

Revised Dec. 1981

This has been compiled from a document written by me in approximately February 1954 for the Editor of "Troopaco" the 1st., Alphington Group Magazine.

Scouting had been in existence in Alphington under Rev. P. W. Robinson and the Rev. C. L. Crossley and at the time of my introduction to the Group they were under the leadership of the Rev. C. E. Hipwell of the Presbyterian Church, in Clive Street (since removed). All of these periods are of course other stories which I trust will be published prior to this one, in order that some continuity may be formed of the history of this Group.

Early in September 1926, I was invited by the Rev. C. E. Hipwell to visit the Troop meeting on the following Thursday evening and I availed myself of the invitation and appeared in my Scottish Scout Uniform. Alas my visit was short lived as I found that the Australian Youth did not measure up to my idea of Boy Scouts so I thought I had better withdraw myself into a quiet civilian life and retirement from Scouting. Two weeks later however, the invitation was repeated, and my old feelings being aroused, I again visited the troop and found that, on this occasion, a parents meeting was being held in an adjoining room, while the scouts held sway in the main hall. Welcomed officially by the Rev. gentleman and hustled from the Troop meeting into the parents meeting, and introduced all round. I was permitted to sit in at the meeting and listened to the cleaning up arrangements being made for the Rev. Hipwell's departure in answer to a call to Maffra. All of this was so much dutch to me, but I was not to be left long in the dutch, as we all returned to the Troop meeting and with the group formed around the parents party we listened to what proved to be a farewell speech. The Rev. pointed out that I had graced them with my presence and "HE felt sure that I would ~~on~~ carry on in his absence". ~~Shoe~~ Shock, and the love of the game stirred me to promise, in a weak voice, "To attempt to hold the Troop together until a satisfactory Scout-Master was found" purely stated in the hope that the incoming Minister would prove a suitable man for this job. Having placed my two feet on the road, I must now make haste to burn up the ~~track~~ track and get somewhere.

Approximately three weeks later Noel Bishop and Dave Youren were present at the meeting, and after discussions with them and outlining my plans I decided that the following Thursday evening would be the testing and melting pot of what I considered to be the nucleus of ~~what~~ a good scout troop. I can picture to-day that first night that I had complete control of the Scout Meeting, I think we had some 25 lads in the ~~the~~ hall and all at variance as to what should be done, but on finding that I drilled them steadily for two hours up and down that hall under the most rigid discipline, I could imagine their feelings. On dismissal, they were told "That was a sample of my methods and were given a talk on what Scouts were expected to be, and invited to return next Thursday at 7-30 p.m., prompt, if they wished to carry on. We had six come back, the door promptly closed, and a start was made with direct individual training along solid lines. Early in 1927 saw the Troop start to expand, and we warranted Dan Cahill as Assistant Scoutmaster which enabled us to embark on quite ambitious plans. Concert work etc., to provide us with funds as we contemplated a Camp at Christmas 1927, and at this stage we were proud owners of absolutely nothing in the nature of

