

## *Revering in Bedford (4)*

### *The War Years - and after*

The general call-up badly hit the Rever Section and for the first few weeks all normal activity was suspended. Some were, of course, able to adapt themselves to conditions and do Revering occasionally in their own district, in other districts or even in the Forces. Some Crews actually started during the war but their existence was precarious and had no continuity. In fact even the 1st.Beds: had to suspend Crew activity for a time and only the 15th. managed to scrape through without a break.

The general opinion was that when the war was over those in the Services would return to Scouting (as they did after the first world war) but this time it was not so and to make matters worse a Rever Advisory Panel had met in December 1944 and had produced a 'New Rever Plan' bringing in an upper age limit (25) - which would now have excluded most pre-war Revers anyway. This did not affect Bedford so seriously as it did Luton - where several well established Crews were faced with the probability of closing down. (At least that was the impression given at the County Meet at Luton in January 1947).

Over the next two decades the struggle was taken up Districtwise, although Crews did manage to retain their identity. Revers were quite well represented at two War-time District Rallies - 1942 and 1944, and District Rever Camps were held at Bromham Park in July (Inter-Crew Competition) and September 1945 and September 1946. In 1946 the 6th.Beds: started a Crew consisting of Forces members but this did not continue for any length of time.

A County Meet was held in Luton in 1947, and Bedford joined Luton in sending a County Contingent to the Eastern Counties Meet at Felsted, Essex in September 1948. County Rever Competitions re-commenced in 1949 with a trek from Ampthill to Milton Ernest - avoiding A & B Class roads - The 1st; and 15th; entered teams, the former obtaining the runners-up Trophy. Oneaters were again runners-up in 1950 (on this occasion the 15th. supplied the winning Leg but did not enter Part II). There was a World Meet in Norway (1949) and County Meet at Luton (February 1950).

Most of the Rever activity, however, was done at Group level and in conjunction with Scouts, and has already been dealt with fairly extensively in the Scouting Record over the period.

Regular District meetings were held right up to the end on many occasions combining with the District Rangers. Together they tackled some very controversial topical subjects, obtaining several interesting speakers with contrasting points of view.

So whilst not entirely successful it was not a time of complete failure. The 'New Rever Plan'(1946) drafted a Training programme under five headings :-  
(a) World Affairs; (b) National Affairs; (c) Cultural Subjects;



(d) Scoutercraft;      (e) Handicrafts, Hobbies and Sports.

This was really quite good but proved rather too ambitious for many, and by the time Revers had learned 'to live with it' along came another Plan - "Rever Organisation and Training" - 1956, which was immediately dubbed "ROT" by its many opponents. This, whilst retaining the 1946 programme greatly tightened up on the upper age limit. It also introduced a new badge - the B.P. Award - as the Rever equivalent of the Queen's Scout. There was also the Project Badge (introduced by the 1946 Plan as the Progress Badge)

This Plan (1956 was the date it was to come into operation) was discussed very thoroughly at the Rever Meet - "Rever Quest in Earnest" - at Milton Ernest in 1953 when the County Commissioner - Captain S. H. Starey introduced three Headquarters Speakers, H. Norman Davey (A.C.C. Revers, Middlesex), Jack Beet (R.S.L. and D.C.C. Middlesex) and G. Kelshaw (Editor of "The Rever Rag"). Incidentally the Meet was well attended :- Three Bedford Crews (1st; 15th; and 94th:), Biggleswade, two Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard, and Luton (as a District). It was very profitable and for a while Reversing, even if not making great strides was certainly progressing steadily and Bedford was represented at the Jamboree-Indaba-MOOT at Sutton Coldfield in 1957.

However, again when it seemed that Revers had adapted themselves to the 1956 Plan along came the Execution (sorry! Advancement) Party Report (1966) and that was the end of the Rever Section of the 'Group'.

As will be gathered much had been done to keep Reversing alive; Training Courses, District and County joint meetings, and quite a few gimmicks, all of which had aroused some interest and served some useful purpose but never was the pre-war enthusiasm regained. All realised we could never go back so we must now look forward to the success of Venture Scouts.

P.S.      The Rever motto "Service" - so often misread, misinterpreted and misused - and in consequence blamed for many failures, gets the last word, for though the Rever Section is no longer in being, the spirit of Reversing is very much in evidence. In some Associations District Auxiliary Service Crews have been formed and constitute an essential part of the 'set up'.