

WIND OF CHANGE (1956 - 1968)

Almost since the beginning of Scouting there has been The SCOUT SHOW. Individual Troops and (later) Groups have made their own efforts, some regularly, with varying degrees of success. Round about the mid-1930s 'Gang Shows' became very popular, but the last recorded District effort (excluding Camp Fires and Hallies) was in 1927 (The Pageant of St. George - performed in the Corn Exchange). So it was a bit of a venture when a team of Scouters and Lay Helpers put on a Show "JAMBOREE" at the Civic Theatre in late January of 1956. This was so successful that a repeat performance was requested by the Personnel of the United States Airforce Base at Molesworth (some of whose Troop took part in the Show). This was done on Saturday 25th. February. Of course such shows require much rehearsal, which meant breaking into normal Scouting activity so an annual effort was impracticable, but attempt was made to establish an event every two years. The second show - entitled "Seasons' Greetings" - was in January 1959 and the third, "Holiday Town" appeared in 1961. By 1963 when the next was due, however, the Local Association had been divided into two districts, which provided some difficulties and no further show was produced. All three 'Gang Shows' had been produced by Roy Smith and a Team of Scouters and Lay Helpers, and were very successful and the rehearsals, even if they did somewhat overlap normal Scout work certainly brought Troops together and provided grand fellowship.

Some of the pre-war events had now been re-instated with varying degrees of success. St. GEORGE'S DAY PARADE (which had never wholly been discontinued) became a big occasion for displaying the 'might' of Scouting. The 1957 Service and Parade was held at the Church of the Transfiguration, Kempston; followed, in 1958 by a parade at St. Peter's Church. After this most of the Services were held in St. Paul's Church, with a break - in 1962 - when the function took place at Bunyan Meeting, in Mill Street. (Incidentally the last one before the final dissolution of the Bedford Division (1967) was also at Bunyan Meeting). In 1963 the County Parade was at St. Paul's and on this occasion Bedford Scouts attended in force, but Cubs paraded separately at St. Peter's. Also, in 1965, the two Districts each held its own Parade and Service, Northern at St. Andrew's Church, and Southern at Elstow.

The 1959 Parade was held on Sunday 26th. April, at St. Paul's Church. The Parade formed up in Ram Yard at 2.30 p.m. and moved off at 2.50 p.m., the Cubs first under their Parade Marshal, C.M. Doug Mortimore (20th. Beds), marching via Mill Street, and High Street to St. Paul's Square. The Scouts, under Parade Marshal A.S.M. Roy Smith

(6th.Beds), marched on a slightly longer route - via St.Cuthbert's Street, St.Peter's Street and High Street to St.Paul's Square, where the parade was fallen out to enter the Church. On arrival at Church, Colour Parties were fallen out on either side of the entrance path to allow rest of Parade to enter Church by the West Door and then re-forming, led by the District Union Flag and St.George's Flag, Colour Parties proceeded into the Church and up the Centre Aisle, to be received by the Vicar at the Chancel Step. After the Service the parade re-formed on the south side of St.Paul's Square and, Cubs marching first, proceeded via Harpur Street, Silver Street, Mill Street and round St.Cuthbert's Church to Ram Yard for dismissal. The Salute was taken by His Worship the Mayor of Bedford from the steps of the Borough Library. The Service was conducted by Rev. J. H. King (County Chaplain) who also gave the Address and the Band of the 5th.Beds; and Herts.(T.A) was in attendance, playing at the Saluting Base.

With slight amendments (and different routes) this was, by and large, the general pattern. St.George's Day Parade has become an 'institution' and will continue as a Scout function of great importance.

COMMONWEALTH (previously Empire Day) and REMEMBRANCE DAY (Armistice Day) parades were not so successful. (Commonwealth Youth Sunday and Remembrance Day are still recognised but Services were not organised specifically by or for Scouts, being arranged by a Youth Committee. Scouts have attended but not with the same enthusiasm).

The DISTRICT SPORTS had become a popular annual event. In 1960, transferred from Fairhill Playing Field, Clapham Road to the Newnham Athletic Track, although ^{never} the original intention, it became a highly organised 'specialist' event and by 1964 had developed into an inter-District Sports.

