

1940's commentary - 12th Portobello

Part 1 – the war years, 1940-1945

The 1940's commenced with Britain very much at War; pupils would have been aware of Air Raid shelters and probably air raid alarms, so any form of scouting would have been conducted under strict and difficult conditions, but would have been a great relief from the otherwise restricted and humdrum conditions.

The 1939 Christmas edition of Schola Regia advised that all Scout activities had been rendered impossible, due to the school gymnasium being off limits for scouts, Jock's lodge having been requisitioned by the ARP, and Assistant Scoutmasters Gibb and Drever enlisting in the armed forces.

The Easter 1940 Schola Regia however reported that meetings had resumed, with morse code and first aid training foremost. Sadly, Dr Donaldson had joined the ranks of unavailable leaders.

Summer 1940 saw an increase in scout activity, with troop being placed in two district competitions, and a meeting being held with the Davidsons Mains group. The group heard with sadness the war deaths of two former scouts, Vivian Pearce and Victor Falconer. It would appear that the 1940 camp did not take place, presumably due to logistics and security issues.

Christmas 1940 saw meetings being held during blackouts, and sadly cubs being unable to take part in the 'going up' ceremony.

The 1941 Easter magazine reported that David Cowan (the subject of a separate report) had been responsible for the creation of a totem pole for the cubs.

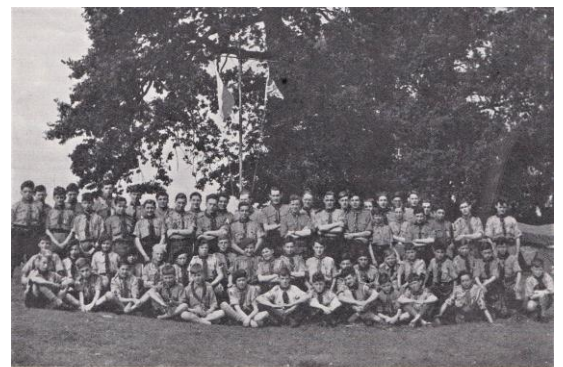
1941 Summer reported several weekend camps, also the likelihood of a summer camp at Humbie. The troop retained the District Shield and Flag. The troop leader was named as D S Henderson.

The 1941 Christmas edition stated that both cubs and parents had visited the scouts at their Humbie camp. It was with pride that the troop, having won the district flag was entered for the county competition, and also won that competition. The troop was forty strong at this time, and still hampered by the blackout.

In early 1942, three ex-scouts, by then in the forces visited the troop. Rector James Robertson (later Sir James), a great supporter of the troop, visited just before his departure for Aberdeen grammar school. The photo above shows him with the scouts in the Regent Road gymnasium.



By early 1943, the troop was eighty strong, and at the annual camp at Newtyle (see photograph on right), sixty-eight scouts and leaders attended. There was a Polish patrol, presumably consisting of some of the many (exiled) Poles who attended the school from 1942 onwards, and the troop had split into two separate units. It was also reported that former scout leader Andrew Brown had been killed in a flying accident in Canada while on active service. The group strength was 80, and an Air Scout section had been started.

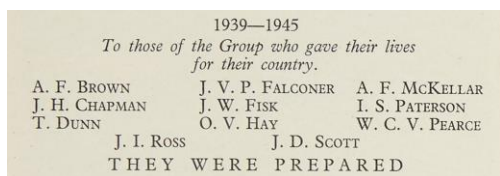


12th Portobello (Royal High School) Scout Troop Summer Camp, Newtyle, 1943

1944 saw an increase in the troop's strength to 120, and the Rover Scout section was mentioned for the first time, keenly seeking accommodation for their meetings. The summer camp was held at Carrington near Gorebridge. By Christmas, it was noted that there were two land scout and one sea scout troop, along with a Rover crew. By Easter 1945, it was noted that networking with guides had been introduced in the form of meetings with guides from St Cuthbert's Church and Mary Erskine school, and the troops boasted no fewer than nine Kings Scouts.

Following VE day in May 1945, the various troop activities increased, and returning scout leaders presumably found themselves in demand. A memorial service for the Scout Group was held in the school hall on 12th October, marking a symbolic new start for scouting. Scoutmaster Sandy Gibb returned from active service, and the Parents Committee, first formed in 1943, got a welcome mention in its role as a fund raiser and great supporter of scout activities.

Part 2 – the post-war years, 1946-1949



The general mood improves vastly; no more blackouts, and scout leaders begin to return from wartime duties, although as can be seen from the Roll of Honour, tragically eleven former scouts did not return.

The following references are principally from Schola Regia editions.

1945 Summer - The Rover crew are busy decorating their den, while thanks are due to the Group Committee and Parent's association for the support they provide.

1945 Christmas - A memorial service for the scout group was held in the school hall. Scout leader Sandy Gibb returned from war Service, and the scouts formed a guard of honour at his wedding.

1946 Summer The 'B' troop won the district shield and flag; and our sea scouts came third. Summer camps will be held at Dunkeld.

1946 Christmas (Cubs). Miss Henderson has resigned as Cubmaster after 15 years of service. Miss Roy, Miss Brown and Mr Andrew Smith will help in the meantime. (Scouts) - Ian Adam led the summer camp. No fewer than five major events were planned for the coming year. Five of our troop were at a jamboree in France, and the Rover Crew is led by Ian Hutchison. Note that in the Group photo (shown above) taken in 1946 at Jocks lodge shows around 120 personnel.



1947 Easter. Over 200 dancers in costume attended the Christmas fancy dress ball. Easter camps will be run as usual. The Memorial Hall fund is increasing in value. 1947 Summer. The Chief scout recently presented Miss Hamilton and Miss Henderson with the Medal of Merit. Many group members will volunteer at the Edinburgh festival. 1947 Christmas. Scouter Ian Adam led the scouts at the annual camp at Dunkeld. The group committee are planning no fewer than five major events in the first half of 1948.



1948 Easter A Fancy-Dress ball attended by over 200 was held at the school. Other events include a Burns supper, the May Fair and 'Smiling Along'. The Summer camp will take the form of a hostelling holiday in France and Switzerland (see photograph). 1948 Easter (Cubs). Three Sea Scouts, messers Cruickshank, Henriksen and Gibb are assisting as Cub Instructors. Pack members took Christmas gifts to the Home for Young Children in Willowbrae road.

1949 Christmas. The Memorial Hall (the new Group HQ) in Tower Street was opened by Lord Glentanar on 15th October. The guard of honour and the unveiling of the memorial plaque are shown here. Many members of the group and the parents committee were thanked for fund-raising. Mr Adamson (a teacher) has been helping with training the Sea scouts.



LORD GLENTANAR INSPECTING THE GUARD OF HONOUR. LORD GLENTANAR IS FOLLOWED BY MR J. P. SMALL, SCOUTMASTER

1949 Christmas (Cubs). Miss Johan Rhind joined Miss Hamilton and Miss Roy in the running of the pack, which now has a waiting list.



Documents supporting this commentary include Schola Regia extracts (published elsewhere), the Court of Honour minute books, 1931-1944 and 1944-1952, the 1947 Peewit patrol logbook, and the account of the August 1948 Scout (and Sea Scout) camp to France and Switzerland.

