

## HERITAGE THOUGHTS FOR THE MONTH OF May 2020

Just after I sent off the April 2020 edition, who should appear on *BBC 1 Breakfast* but Chief Scout **Bear Grylls** with **Tim Peak**, the Astronaut, Explorer and Scout Ambassador. Both in Scout uniform, they were speaking from their homes and introduced plans to launch a "Hike to the Moon project" for Scouts.



Many will remember **Joyce Anson and Gina Potter**. They were identical twins from St Albans who valiantly performed at the Gang Show for many years. They were also founding members of the first St Albans Gang Show in 1939 at Culver Hall. Involved in the nine performances were **Ralph Reader**, his London Show Producer **Tiny Fellows** and "**Uncle**" (**Mac**) **Macintosh** who was his Musical Director (and later Camp Chief at Gilwell Park). Due to the outbreak of WW2 a year later, the Show did not restart until some years after the Harpenden Gang Show started on 22 October 1949. Harpenden now hold the record for the longest continuously running Gang Show in the UK. This photo was taken when they were each awarded the Silver Wolf by **Ivor Thomas CC**, during the St Georges Day Service in St Albans Cathedral in 2006.

I met **Guy Marshall** a former CSL for 24 years with 17 St Albans Group. **Guy** was employed by TSA at Gilwell Park from 1974-1978, initially as Secretary to the National Venture Scout Section, then as Editorial Assistant on *Scouting Magazine* under **Ron Jefferies**. During this time he was based at B-P House in London. Included amongst his many duties was hand writing in calligraphy script, the recipients' name on all Queen Scout Certificates. During our reunion we updated ourselves with progress since we last met, including our chance meeting up at the stunning display of projected Poppies inside St Albans Abbey and the tour of some of the 40 war memorials in St Albans. **Guy** donated some items of music and a rare book to the County Scout Library - *The Secret of Rumbling Churn* by **John Winfield Sweet**. In his day **John** was the most famous and prolific writers of books on practical Scouting. We have many of his books in the Library at Well End. In a letter to **Guy** dated 1973, **John** admitted he had started the book 50 years earlier in 1923, when he was in camp with Rover Scouts from the Second Wallsend in Northumbria. I asked **Guy** to inscribe the book with details of how he obtained it, how he knew and worked with **John** and of others he had worked with at Scout HQ at Gilwell and at 25 (B.P.) Buckingham Palace Road. London.

Thinking back, I did have the pleasure of being introduced to **John Sweet** after I was appointed County Quartermaster. It would have been at Well End and when **Freddy O'Hare** was Deputy Warden under **Bert Moreton**. **John** would have been at the end of his term as Field Commissioner for Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Berkshire. I remember him coming to a Wood Badge Course (as they were called prior to 1968) and signing the visitors' book. He gave one of his inspiring talks at the Camp Fire.

**John** was a rare character and a remarkable man. He was one of those brilliant speakers who could bring tears to your eyes and in the next minute have you laughing fit to burst! He specialised in writing books on practical Scouting with lifelike drawings and sketches and was a contributor to *The Scouter*, *The Scout* and *Scouting Magazine* for decades.

One hundred years ago on the evening of St Georges Day 1920, the First Elstree Troop assembled outside the home of their Scoutmaster **Mr S. Poncia**. Headed by their bugle band they marched smartly to the railway bridge where they met contingents from Aldenham, Radlett, Shenley and Edgeware Districts. They then all marched to the home of their Group Treasurer, a

**Mr Williamson** and paraded on his back lawn in Shenley Road. **Mrs Everett**, wife of the **CC Percy Everett (PWE)**, then presented a number of service awards. **PWE** then gave a talk and thanked the hosts and the Troop Scouters for inviting him and for having the initiative to organise the event.

**Correction** – I inaccurately inserted an item into the March edition newsletter. In the item about **Ray Vassie**, I stated he had received a Silver Wolf Award. This should have read Silver Acorn.

**In a barrage of previously unseen archive films about WW2** and other documentaries on Friday 8 May there was no mention of Scouting until CH5 showed *The Lost Films*. This documentary had been collated and filmed by **Lewis Coles**. He was an employee of Kodak and lived at Kings Langley. One of the snippets showed a parade of Scouts from Hertfordshire.

**An article appeared in the county newspaper *The Herts Advertiser*** about the Scouts of St Albans District who held a virtual renewal of the Scout Promise for St George's Day. The article included some photos and a long and very appropriate message from **Liz Walker**, the County Commissioner. She explained the relevance of the Day and how it fitted with Scouting in these difficult times. **Liz** included reference to the "Hike to the Moon Project." The UK target to raise £240,000 was passed within a few days.

**I was reminded by one of my Team that 17 May 1900 was the anniversary of the Relief of Mafeking.** This was a 217-day siege and the event that made **B-P** famous by becoming a Military Hero. His experiences here gave him the initiative to start the Boy Scout Movement. He wrote a book on good citizenship - *Scouting for Boys* and experimented with his ideas he wrote in each chapter using 21 boys from the Boys Brigade at an experimental camp on Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour.



The sister of **Lord Somers** was **Lady Clarendon** who originally lived at *The Grove* in Watford. Her husband **Lord Clarendon**, was our County Scout President 1911- 1914. He had been appointed at the first ever County AGM that was held at *The Grove* on 30 September 1911. He was a significant benefactor to Scouting having later bequeathed part of his estate to the First South West Herts Scout Troop as a campsite in memory of his son who was a former Scout in the Troop. He had died in 1936. The gift of land was named after his son and is called *The Lord Hyde Campsite*. While as deputy Chief Scout, **Lord Somers** performed the opening ceremony of the campsite on 3 July 1938 in Lees Wood. (A separate Watford District site known as Lees Wood campsite is next door). The Lord Hyde site took 18 months to prepare. In the photo **Lord Somers** stands at the memorial garden that was built in the shape of a "Gone Home sign." Out of sight behind **Michael Furse**, the Bishop of St Albans, who is on the extreme left of the image, is the memorial stone and plaque. This was unveiled by Wolf Cub **P. W. Allkins**. The garden now contains the ashes of many former members of the Group and the ashes of former members are still being interned although this area is now very overgrown.

A full record of the opening ceremony is written into my book, *Milestones of 105 Years of Hertfordshire Scouting*. An updated copy of the book was distributed to every Hertfordshire Scout Group in 2015. **The Clarendon family** left *The Grove* soon after the opening of the Campsite to live in their new home Holywell Farm, Hampshire.

**Congratulations** to the 126 Leaders and Young People from Hertfordshire who were awarded Honours in the 2020 St Georges Day list.

**FRANK BRITTAIN** Archivist & Historian, Hertfordshire Scouts. [archivist@hertfordshirescout.org.uk](mailto:archivist@hertfordshirescout.org.uk)