and Company, which resulted in a win for 1st Apsley (47 points), with 3rd Boxmoor second (45 points) and 1st Hemel Hempstead third (44 points) - an excellent turnout. The camping competition restarted at Phasels Wood with 1st Hemel Hempstead finishing runners up to old rivals 3rd Boxmoor.

Senior Scouts were now being encouraged and Charles Brooks was left to concentrate on developing this side of Scouting which would eventually provide the leaders of the future. Scouts and Seniors joined over 1400 others at the Hertfordshire County Camp at Gorhambury attended by the Chief Scout Lord Rowallan.

In 1946 Leslie Boarder left the District to become ACC Training and Charles Brooks became District Commissioner a position he was to hold until 1963 when he in turn was also invited to join the County team. At that time most troops in the district were feeling the pinch on two counts - leaders and money.

Our old neighbours St. Pauls restarted in 1949 and were now known as 2nd Hemel Hempstead (St. Pauls) and had over forty cubs and Scouts in the group. Also beginning to stir was the development of the New Town which was later to lead to considerable growth in scouting numbers. 1949 had been a good year for scouting with numbers increasing. The 1st Hemel Hempstead Seniors had joined forces with 3rd Boxmoor and others who had been unable to secure their own leaders. Under the leadership of Bill Thomas the combined Seniors enjoyed great success including winning the County Marathon competition.

1950 can be described as a year of growth, excellent results in Bob -A- Job Week, an old Scouts Reunion and a highly successful camp-fire at St. John's Hall, conducted by 'Mac' of Gilwell, with 1st Hemel Hempstead scouts amongst those taking part. Also in that year Derek Lea became the group's first King Scout. A Group Committee was formed and they started plans to raise money with the object of getting a scout headquarters of their own.

A superb concert was a highlight of the following year, 1952. Organised by the committee it proved a great entertainment involving Cubs, Scouts and Seniors plus the Stella School of Dancing, Marlowes Contact Club and the Hemel Hempstead Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society.

More changes in the Group's leadership took place in 1953 when Bill 'Jock' Drummond became GSL and his wife Vi ran the cubs, with Derek Lea taking over the District Seniors. The Group continued to meet in the hall in Christchurch Road.

Jubilee Year - Scouting's first half century

It goes without saying that 1957 was a great year. The Jubilee Jamboree was held at Sutton Coldfield, with the Hertfordshire Contingent - which included three scouts from the troop - led by District Commissioner, Charles Brooks and GSM Jock Drummond serving with the camp police force. The Group Committee organised a fleet of coaches to visit the camp and some may recall the impromptu camp fire sing-song conducted by Troop Leader David Westlake on the long journey back. After the Jamboree the New Zealand contingent paid a memorable visit to the District with a spirited rendering of traditional Maori dances and the Finnish Contingent were looked after by all the groups in the district, forming many lasting friendships. Early records at the time were a little vague as to the group's true origins, so 1st Hemel Hempstead's own Jubilee was not celebrated as such, but nonetheless it was that year the group finally moved to its own headquarters in Alma Road. The opening ceremony was performed by Dr. Leslie Pears the County Commissioner. Situated on what was later to be the site of the Dacorum College, with the River Gade just outside the

door it provided an ideal place for a variety of scouting outdoor activities including pioneering, raft building and open fire cooking.

The Wolf Cubs celebrated forty years of cubbing that year too and the pack attended the district camp. The Rover Scouts were formed into a District Rover Crew and with the kind permission of the Development Corporation were meeting at the Old Pump House at Chaulden. A group show was held in conjunction with the 1st Warners End Girl Guides at George Street School and was well supported by parents and friends."

By 1958 numbers in the district had grown dramatically as a comparison with the census figures of 1921 clearly illustrates.

A district magazine - 'Scouting Stew' was started in 1959 by David Adams, George Storrow and other District Seniors and rapidly became a firm favourite as groups vied with one another for a share of the news. But the new town was progressing fast and the Alma Road site was required for the much needed Dacorum College. Once again the group's headquarters was under threat. A lot of difficulties had to be overcome trying to find a new site, but at last after assistance from Mr. F.O. Brann, the Chairman of the Local Association, the group obtained a site in Queensway. It was in fact on the site of the recently demolished St. Paul's Church, so for those who had joined 1st Hemel Hempstead with the closure of the 2nd Hemel Hempstead (St. Pauls) it was also something of a home coming. The site was actually the garden of the old vicarage.