Undaunted, we talked the running of dances etc. and so swelled the coffers, for most of these functions we were deeply indebted to the Alphington shopkeepers and Mrs. Carlston for their valued support given in the prize and supper departments. Making every post a winning post, we at last had sufficient means to purchase Tents and Dixies etc., and so to camp we went as the most greenhorn Scout Troop that ever camped. I could not pass over this episode without devoting a fair space to detail, as I look back on it as "The greatest experience of my young life". Mr. Jack Gaynor, offered to drive the truck, being loaned by Mr. Bennet, Contractor, to transport us to the site. Picture the scene, a late start after a good deal of trouble with the truck, and a Tenderfoot Troop going camping with everything but the kitchen sink loaded on this flat top truck, and approximately 25 lads full of beans and exuberance piled high on top of the load. My heart kept jumping up and down every time we passed over a bump, and I poked my head out of the cabin, times without number, to count my prodigy, on that never to be forgotten journey, Tins of biscuits, Scout hats, Dixies etc., took turn about falling from my load, and a concerted shout brought us to a standstill on numerous occasions to retrieve dropped goods but fortunately no boys were dropped off. At Yarra Junction we eventually arrived and to the Greenhorn Scoutmaster this signalled the beginning of what was to be a most eventful experience. The A.S.F. who took the trouble to tell me that to take tent timber to the Australian bush was like taking coals to Newcastle has had the joke passed over him so often that I venture to say he has never gone to Camp since, unless prepared to the hilt. The first ridge pole dragged into Camp took four lads to handle and at one end measured 3 ins. while the other end measured upwards of 10 inches in diameter. Struggle and more struggle and at long last all tents stood up the right way and we had managed to cook something for those amateur timberjacks to eat. Then bed and what a night, called from the boys at regular 10 minute intervals of "What's the time Boss" so no sleep was enjoyed by all. Cooking devolved on the Officers shoulders as practically none could light a fire properly and after five days of weariness and hard slogging the Officers found time to sleep at night and the golden ideal had been accomplished some of the lads had learned to cook, so we were on the right trail after all. If these sentences can bring pride to the memory of any lad who took part in that camp, and cause him amusement to-day, I will consider the ordeal repaid in full. The fruits brought to us by the good friends at the boarding house who paid a daily visit to "The poor lads who were wrestling with nature". The trip to Poweltown on the little train when Ed. Candy jumped off and on to demonstrate his skill. The look on the lady shopkeepers face, when I asked her "Could she rustle up tea for 25 hungry lads". Jock Collins swimming in the Little Yarra river, 2 inches deep in water, against Boss orders, and Boss walking into the party. Jim McNeil offering his Swallow and Aerial Christmas Pudding for sale at one penny a slice, on the off chance of the purchaser finding 3 pence in same. The Christmas pudding made by the Officers. The paper chase through the Orchards, and the inevitable aftermath. The bag meat safe above the cook's tent doorway, and the many victims it claimed during the ten days. Well home

the truck as a means of illumination, but all boys returned safely to Mum and no casualties.

Early 1928 brought us an almost unsurmountable obstacle that could well have spelt finis to scouting in Alphington. The Presbyterian Church authorities asked us to vacate the premises as they required the accomodation for extra Church meetings. We were not in a financial position to hire the one and only hall available, and when nearly at our wits end we were saved by Our Good Fairy Godmother. Mrs Carlson offered us the use of her Cow sheds in Geneva Road, and so we, took over and through working bees succeeded in converting the sheds into the 1st., Alphington Group Scout Den. Were we proud of it ; flooring, lining, lighting, Patrol corners, boxes etc., were among the first jobs every night and Saturday afternoons, the sound of hammering could be heard for many a score of yards in any direction. Our Keith Anderson Rover Crew were inaugurated during this year and a happy band of Rovers they were who used to finish off their meetings in the Den with fried sausages and, tomato sauce etc. A most successful year all round as the Group members, Rovers, Scouts and Cubs numbered just over the one hundred mark. We had succeeded in raising the interest of a number of the boy's Mothers by this time and we hired the Alphington Hall to hold a Parents Night. A wonderful muster of Parents and the outcome surpassed my wildest dreams. The Mother's Club was inaugurated at that meeting and their first meeting arranged for early September in the Alphington Hall. Bazaars in the Den were a feature and all this time, the Parents performed door to door visitation soliciting support and strang to relate, receiving same in quite a substantial way. Next a piano, and what a donation that proved to be, the tuner did his best with it and although a number of notes were dumb for life, our very good friend Mrs. R. Swales gave service on that old bus that would have brought tears of envy from some of the great masters. Can anyone recall th Community Singing nights in the Den when 100 people sat on planks of wood covered with rugs and supported on kerosene cases. Our Christmas 1928 Camp at Woodend promised to be a good one, and actually proved to be the best Camp it has been my pleasure to attend. Backed by a splendid muster of Rover Scouts, and here I must contain myself from mentioning names, as I could write volumes on this Camp. (What about the Church Parade when led only by a PRESENTOR, no piano or organ, our lads sang the wrong tune and so the effort was called to a halt and restarted on the right tune) (What about Noel Bishop's effort to show us all how to ride a horse?). We camped near the racecourse, one of 7 Scout Camps in and around Woodend. The local constable headed the Woodend Traders Association and organised pic-nics, feeds etc for the boys and a shield was given for competition amongst the Scout Troops. 1st. Alphington were second and only two marks behind the winner. We became very popular at Woodend as a result of this Camp, and returned on numerous occasions to that district. The combined Troops gave a concert in the Mechanics Institute for all residents and a splendid programme ensued.