The SWIMMING GALA too, first organised in 1961 and held at Newnham Baths, developed into a 'specialist' event, and year by year had to be adjusted to give some incentive to 'non specialist' competitors. Some of these evenings were very cold but probably the most memorable was the one this year (1968) when, after a week of heavy rain, a fine Saturday looked very promising and all was ready for the start. But as the first race was about to commence it was noticed that the water was rising rapidly and soon the baths were in flood - with the rest of the riverside meadows. There was only one race - to evacuate the baths, and all joined in.

From 1956 to 1962 the District CAMP FIRE in Mill Meadows was a popular event, usually conducted by the 'Gillwell Team' of Scouters. In 1963 it was held as an indoor event at the Grosvenor Centre in Ashburnham Road, and the 1964 one was in the Corn Exchange. After this the function seems to have got less publicity, which poses a question, Is there any future for the 'Camp Fire' in modern Scouting? Not one of those held was a 'failure' in fact all were very good. They were well conducted and certainly attracted the public, but as the years passed it was noticeable that each successive 'generation' of Scouts showed less aptitude than the one before it and it was obvious that Troops were not 'Educated' toward the Camp Fire and the procedure therewith, as in former days. Several attempts were made to ensure that participants knew the songs, yells etc. which would be on the programme but only with partial success. The Camp Fire certainly does not occupy such a prominent position in Scouting as it once did, but some Troops have traditionally become 'specialised' in this form of entertainment, and while such still exist it is very unlikely that they will allow it to die out completely.

Mid-Beds: (or Bedford District) always had a good reputation in County Competitions, and this was maintained. Some of the old pre-war Competitions - in fact most of them had taken on a new look - and there seemed to be several new ones as well. However, Mid-Beds usually put up a good show. In the 1957 Wolf Cub Competition the District had six in the 'Top Ten' :- 29th.Beds (St.Loyes) were winners, 37th.Beds.(St.Andrew's) runners up, 90th.Beds.(Bunyan) third, 105th.Beds (Putnoe), 18th.Beds(B.M.S) and 1st.Beds.(Onesters) were 5th, 6th and 7th. respectively. 37th.Beds.(St.Andrew's) and 90th.Beds.(Bunyan) were winners and runners up respectively in the Scout Competition and the Group Competition. In 1958 the 90th.Beds. were runners up in the County Cycle Marathon. 1959 was another good year. This time it was 105th.Beds.(Putnoe) who won the Cub competition (with 18th.Beds. third and 29th.Beds. fourth). 18th.Beds. were runners up in the Scout Section (41st.Beds. and 37th.Beds. were seventh and eighth) and the 18th.Beds.(Bedford Modern School) were winners of the Group Competition (12th.Beds.(St.Michael's) were fifth). Again, in 1960, 105th. and 18th.Beds. were first and second in the Scout Competition, the 105th. were winners of the Cub section (with 29th. and 18th.Beds. second and third), and in the Group Competition it was 105th.Beds (Putnoe) winners with 18th.Beds.(Bedford Modern School) second. In the Cycle Marathon Senior Scout Section 90th.Beds. entries came second and third, and in the Scout Section 18th

Beds (Bedford Modern School) were also second and third.

In 1961 the B.P. Guild Trophy was won by the 115th.Beds (Newnham) Troop.

Round about this time a new method was being introduced, a form of knock-out competition, whereby a series of local competitions were held and the ultimate winners passing on to the finals. This virtually assured each district one place in the finals, but in Bedford, there being two Districts, competitions did not always get reported at Divisional level so records are incomplete. However, 136th.Beds.(Rushmore) were recorded as winners of the Scout Competition in 1966, and the 105th.Beds (Putney Methodist) in 1967.

A local competition in the form of an Adventure Expedition was organised in 1960. This was quite well supported and some Groups entered two teams (or Patrols), in fact 90th.Beds (Bunyan) came first and second, with 18th.Beds (Modern School) third. Apart from Scouting competitions the 90th.Beds. regularly entered the Road Safety Quiz competition and on at least one occasion were winners and were runners-up several times. Another local competition which 'came to stay' was the Wolf Cub Football Shield. This was organised by Cub Scouters rather than the Events Committee (which perhaps accounts for its long life). Of course most such events have 'teething troubles' at the beginning and it is interesting (and rather amusing) to record that in one of its early years (1959 - 60) one team reached the semi-final without playing a match whereas their opponents had had to replay each round. It is good to relate, however, that the latter passed on to the final. (Only to lose it in extra time).