Once again the scouts were at the Hertfordshire County Camp at Gorhambury, this time to bid farewell to Lord Rowallan the retiring Chief Scout. Bob -A-Job week in 1959 raised the grand total of £53

1st Hemel Hempstead become top troop and get a new home

The group and scouting owe thanks to their Trustees -Messrs. E. Epithite, H.F. Stupples and Bartlett and also an excellent working committee for the fund raising campaigns and building programme which resulted in the new Headquarters in Queensway. This was an ambitious project by any standard, not least the concept of a sturdy brick built structure at a time when most scout huts were simple timber constructions. The bricks themselves were recycled from older properties demolished in the old town and the site was that of the former St. Paul's church - the closure of which a couple of years previously had seen the amalgamation of the old 2nd Hemel Hempstead with the first.

Regular weekly bingo nights had been a major source of fund raising; few will forget the hushed silence of the old smoke filled Alma Road HQ as Stan Capel intoned the numbers. But it was bingo that enabled the £5000 HQ to be paid for a couple of years ahead of expectation, so that at last the group owned its own permanent home. Opening day arrived in 1960, a wet day, but a happy spirit prevailed among the guests, parents, scouts and friends of the group. The official opening ceremony was performed by Ralph Reader. Ralph was known to generations of scouts throughout the world for the creation, production and music of the 'London Gang Shows' which ran from 1932 until the 1970's and to many service men for the RAF Gang Shows he organised during the war. Special guests that day included the Mayor of Hemel Hempstead, Mrs. Marshall, Mr. E. Epithite, group chairman, Mr. E. Earlam a GSL from Eastbourne and son of the group's second Group Scout Master in 1916 and District Commissioner Charles Brooks.

A new idea launched that year was the Old Folk's Christmas Party. Old people throughout the town were collected by coach and brought to the Queensway HQ for a Christmas tea and entertainment. The concept proved so successful it was repeated for several years.

1960 also marked the start of a new era of success for the troop in winning the Salinger Trophy. Camps that year included Gilwell Park, Phasels Wood and North Devon. The scouts helped with setting up a check point for the County Senior Scouts 'Tour of Herts' cycle competition - an all day

affair from 3pm to 5pm. And it was 1960 when the troop entertained scouts from Landskrona in Sweden, forging links which continued for many years. Dora Epithite retired as President and her husband took over.

The enthusiasm of the group went from strength to strength in the early 1960's. The growth of the new town and with it the emergence of many new and dynamic groups had tended to overshadow the old established groups, but 1st Hemel Hempstead now re-emerged to dominate district competitions and collect a shelf full of silver ware. They retained the Salinger Trophy and added to it the Semple Trophy, the Brann Quiz Trophy and the District Camping competition as well as a good second place in the town's youth swimming gala. A run of success which continued for the next few years.

This was also reflected in scouting achievements with David Westlake in 1962 becoming the troop's first Queen's Scout for many years. New leaders came into the group with Ben Roberts and John Stacey taking charge of the cub packs. Two stalwarts of the group left that year with Brian 'Kim' Warren (SM) moving to Aylesbury and Derek Lea becoming camp warden at the Glasgow City Scout Camp. Derek had progressed through the 1st Hemel Hempstead group from cub, scout, senior scout became a King's Scout and in turn became ASM, SM and District Senior Scout Leader. Derek also possessed a fine singing voice which led to him performing in Ralph Reader's London Gang Show for several years and also the Watford and later Glasgow shows.

At the Group's annual meeting the District Commissioner's closing remarks hailed '1st Hemel Hempstead as Troop of the Year!' . Again strong performances in District competitions was noted. Fourth in the camping competition, second in the youth swimming gala and third in Handicraft.

Scout Band officially launched and more competition success

The District Band were busy under the tutelage of 'Jock' Drummond and eagerly anticipating their public debut at The Youth Rally and then on the St. George's Day Parade. 1962 saw the appointment of a new chairman - G.R. Meakins and an excellent secretary - F. E Forrest. A supporters committee was set up to raise funds. The group continued to hold a Christmas party for the old folk and to hold a carol concert in the headquarters.