The year 1929 seen the inauguration of the Group Committee bringing Fathers and other Male helpers into the workings, while the Mother's Club continued to function in their own right. Insurance of Group property. Deeds of Trust, handling of finance etc

the tasks involved in tackling such an ambition, but here and now I would personally like to say that never was a problem tackled with more vigour and enthusiasm than that displayed by that Group Committee during the ensuing years. Bazaars, functions of all kinds were listed and October 1929 brought forth what I venture to say was the greatest and best Bazaar ever held in Alphington. All hands worked at such a pace, borrowing, begging etc., and on the day of the Bazaar the Group March throughout the district advertising the show, all helped to realise the grand sum of 90 Pounds. The Church of England Authorities made available at this stage the bugles, drums and Bass drum held by them, in recognition of the splendid work done by the Group. The Local Council were debating granting of a block of land for the building of our projected Scout Hall and while a great deal of opposition was met as the respective sites were reviewed, a large share of encouragement was also handed out to our ambitious Group Committee. At one of our last Parents evenings in the Alphington Hall our District Commissioner Colonel Carroll presented Edward Candy, one of my original six boys, with his First Class Badge, King's Scout Badge, First, Second and Third All Round Cords. To the uninitiated, this lad had planned and gained the highest awards in Scouting and I was more proud of him than his relations. Well done Eddy, my one and only King's Scout! The Troop competed in the first Townsend Shield Competition for Heidelberg District Scouts and were fourth in the contest. We had a very good boxing and athletic team as well as some of the best swimmers in the district and fared very well under all types of competitive work. The Cub Pack were coming well to the fore and Akela, Miss Kitty Shaw and Miss Avis Carlson were richly blessed in their work amongst the Cubs. The Christmas Party drew a large and splendid following for the Cub work and the District Commissioner paid high tribute to the Pack efficiency. The Christmas 1929 Camp promised to be one out of the box as another ambitious step was taken. Parents were invited to visit the Camp on Visitors Day and motor trucks were made available. Altogether 35 adults and 20 children visited the Camp, and a three course meal was supplied by the boys in Camp entirely cooked and served by them and the tributes paid by the visitors to the excellence of the meal more than recompensed the boys for the loss of points in a competitive sports programme organised between visitors and Scouts.

Swinging into 1930 with more gusto than ever the Group Committee were off to a flying start by suggesting a Queen Carnival Competition to be held for three months with three Queens representing Cubs, Scouts and Rovers, no sooner said than done, and the following three Queens were asked to represent Miss Lil Kelly (Queen of Cubs) Miss Mary Parker (Queen of Scouts) Miss Edna Whitcher (Queen of Rovers). To all readers, or to all residents of Alphington I need scarcely draw attention to that 31st., of May, 1930, when the Alphington Hall held the largest gathering of its history, or the crowning of the Queen, and the whole programme, that night which culminated in the raising of 375 Pounds, by the three Queens and takings of 20 pounds in silver coin admission at the door. The picture that hangs in the hall is an ever lasting tribute to their effort and it's pride of place a token of the high esteem in which they are held by