During the period four World Jamborees were held -

Sutton Coldfield (Warwickshire) 1957 - Jubilee Jamboree - Indaba - Moot.

Makiling National Park, Laguna, Philippines - 1959.

Plain of Marathon, Greece, - 1963.

Farragut State Park, Idaho, U.S.A. - 1967 (The last 'Boy' Scout Jamboree)

Bedford had representatives at the last two, but 1957 deserves special mention. It was the Jubilee Year of Scouting and celebrations were made in all parts of the Country and Bedford did its share in these celebrations. At Whitsun a District Camp was organised in Addison Howard Park, Kempston, at which most local Groups were represented. The weather was not exactly at its best but nevertheless a full camp programme was carried out including a well attended (and well conducted) Camp Fire on Saturday evening, Scouts' Own on Sunday and Sports on Whit Monday. Also a seven-a-side Knock-out Soccer Tournament.

The ninth World Jamboree (Jubilee Jamboree) was held in Sutton Park, Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire, from 1st to 12th. August and it was the largest of all time, to celebrate the fiftieth year of Scouting. As host Country England had a very large contingent and Bedford District was allocated nine places in the County contingent and Stan Gaunt also went as Assistant Scoutmaster. Most Scouts and Cubs in the United Kingdom had a chance to visit the Jamboree and several Troops and individuals from Bedford made most of the opportunity. Two coach trips were organised, one for Cubs and one for Scouts. A rather amusing incident occurred on the Cub outing. At most Jamborees, and indeed at most large organised events, there are things going on around which are not really part of the event, and the most usual of these is the old fashioned Fun Fair. There was one at Sutton Park and it was near where the coaches shed their loads. A certain Pack noticed this as soon as they had disembarked and before the Akela (male) could say a word there was a shout "Tippee, a fair" and off they went with Akela in pursuit. (When the party assembled again at the end of the day for the homeward journey the said Pack were there in force, tired but happy - many of them having had a lovely day - at the fair. Akela was also tired but not so happy). Another by-product of such events are the 'weather reports'. On the night preceeding one of the Bedford visits there had been a rather heavy thunder-storm and the morning papers carried a report of how most of the Jamboree camp had been washed out. On arrival certainly a few puddles could be seen but the camp seemed quite intact. On enquiry at one of the oriental camps "How did you get on in the rain last night?" the reply received was "What rain?". (So much for News Reports). Some of the visitors did manage to make a systematic tour of the Sub-Camps (although not all in one day) and this entailed passing through 'open spaces' between the Sub-camps, and several parties of 'Teddy-boys' in their Edwardian clothes were noticed. This was the 'in' fashion of the time and it has really little to do with the Jamboree but it did bring to notice the fact that fashions in the Scout Uniform were also changing, which of course is inevitable after fifty years. So too were methods of camping. Gone was the bell-tent to make room for the several types of ridge-tent; gone was the old type of wood fire, to make way for the altar fire and various gas and spirit fires. Gone too was the 'trench table' to be replaced by trellis or tree-able tables. And most camps had a dining shelter. Several 'new' nations had appeared, several 'old' ones were missing. It was a pleasant surprise, therefore, to see in one Sub-Camp a bunch of flags (Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Russia) flying. This was a 'guest' contingent under C.S.A.I.E. (Council of Scout Associations in Exile, and Polish Scouts in Exile).

One Sub-Camp (Bed-Isehl) was entirely given over to the Rover Scouts for the World Rover Moot (~~two~~ representatives from Bedford attended) and another Sub-Camp (Niagara-on-the-Lake) was occupied by delegates to the World Scouters' Idé-aba (Bedford had four representatives).

Scouts have often been asked to help at Kempston Show - in mid-August - but this year were allocated a 'Show Stand' and a Model Camp was erected, with a display of badges and flags of the Scouting Nations of the world. This actually did a useful bit of 'Scouter' recruiting.