1963 saw 'Jock' Drummond and the District Scout Band heading the largest and finest St. George's Day Parade staged in Hemel Hempstead, with an excellent turn out of parents and friends, whilst local employers Kodak recorded the event on colour film.

P.L.Trevor Welton gained his Queen Scout award and Thanks Badges were presented to Dick Meakins (Chairman) and Stan Capel (Treasurer). On 27th April that year the District Band was officially inaugurated at the Group's headquarters by the District Commissioner Charles Brooks. The D.C.'s appeal for funds drew donations from the group committee, the funds of the now closed 2nd Hemel Hempstead (St.Pauls), Mrs Drummond, and Harry Gawthorpe. Bill Sygrave presented the silver mace which had been given originally by his mother to the old St. Pauls Troop. Others present were Ron Green (3rd Boxmoor) and Reg Sears (formerly St. Pauls). In 1963 there were 46 Cubs, 24 Scouts, 7 Senior Scouts and 5 Scouters.

1964 once again saw the District Camping Competition trophy back on the shelf at 1st Hemel Hempstead, the troop won the Dacorum Swimming Trophy and the cubs triumphed in the district sports. Another Queen Scout Award was put on the honours board, this time going to P.L. David Brooks who was also invited to march in the St. George's Day Parade at Windsor Castle that year.

Fund raising had proceeded at such a pace that the Group were able to pay off the £4500 balance on the mortgage in just four and a half years, a tremendous achievement. At last a secure home, a long way from those early days and much deserved. Thanks Badges were in order for the Committee and the AGM that year saw presentations to E. Epithite (President), F.E.Forrest (Secretary),

Mrs. Kemp, Mr and Mrs Welton, Mrs F Holness, Mrs Gillard and Mrs Picton. Disaster almost struck when a burst water pipe flooded the building, but prompt action by the Fire Brigade prevented serious damage. New leaders, young and enthusiastic, took over the running of the troop - Peter Nielsen, Alan Darville, Kim Warren again and James Kemp. That summer saw the troop undertake a successful venture into boating on the Norfolk Broads. The Camping Competition Trophy was won again and the cubs (A Pack) beat 4th Boxmoor to take first place in the District sports. Mrs S. Neep was now helping with the cubs (B Pack) and 43 attended the District Cub Camp.

Entertainment and Bingo

The success of the fund raising had been built on bingo evenings and the bingo sessions continued after the payment of the property to be the main source of income. Receipts in 1966 were £1525 with the group overall showing a healthy surplus of £253. But another form of entertainment - the group show - was to prove the highlight of the year. Produced by Charles Brooks and Kim Warren the show was held at George Street School in conjunction with 1st Warner's End Guides and involved cubs, scouts, Guides and Senior scouts with a grand Rock 'n Roll finale staged by guest star 'Froggie' French and his Frenchmen.

The cubs good turn saw the distribution of decorated boxed eggs to old age pensioners. The cubs were again winners of the District Sports competition. A review of the Group constitution was drawn up to conform to new policy rules and accepted that year.

Changes in leadership saw Alan Priestley, who had been running the Seniors, leave and Kim Warren leave the troop. Kim was to continue scouting in Scotland. John Stacey took over the Senior Scout Troop. Sadly the death of Chairman of the Group Council, Dick Meakins occurred. Dick had been a quiet but efficient worker who had contributed a great deal to 1st Hemel Hempstead.

At the end of October 1966 the GSL appointed Charles Brooks as Chairman.

Problems with leaders but the group surges on

1967 opened with the presentation of the Long Service Award to GSL 'Jock' Drummond. However, later that year Jock Drummond and the secretary were to resign, but by then as the minutes recorded these 'two gentlemen had left behind a pattern of ceremonial and secretarial work upon which the soundness of the group must flourish'. Sadly Fred Holness, GSL from 1930 to 1940 and Chairman of the Supporters Association was to pass away that year.