At last news they were on their way to Sydney, they eventually found their way to the Home Baked Cake Shop owned by Mrs. Cahill (Dan's Mother) who looked after them, and Dan showed them all the sights then put them aboard the train, with their bikes, for Melbourne. On being asked what struck them as being different from Melbourne, Morris said "They sell tomatoes by the dosen". Our Rover Crew built a small trek-cart of which they were very proud and decided to walk to Warrandyte dragging this cart which carried all of our Kitbags. On reaching Eaglemont Cutting it started to rain and a vote was taken as to the wisdom of carrying on or returning. Needless to say we carried on. We arrived eventually at Pound Bend where our objective, was to occupy a deserted bark Hut owned originally by a Deaf and Dumb Gold miner, now we are on the down hill approach to Pound Bend and the wheel of the trek cart collapsed and rolled all the kits downhill. We retrieved same and arrived at the hut. Threw the cart against the wall and proceeded to light a good fire inside the hut. All stripped off to dry off and after eating settled down to sleep. Two of our number had brought their particular pets, Lyle Bend had a Kangaroo Hound of enormous proportions and some lad had a wec fox terrier. In the middle of the night a dog fight commenced and the hut emptied of all personell quick smart to allow them to have it out. The dogs were tossed out and we resumed our sleep time. Our journey home next day, with the bent wheel partly straightened, meant half carried their kits half way and then changed over all agreee they enjoyed the trip and experience.

Now that a good sum was held our Group Committee forged ahead with plans for their H the site in Adams Street had been purchased and an Architect's assistance secured to handle the contracts. Visits to other halls and their methods of finance studied and heaps of other legal methods provided a huge volume of work for those tireless Committee members. On the night of 12th. November, 1930, the plans, specifications and tenders were reviewed by the Group Committee and the Architect, Mr Laurie Warner, and Mr Bishop's tender accepted. As can be readily understood, after reading over the activities of 1930, the entire ^{Group} with it's many branches had enjoyed a most strenuous year so no Christmas Camp was mooted. The Troop competed in the Townsend Shield and this time took second place. The Group went into recess for the holiday season but no rest for the Group Committee who swung into action with gusto. Off to a flying start in 1931, the hall having been completed, as far as finances would permit, the resolution was made that "The hall would be added to as funds become available" until we finally owned the hall we had proposed. The Official opening ceremony was performed by Mr. G.H. Thomas, Chairman of the Victorian Boy Scout's Association, accompanied by Mr. F.R.G. Sanders, Secretary of the Association in April and the Troop entered their new accommodation the proud winners of the Townsend Shield, and oh! so proud owners of a beautiful hall that they had so long dreamed of. To many that may seem a culmination point that could very well have spelt a good rest and lay back for all those willing band of workers, but no, a platform to be built, blinds to make and hang, an electric urn to provide liquid refreshment and all of a dozen other commodities that go to make for comfort, were all part and parcel of the years work efforts.

agreed ^{method} ~~method~~ of payment. Our Ladies immediately canvassed 40 folks willing to pay 6 pence per week for 25 weeks and this was religiously collected by our marvellous committee ladies.

Although an undenominational Group we held monthly Church Parade to Presbyterian, Church of England and Methodist Churches led by our bugle band under the capable hand of Ed. Candy. We also provided band and assistance at those Churches, when called upon for Basaars etc., and at the local State school provided items of bike patrol's drill and ambulance work as well as bridgebuilding.

My minister from Ivanhoe Baptist Church who had spent a number of years in Algeria on missionary work came along to our "Pie Nights" in the hall, when all lights were switched off and a huge fire roared in the fire place, the lads would be thrilled by his talks, particularly as he dressed in Algerian costume for the occasion. In return we marched, 100 strong, led by our band to Ivanhoe Baptist Church Service, and he was very proud of our gesture. .