1958 was the Jubilee year of local Scouting and to commemorate their fifty years unbroken service the 1st.Beds.(Onesters) had new gates to their Headquarters at Fenlake, the opening ceremony being performed by the D.C.(John Dew). As well as being pioneers of Scouting in Bedford the Onesters were also one of the pioneers of building projects.. After years of wandering from one temporary headquarters to another, meeting in lofts, warehouses and schoolrooms, they purchased a piece of land at Fenlake and started to build their own headquarters. This was in 1932. Round about the same time another 'pioneer' Group @ 7th.Beds.(Kempston) erected their own hut on Chantry Estate. As mentioned previously, in the early days a Troop was considered very fortunate to have exclusive use of any building. Sponsored Groups were not greatly troubled in this respect for it was the duty of the Sponsoring Authority to find accommodation, and up to the time of the second world war only two other Groups, 61st.(Wootton) and 15th.(at Elstow) had built their own headquarters. (90th. and 94th. had also converted existing buildings to very good use). This situation persisted for some years after the war, but one of the new trends in Scouting was for a Group to have its own headquarters. (Actually this is not exactly new - it had been in 'Rules' since the early days). But now Groups were becoming better equipped and more inclined to tackle the problem. In 1958 the 41st.Beds.(Bedford Roman Catholic) Group erected their own hut in Tucker's Field, Elstow - close by that of the 15th.Beds, and in 1961 the 8th.Beds (Queen's Park) saw a building project come to fruition when their headquarters at Cox's Pits was declared open. (This Group had previously converted some huts on the Gas Works' property to good effect). In 1963 no fewer than three Headquarters were opened - 105th.Beds (Putnoe) in February, 94th.Beds (Sea Scouts) at Granville Street, in April, and the 20th.Beds (Goldington) in May, and several others were under way. Unfortunately due to technicalities, oversight -or both, the 8th and 94th. soon found themselves having to restart from scratch.

The 15th: too, had to make a fresh start after their headquarters was burnt down during the December of 1967.

1956-1957 was also a year of progress, remarkable chiefly for an all round increase in membership, which now topped the elusive 1,000 mark, the figure at the 1957 census being 1,055 (Actually the thousand mark had once previously been exceeded during the war, but this was due to the arrival of many evacuees - including two large school Troops). The Association had never before reached the thousand Membership off its own bat.

This increase continued steadily over the next ten years and at the 1966 Census, the last taken as a single District (or Division as it had become) stood at 1,300. Several new Groups had been registered and about an equal number disbanded (See Census). One of the oldest Groups in the county - 7th.Beds:(Kempston) broke its continuity record, being disbanded in 1959. It was, however, re-formed in 1962. At one period - 1958 to 1961 - twenty-seven Groups were in operation. It was around this time that suggestions were made about dividing up the District into smaller Sub-districts and in 1960 - 61 an experimental scheme was devised. The Local Association was split up into four Districts each under an Assistant District Commissioner plus a Schools and Handicapped Scouts section under the care of the District Commissioner. These Districts were :-

North-Eastern (Area North of river and east of High Street) A.D.C. G. Strong;

20th.Beds: (Goldington);	27th.Beds: (St.Peter's);	37th.Beds: (St.Andrew's)
90th " (Bunyan);	105th " (Putnoe);	115th " (Kewham)
41st " (Bedford R.C. "B")		

North-Western (Area north of the river and west of High Street) A.D.C. G. L. Hawker.

6th.Beds: (Holy Trinity);	8th.Beds: (Queen's Park);	11th.Beds: (St.Paul's)
19th " (St.Martins);	29th " (St.Loyes);	87th " (Salv. Army)

South-Eastern (Area south of river and east of railway) A.D.C. W. F. Gaunt.

1st.Beds: (Onesters);	4th.Beds: (St.Mary's);	12th.Beds: (St.Michael's);
15th " (Fifteenth);	41st " (R.C. "A");	78th " (Cardington);
94th " (Sea Scouts).		

South-Western (Area south of river, west of railway and outlying district) A.D.C. H. Coy.

36th.Beds: (Wharley End);	49th.Beds (Cranfield);	61st.Beds: (Wootton);
101st " (Kempston C of B)	104th " (Marston).	