John Stacey became GSL and full support was promised by the Council, but the troop were still in difficulties due to lack of leaders. The capitation fee remained at two shillings. The cubs A pack won the seven - a - side football competition and the combined packs entertained the Wembley Pack to a party. The Cubs Jubilee provided an opportunity of collecting 140 pounds of silver foil toward the Guide Dogs for the Blind. Camps were attended at Bovingdon and at Frensham, Surrey. At an excellent AGM, the retiring GSL Jock Drummond was presented with a silver tray with a bouquet of flowers going to Mrs. Drummond. The retiring secretary, Mr. Forrest was presented with a set of Scout cufflinks and thanked for steering the Group through many changes and some of the most testing years in the Group's history. Edith Horwood was appointed secretary. New appointments in the Group were Phil and Peggy Hersee for Scouts and Cubs respectively. A troop camp with 3rd Boxmoor saw a return to a pre war Boxmoor favourite site at Milton Ernest. The Autumn Fair saw a profit of £134 and card sales contributed another £20. The car park at the HQ was completed at a cost of £466. The Group ended the year in credit to the tune of £435.

That year saw the last 'World Aspidistra Show' - a somewhat bizarre event held at midnight at the summit of Ivinghoe Beacon - where Senior Scouts from the Northern Home Counties and London hiked to exhibit their aspidistras. Entries were imaginative - planting in flower pots was not a winning formula. The 1st Hemel Hempstead Seniors were therefore pleased with a second place!

Jeff Tomkins rounded off the year with another Queen Scout award for the Group.

A uniform change, the end of the green scarf and an Honours Board

The group Scouters recommended a change to the group scarf which had been plain Scout green down the years, with the addition of a one inch orange border to avoid it being lost against the green shirts which had replaced the old khaki. Capitation fees were to be increased to what then seemed a fantastic sum of twenty one shillings; with ten shillings going to HQ, five shillings to the County and six shillings to the Local Association. An interesting event was the opening of the District Guide Headquarters next door at which the current Lord Baden-Powell performed the opening ceremony. Four scouts from the troop were invited to attend.

The Lochearnhead Scout Station film was shown at the AGM to a good gathering of parents and friends. The secretary resigned and the chairman agreed to act in a dual capacity until a replacement could be found. The President E. Epithite resigned due to business commitments after serving Scouting since 1914. Lindsey Kemp became a Queen Scout. A great effort from Bob - a - Job week earned £84. The Christmas Fayre raised £102 and sales of cards £70.

Queen Scout Jeff Tomkins had the honour of being selected to carry the colours at the St. Georges Day parade at Windsor Castle. A proud day for Jeff and a great honour for the group.

Thanks Badges were presented to Mrs F Holness, Mrs Picton and Allen Priestley, also to Maureen Stacey for the work behind the scenes in typing and handling the sale of Christmas cards for fund raising. In response to an appeal for help, Mr and Mrs H Wheeler offered their services. Mr J Taylor took on the role of treasurer and Bernard Draper took on the responsibility of running the bingo.

Forty nine boys participated in a sponsored twenty mile walk along the canal, assisted by parent supporters and resulting in raising £140. A social evening was attended by one hundred parents and friends."

By 1970 new treasurer Geoff Winter was reporting a balance of £300 and finances were looking up after some difficult times. Four members of the troop attended the County camp at Lochearnhead Station that Easter. £53 was raised at a jumble sale to help pay for the trip. Graham Kemp was presented with the Chief Scout Award. Mr and Mrs Tierney became the new leaders of the A pack and successful reports were filed by all sections at the AGM. GSL John Stacey presented the group chairman Charles Brooks with the Thanks Badge and also badges to G. Winter and Mrs E Wheeler.

Jill Smart became a warranted Cub Leader and was welcomed to the group.. The group walk raised £70 and the Christmas Fayre a further £61. The cash balance rose to £799. The Group Annual report drew praise from the District and thanks were recorded to the secretary Mrs. E. Wheeler for its presentation."

John Stacey retired as GSL due to work commitments and was presented with a record player and awarded his Long Service Badge by ADC Scouts, Bob Woodgate. Thanks Badges were presented to Mr. Wheeler, Mrs. Draper, Mrs. Horwood and Mrs. Copson.

That year an Honours Board carved by Mr. Tierney was erected in the Headquarters to honour the achievements of King and Queen Scout Awards. The following names were recorded on that day.