The troop went into a very arduous training programme, evenings and week ends to prepare to compete for the Townsend Shield. Part of the competition consisted of examiners asking boys of the troop questions on badges held and so all of this demanded retraining. I, personally handled quite a share of this training and had this experience. I asked a young lad "If the Australian Flag on the Town Hall was flying half-mast, what did this indicate" "Someone is dead" he replied, requiring a bit more explicit information, I persevered "Supposing I died would they fly the flag half-mast" "No sir" came the reply, "WHY" I asked, "Well, you are a man of no importance, Sir" he said. How right he was but despite this I was very proud of MY BOYS.

The troop sponsored the 1st., MacLeod troop, hiring a furniture van which transported us together with our equipment to take us to the Church of England. There a good muster of Parents and lads gathered and our display was well received. Russell Woods, ex 1st Alphington become Scoutmaster .

Our Mothers Club changed it's name to Welfare Club and added ^{welfare} ~~welfare~~ work to their aims. We next formed an adult and senior scout Mouth organ band under the ~~direction~~ direction of Mr Cyril Pemberty which added items to our and other organisation Concerts in and around the district. All branches of the Group were at record high level and we added ~~to~~ our numbers and officers during the year. Mr. Long came to us after our Chief's visit to Melbourne and became an Assistant Scout Master.

The years activities are far too numerous to mention but one thing become very evident, we had succeeded in catering for a long felt want in this district, and Alphington was now a social centre of the highest order. From near and far our following came and at any of our concerts, dances or parents evenings, one had to be early to get in.

Christmas 1931 saw the troop in camp at Broadford, and another parents visiting day arranged. Many parents will have happy and otherwise memories of the Camp visit when we recall Mr. Alcock delivering parents to their door steps at 6-00a.m.,

token of appreciation for all the assistance she had rendered to the Group over the years.

Continuing into 1932 the committee's were continuously engaged in fund raising and spending on extra appointments for the hall, and arrangements were in hand to celebrate the first birthday of the hall. A very successful birthday party was enjoyed, so setting the precedence for all succeeding birthday parties that never fail to bring happy memories to all who were in the Group or attached to it's many activities since it's inception. 1932 proved a trying year for all, concerned, the Group Committee had many retirements through overwork, overstrain, and the never to be forgotten depression, but as we lost some members so we gained some new lads and their Parents became interested. The troop once more settled down to the task of training to defend the Townsend Shield and our Ambulance team was the pride of the district, trained by the Victorian Railways Instructor. Great was our jubilation as we brought home the Shield for the second year in succession. Our boxing and wrestling team helped our District to win the Inter district Cup. Once again we camped at Woodend and on this occasion we took 1st., Macleod under our wing as their Scoutmaster was very ill. As a result of our repeated visits to Woodend we were invited to attend, with our Band, the official opening of their Scout Hall.

1933 saw the Group Committee making arrangements to line the Hall and complete the interior. The second birthday was celebrated and we were beginning to feel as though we had always had and been used to this lovely accommodation. The Depression was still raging and our hall was offered for relief organisations to hold functions and administer relief.

Our Group Committee arranged another Bazaar for September. The local Girl Guides and Brownies had been turned out of their meeting place so the Group Committee were unanimous in offering the use of our hall to them. The offer was accepted and the Girls have met in our Hall ever since.

The Girls helped us out with suppers etc., and much work was done in this year. The Bazaar takings provided the funds required to complete lining the hall. Immediately after this Bazaar I tendered my resignation owing to pressure of business.

Thus ended my active association with 1st., Alphington Group -- I could not possibly name all of the so very good friends who stood by me throughout my period of service from 1926 to late 1933, however I must record my thanks to one and all of the members of those wonderful committees.

To the lads who passed through the Group during my period of service, I say thank you for your loyalty -- I have ^{watched} ~~attended~~ your careers with interest and I am proud of the deeds you have performed and I know full well that you have moulded your lives in the Service to Others.

Rev. W. M. Brown C. S. M.

