

I (Bruce) joined the cubs in about 1952. Stan - a.k.a. Akela - Childs was assisted by his son Michael (a.k.a. Kim) in the running of the Cubs. They lived in a flat at a large old house called "Fairlight" alongside the Longford River bridge at the junction of Uxbridge Road and Windmill Road.

I became Sixer of Brown Six and then, as I recall, Pack Leader. I lived at 8 Cranmer Road. Others who joined about the same time were Christopher Rogers (Cranmer Road), Richard Baker from Park Road, Alan Martin, John Gidlow. Others will probably come to mind.

While a Cub, I appeared on television! (This was when life was in black and white!) I had to dress up in Finnish National costume and we all marched about at Olympia! I've no idea why! It must have seemed like a good idea to somebody at the time!

I went up in due course to the Scouts. I can't for the life of me remember the Patrol names, could it be "Swan Patrol"? The Scout Troop was run by Chris a.k.a. "Guv" - Wren and his son, Christopher (I know! Believe it or not Guv said he was the 7th! Some people have NO imagination, do they? Guv lived in Links View Road. His other son, Michael, who was younger was also a Scout in time. I rose to Troop Leader. Others involved were David Judge (formerly a Sea Scout with 1st Hampton Hill. 2nd HH were Air Scouts but disbanded before my time), David Best, Robin Ford, Paul Hopkins, John Howlett, Gregory Martin, Butch Champness, Chris Palmer, Brian Goodburn. The problem is I am now quoting familiar names, but I am getting to the stage where I am not sure whether they were familiar as Scouts or school-mates or what.

We camped sometimes at Walton Firs and sometimes at Normandy, near Guildford in Surrey. We went in the back of a furniture van, all hanging over the back waving at motorists! My wife, Jo, is a Guide Leader up here, and previously in Bromley, as was her mother and grandmother, and she says she knows EXACTLY what the Guide Association (or "Girlguiding UK" or whatever name they choose to be known by this week) would say about that! By the time they had finished filling out the Risk Assessment Forms the holiday would be over.

But our favourite local camping place was nicknamed "Paradise Valley" at Hanworth. I never knew if it had a proper name - probably not. We hand-pulled an old trek-cart from "Skip" Casey's garage (alongside the Catholic Church) to the village to load up and then along the Uxbridge Road to what was then called the "Hope & Anchor" after a pub that stood there. You probably know it as Apex Corner.

Then it was left along the road to Sunbury down to Job's Dairy (where they had concrete cows on the lawns at the front) and left again into Nallhead Lane until a sharp bend was reached at the bottom. There we'd turn right down an unmade lane about 3/4 mile long and there, on the left, was Paradise Valley. It was a small tongue of land (sit down while you read the next bit!) between a fast-flowing, unfenced deep water culvert with concrete sides, and the barely fenced Shepperton railway line!

There were absolutely no facilities at all. We had to walk 3/4 mile up to the top of the lane for water and lug it back in billy-cans. Shops were even further. Don't even ask about toilets! Hole in the ground, aim and hope for the best! Cooking STRICTLY over an open, traditional wood fire, with tea made billy-can style (you know, swinging the can?). No artificial aids to getting the fire going, except once when "Ted" Edwards (of whom more later) tipped some baked-bean oil on the fire and it whooshed up. I don't know how many fires I extinguished with baked-bean oil before I was told that what Ted had used was paraffin in a baked-bean can!

We had a small Senior outfit, just one patrol. I was Patrol Leader of the Senior Patrol and Troop Leader. Also in the Senior Patrol were Richard Baker, Chris Rogers, David Judge and a couple of others - about 6 in all. Ted Edwards was our Leader. Funnily enough, Ted's father was called "Edward Edwards" too (see the Wrens above) and so on back, I believe. Ted worked with his father in an Ironmongery Business in Sunbury (E Edwards & Son), which gave us access to an elderly Fordson Thames van that stank of paraffin which was our transport.

I can recall one night when the Senior Patrol went on a night hike. We went down the A3 as far as the Devil's Punchbowl at Hindhead, in a total pea-soup fog. Parking in a lay-by, we decided to cross the road, jump across the ditch and hike off, but then changed our minds, for no apparent reason, and went off the other way. The next morning we saw that if we had just jumped across the ditch we saw, we would have jumped straight into the Punchbowl!

On that occasion, after our hike, we all slept in sleeping bags in the back of Ted's van, until there was a smell of burning fabric, a splashing sound, followed by loud cursing and rapid movement. One of our number had been smoking and had dropped his cigarette, causing his sleeping bag (with him in it) to start smouldering. It was only the quick-thinking (it says here!) of one of the others in dousing the smoker and his bag with about 2 pints of water from his drinking bottle!

We, too, used Jumble Sales to raise money. I am so embarrassed now to recall that what were then complete "White Elephants" such as pianos, oak wardrobes, cane-back and bent-wood chairs and old dining room suites were greeted with groans of dismay.

Worst of all, pianos were ten-a-penny, everyone had one, no-one wanted them. I'm horrified to think back and remember that we used to have to hold "Piano-smashing Competitions" where teams armed with sledgehammers had the task of demolishing unwanted pianos in a race to see who would be first to get the piano demolished until all the bits could be pushed through the middle of a suspended car-tyre. How awful, looking back!

I was also doubling as Assitant Scout Master by then. About my last memory was the planned camping trip to Wales. We all planned to go (the Seniors) but one, then another, fell by the wayside until I was the only one left. Ted, God love him, true to his word, said - "OK, you and I will go then." So my senior Scout Leader and I went camping for a week in Wales. Those were innocent times.

My parents enjoyed being on the Parents' Committee and stayed even after I left. I was wheeled out as a young adult for various (usually fund-raising) functions after that. They were mainly the new-born concept of the "Cheese and Wine Party" (cubes of cheddar and pineapple on a toothpick, served with Liebfraumilch).

Throughout the time I was a member, we always met at the old Parish Hall in School Road. It was Church-owned to start with (Vicar: the Rev. Blunt) but the Scouts took a Lease of it in about 1961. A friend of my father's, a Solicitor from Kingston-upon-Thames called Leslie Golding (later of Rigby Golding & Co of Sunbury) did the legal work and was presented with the Scout Thanks Badge after that. This was a total (but well-intentioned) stitch-up, because my parents wheeled me out to attend, and before the night was over, I had been interviewed by Leslie Golding and offered Articles of Clerkship ... a cunning plan, Baldrick!

We had our summer Fete at Laurel Dene, on the road down to Teddington.

One last story before I finish. A member of the Parents' Committee was Ron Cook. He lived at 9 Myrtle Grove (down towards Westbank Road). He was a spitting image of the trade-union leader played by Peter Sellers in "I'm Alright, Jack". I think he was ex-Army. He was poker-straight and had a fierce bristling moustache. The parents took it in turns to have meetings at their houses by rotation or other arrangement.

Clearly, there must have been an "other arrangement" by which it was Ron's turn (oh, yes, and his placid, downtrodden wife, read on!) to host the meeting. He had clearly forgotten all about this, because of his look of shock as the first parents arrived. But he wouldn't admit it. Not our Ron. By then he must have remembered, but he couldn't bring himself to admit to "the wife" that he'd forgotten to tell her about it.

As their numbers grew, absent any explanation by Ron, she eventually said: "Ron, what are all these people doing here?" to which our hero replied: "It's a Committee Meeting.". She replied: "But Ron ... why didn't you tell me?" He responded with brusqueness: "I don't have to tell you EVERYTHING, do I, woman?!"