King Scouts D. Lea
H. Cox
Queen Scouts L. Hunt
B. Webb
A. Cox
D. Clarke

J. Lloyd
G. Tomkins
D. Westlake
T. Welton
D. Brookes
R. Cameron
J. Tomkins
L. Kemp

Closure threatens the scout troop

Leadership difficulties were once more a concern in 1971 and an appeal was again made by the chairman for help. A problem that was to go on into the following year. The cubs meanwhile enjoyed success with three gold arrow awards for the A pack plus a number of silver and bronze and proficiency badges. B pack enjoyed an excursion to Greenwich and a trip around the Cutty Sark ship. Participation continued in District competitions that year, but were not rewarded with success. Scouts camped at Puckmoore Park in Kent but were desperately seeking a leader. The real threat of closure now loomed over this famous troop. Financially the position was looking good with surplus money being invested even after expenditure on improvements to the headquarters. Bernard Draper produced a sound balance sheet after considerable efforts in fundraising by supporters, with a surplus of £367.

Help was given to the Handicapped scouts of the Six Counties ""Over the Style"" group by the Group Council which provided a great experience for all those involved.

1972 saw the cubs continue to flourish as 14 new boys were taken in to A pack and 4 Gold awards, 5 Silver and 8 Bronze were achieved. A camp at Gilwell Park was enjoyed by 22 cubs. Mrs Say left the cubs to become a mother, Miss Young took over and Cub leader B. Tierney was set to leave the district. The B pack meanwhile recorded 4 Gold Arrows, 9 Silver and 11 Bronze. A day was enjoyed at Hampton Court and a camp at Home Farm, Water End where they were presented with the shield for best all round pack in camp. Also a place in the semi-final of the District competition was achieved.

The Scouts meanwhile were in a state of deterioration due to the continuing leadership difficulties. A special appeal throughout the district brought forward once again former cub leader B. Tierney who in his efforts to save the troop from closure was ably assisted by Patrol Leaders Raymond and Kevin Wheeler. Raymond strove hard and gained his Advance Scout Standard Badge - hard work under extreme difficulties. But a fortunate and happy solution then arose with the arrival from Yorkshire of Stephen Harris who was welcomed as the new leader, bringing an end to one of the worst periods in the troop's history. We should also in these notes remember the scouts who remained loyal to the troop throughout this difficult period and to the Venture Scouts drafted in as a flying squad to keep the troop going. Meanwhile the hard-working supporters continued to build up funds with a total of £1391 being the balance.

It was then the cubs turn in 1973 to lose leaders resulting in the closure of the B pack and amalgamation with the former A pack and some boys joining the troop. But again excellent results were recorded with 6 Gold Arrows, 9 Silver, 12 Bronze plus a number of proficiency badges:- 8 Athlete, 12 Home Help, 24 Explorers, 16 First Aid, 4 Sportsman, 5 Swimmers and 1 Book Reader! Visits were made to The Imperial War Museum and The Royal Airforce Museum at Hendon. Eight cubs attended Activities Day at Hertford. Thirty cubs were in camp at Lee's Wood, the District Team awarded the pack a second prize for best packs in camp. Second was also the place achieved in the District Sports, a third place in Swimming, winners of the Handicraft competition and into the final of the Bennett Football Cup.

The troop meanwhile were beginning to get back into scouting, finishing fourth in the Hemel Chal-

lenge Trophy and third in the swimming gala. Summer camp was at Coetmor Mill in North Wales. A winter camp that year at Well End proved cold but with high spirits many badge tests were passed. 1973 will be remembered as the year of the power crisis and the scouts contributed to help given to Old Age Pensioners by chopping and distributing fire wood. A highspot of the year was the gaining of the Chief Scout Award by Mark Evans and Raymond Wheeler. Raymond was later to receive his certificate from the Chief Scout at B-P House. The Peewit Patrol led by Mark Evans won a certificate for second place in the county's Great Hertfordshire Quiz and Steve Harris gained his Wood Badge. The activities of the supporters continued unabated, investing in equipment and still showing a positive balance of £1663.