Schools (and H.C.) - D.C. John Dew.

18th.Beds: (B.M.S);	40th.Beds: (Stewartby Sch.);	69th. Beds: (Bromham House)
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These boundaries were, of course, only approximate and the scheme experimental ^{and} ~~but~~ it worked quite well in the North-East and South-East 'divisions' but not so well in the others. The Divisions, with slight amendments, were officially accepted in 1961 when Bedford Local Association became a Sub-County (or, later, a County Division) consisting of four Districts. (Much confusion was caused when the District became known as a 'Division' and the Divisions and 'Districts'. It took some time before these new titles were finally sorted out).

North-East District was launched as a Pilot Scheme, becoming an autonomous district with its own District Commissioner (Mr. S. Ward) and to a large extent became responsible for its own organisation with L. A. Executive and sub-committees. (The 41st. Beds: (Bedford Roman Catholic "B") had now been re-registered as 118th. Beds: (Holy Cross) and continued to operate in N.E. District).

In September of 1963 Bedford South-East District had its inaugural meeting and formed its own L.A. Executive, sub-committees etc. with Mr. L. J. Pestell as District Commissioner. By this time three of the Groups in 'North-West' had been disbanded so the remaining three were transferred and it was decided to reduce to three Districts instead of four - North, South-East and South-west. This was again reviewed and amended in 1964 when the question of Divisional (or District) boundaries came under discussion, and it was finally decided to keep two Districts Bedford North and Bedford South with the river as the boundary (but again only approximate, 8th Beds - Queens's Park - having been transferred from North-west to SOUTH-west were allowed to remain in South). So from 1964 there were two autonomous Districts in one DIVISION. Each District was responsible for its own Warrants and Finance Committees, in fact most things but the Divisional Executive was still responsible for Building projects and development, Events, and to some extent Finance. This was not always very satisfactory but was necessary because many negotiations were in the name of the 'Bedford and District L.A.', likewise certain subscriptions still came in under the old name. These problems all took time to straighten out but eventually it was accomplished and the Fifty-sixth Annual General Meeting of the Bedford and District Local Association (on 16th. May, 1968) was the last one and the Bedford Division remained in name only.

This, of course, is not the end, merely the close of another phase in Bedford's long Scouting history. Now two complete Districts take the place of the one, and enter the new 'Scout Year' 1968 with confidence. The old Local Association blazed a good trail, the two new ones will follow with equal tenacity.

"Census"1956 - 1968

1 st	Beds. (Cresters)		
4 th	" (St. Mary's C & E)		Disband: 1963-64
6 th	" (Holy Trinity)		" 1963-64
7 th	" (Kempston)	Disband 1959	Re-reg: 1962
8 th	" (Queen's Park)		
11 th	" (St. Paul's C & E)		Disband: 1961
12 th	" (St. Michael's)		
15 th	" (Elstow)		
18 th	" (B.M.S.)		
19 th	" (St. Martin's)		
20 th	" (Goldington)		
23 rd	" (Bromham)	Re-reg 1967-68	
27 th	" (St. Peter's Barn)		
29 th	" (St. Lages)	Reg: 1955-56	
36 th	" (Wharley End)	Reg: 1955-56	
37 th	" (St. Andrews)	Reg: 1956-57	
40 th	" (Stewartby School)		Disband: 1961
41 st	" (Bedford R.C.)		" 1963-64
49 th	" (Cranfield)	Reg: 1957	
61 st	" (Wootton)		
69 th	" (Bromham House)		Disband 1963
78 th	" (Caddington)		
87 th	" (Bedford Salvation Army)	Reg: 1957	Disband 1963
90 th	" (Bunyan)		
94 th	" (Sea Scouts)		
101 st	" (Kempston C & E)		
106 th	" (Marston Mortagne)		Disband 1964
105 th	" (Putnoe Methodist)	Reg: 1957-58	
114 th	" (Wilstead)	Re-reg 1967	
115 th	" (Newnham)	Reg: 1958-59	
118 th	" (Holy Cross)	Reg: 1960-61	
136 th	" (Renhold)	Reg: 1962-63	
139 th	" (Clapham)	Reg: 1963-64	
143 rd	" (Brickhill)	Reg: 1963-64	