Scouts now back on top

1974 got off to a flying start with the troop winning the Harry Gawthorpe Trophy, just pipping old time rivals 3rd Boxmoor into second place. It was summed up by Steve Harris on winning the award, thus "" the above award has come at the end of a really great year for the troop and any credit must go to the scouts themselves for the effort they have put into scouting over the last twelve months"". A District camp was held at Lees Wood and generally judged as a very successful weekend. In June the troop entered for the County Commissioner Standard which, following a personal visit to the troop for an inspection and watching some continental cooking resulted in being presented with the Blue Pennant Award. Success eluded the troop in the District raft race, apart from the record for the fastest sinking! Summer camp was held at Broadstone Warren, Sussex - a beautiful site comprising 400 acres of woodlands - a good camp with pioneering, compass work and swimming. Later that year a "" Nord Jam Gastabud"" or Viking Banquet, as part of the Join-in Jamboree celebrations provided the opportunity for the scouts to enjoy themselves making costumes and decorations and resulted in a magnificent evening. Several scouts also helped at the local radio station participating in the Jamboree on the Air.

Nick Evans gained his Chief Scout Award, so too did Kevin Wheeler. The troop now possessed its own sailing boat and several expeditions were made to Cheshunt and Rickmansworth. The leaders of this very successful year were recorded as :- Steve Harris, Ron Palmer, Rod Day, Alan Robinson and Derek Smart. Ten scouts passed the Airmans Badge thanks to the good offices of the ATC. Ninety parents and friends attended a bonfire night and a Rovers Reunion started the previous year at the Bell when some 50 old Rovers and Seniors attended, was repeated. Jack Harris was duly installed as GSL - the first for some five years. A magazine simply entitled 'Hemel' was launched to keep parents better informed. The cubs rounded the year off by winning the District Handicraft competition.

Charles Brooks made President of 1st Hemel Hempstead

As the group entered 1975 the cubs continued to gain Gold, Silver and Bronze awards plus proficiency badges in Swimming, Explorers, Book Readers, Entertainers, Scientist, Athletics, Hobbies and Handyman - quite a selection! Mr. Ottaway continued in his efforts with the cubs football team, but whilst reaching the final of the District Cup the ultimate victory continued to elude them, losing to 3rd Adeyfield. Peggy Hersee who had been with the cub packs over 8 years left the district. The scouts lost out on winning the District Camping Competition by just half a point. Maintenance work on the headquarters now had become a regular activity with vandalism to windows and fencing an increasing problem. In 1975 the death of Mrs F. Holness who had served the group for so long was a sad loss to the supporters. Mr. and Mrs. Ottaway's service to the council was recognised by the award of the Thanks Badge.

The Chairman, Charles Brooks retired after ten years in the post and was asked to become President of the Group - a position he held until ill health caused him to step down in 1990- a total involvement in the two roles with the group of a quarter of a century. John Stacey who had previously been both cub leader and Group Scout Leader, now became Chairman. Ken Wyatt presented a strong financial statement in an easy to comprehend manner, reporting £300 profit from bingo, £115 from the Christmas Fayre and £107 from the sale of Christmas cards. £1000 was in-

vested with Scout HQ, £500 at the bank and £150 in cash. All a great credit to Bernard Draper and his fund raising team.

The troop summer camp was held in Roxburghshire. Thirty cubs gathered at Harmer Green. Tim Younger was selected by the district to meet the Chief Scout and his brother Mark led the scouts. The cub pack won the District totem pole competition.

The District Scout camp was once again held at Lee's Wood in 1976. Some of the scouts joined with the cubs on their Jubilee trip to Boulogne and in June were camping in patrols at Phasels Wood. Progress was made following the initial experience in raft racing, as a fourth place was given for design and the Falcons finished second in the race. A camp at Tolmers saw 1st Hemel Hempstead team up with the GSL's old group the 1st Lyonsdown. The annual camp that year was at Lowestoft where fine weather was enjoyed permitting plenty of opportunity for sailing and canoeing. However the return was several hours late due to a breakdown of the coach. The Peewit patrol led by P.L. Stephen Dart took second place in the District camping competition and the same patrol came a commendable tenth in the county competition. An Edwardian Evening was the theme of a very successful social event that year. Once again the troop were successful in obtaining the County Commissioner's Standard and also organised the carol service at Phasels Wood that Christmas. Apart from their trip to Boulogne the cubs also went to Littlehampton, and Lees Wood. Steven Newell carried the flag at the Hertfordshire Jubilee service held at St Albans, representing both the District and carrying the pack flag. The Gold Arrow cubs visited the Monument and the Tower of London. Carolyn Neep was presented with her warrant - a very popular ACL - and a warm welcome was extended to Mrs. Lawrence who was now assisting the pack. The event was quite an evening as the two `managers' of the football team Mr. Ottaway and Mr Lawrence and Shiela Neep and Gill Smart who had done so much for the cubs over such a long period were duly honoured.

Sadly 1976 was to see two stalwart members of the group pass on. Former Rover Leader Bert Storrow, for years a steady worker and helper with the handicapped died. The other loss was Bernard Draper who died whilst on holiday. It was Bernard who had taken charge of fund raising at a critical time in the group's history and thanks to his dedication put the group into a healthy position to finance the scouting activities. Secretary Eileen Wheeler and treasurer Ken Wyatt provided sound and capable hands to take the group on with £1699 in the bank at the end of the year.

Seventy Years Celebrated

A new venture was launched in 1977 at the 1st Hemel Hempstead Queensway headquarters, with the formation of the District Scout Fellowship, which aimed to bring together old scouts and parents in a team to back the District Team in their tasks of running scouting in the more complex and demanding times it had now entered. The troop camped at Well End, once again with the 1st Lyonsdown, and also participated in the District camp at Chalfont Heights. There was canoeing on the River Thames and an evening with the Venture scouts on the climbing wall at the Sports Centre. Other activities included a raft race, summer fair and a barbecue. The summer camp that year was by the River Wye. In September help was provided by selling programmes at a steam rally held at Gaddesden.

The 15th October 1977 was an important milestone in the history of the 1st Hemel Hempstead Group. It was the day chosen to mark the seventieth anniversary. The ""Evening Echo"" carried photographs taken in 1909 asking ""Are you in either of these photographs?"" The article appeared under the heading ""Scouting founder to attend reunion"" Below the article is reproduced in full.

The man who started scouting in Hemel Hempstead 70 years ago will be guest of honour at a grand reunion next weekend. Allen Foxall, who now lives in Finchley, North London, started the 1st Hemel Hempstead Scouts in 1907 - a year before Baden-Powell's Scouting for Boys began to be published in fortnightly parts. He was known as the Commander, and the boys wore knickerbock-

ers and carried six-foot ash poles cut from the hedges. The troop had three sections - the Cycle, the Bull and the Hound, and met at their HQ in Dodds Lane. When the First World War broke out in 1914, Mr. Foxell joined the City of London (Rough Riders) Yeomony. But the Hemel Hempstead Scouts were kept going by their patrol leaders. They came under the wing of a Mr. Earlam, who had a business making toys in George Street, and they met in part of his workshop. Saturday's reunion at the Queensway HQ is being organised by Charles Brooks of Mountfield Road, who was District Commissioner for Hemel Hempstead for 16 years, and is now president of the group. Already more than 130 people have said they will attend, and former scouts have written from as far away as Tasmania and Rhodesia. Mr. Brooks is writing the history of the Group and would like to hear from anyone who has any early photographs or information.

And so this brief history approaches a conclusion. At a point where the newspaper quoted from the drafts of this very document which has remained unpublished ever since. But to return to the evening itself. Allen Foxell was there and spoke movingly of the early days. He was perhaps surprised at where his venture had since led. According to a contemporary report in the 'Hemel Hempstead Gazette'

More than 125 past and present scouts attended, but Mr. Foxell was by far the most senior. The next oldest joined in 1920. A cake baked by Scout Council member Mrs. Eileen Wheeler has been given to St. Paul's Hospital'

From meeting in the lanes of Hemel Hempstead, in its pre First World War small country market town days, to the much larger and more modern town some seventy years later with its troop meeting in its own brick built HQ, is its own tribute to those who began it all and to all those who have served in varying capacities ever since. Those who kept the idea and ideals alive through two World Wars, crises of leadership and crises of headquarters. The achievements in competitions, in badge work and in serving the community. The leaders, the supporters and fund-raisers and all who have themselves worn the uniform of 1st Hemel Hempstead as cubs, scouts, seniors and rovers in their day and venture scouts - it is a story of which to be proud. A continuous tradition few other groups in scouting can claim.

The 80th Anniversary AGM took place on Monday 18th May 1987. Perhaps when the next important anniversary comes to be observed some one may pick up this brief history and add to it the missing chapters.

A History of the 1st Hemel Hempstead Scout Group by Charles J. Brooks