

12th Portobello (RHS) Reminiscences

Rob Lawrie

Rob on 12th Portobello Campsites, 1952 to 1970

The first summer camp I attended as a scout was, I think, in 1952. It was held on the shore of St Mary's Loch.

I remember another camp at Clovenfords (1955), and one at Kelso (1951).

In 1957 I attended the **World Jubilee Jamboree, Indaba and Moot** at Sutton Coldfield. I was Troop Leader of the Edinburgh and Leith contingent - which also included Barry Gilliatt and (I think) Alex Thomson - (unsure of others from the Twelfth - sorry). One name I remember is Leonard Darling from another Edinburgh Troop (he appears in a photo on the right with Barry and I).

I should explain that a Jamboree is a meeting of Scouts, an Indaba is a Conference of Leaders, and a Moot is a meeting of Rover Scouts. I still have three First Day Covers and a complete set of ten copies of the camp Newspaper (Bound size. 14 ins by 20 ins).



In 1961 the SS camped at Newtyle Farm, Dunkeld. At this camp a parent (Jim Dallas' dad) arrived with Chips for everyone in camp).

1962 Kailzie with the Sea Scouts, and Ruchlaw Mains Peebles, with the land Scouts (photo on left, me with Gordon Burt and Eric Sprigg)

1963 Edinample, Lochearnhead. Twelfth Knight (under oars)

1964 Duntanlich by Foss. On the South shore of Loch Tummel. (The charge for the 10 night camp was 3 pounds 10 pence). The land scouts were camped on the opposite shore.

In 1965 We attended the Scottish National Sea Scout Camp at Connel Bridge (The camp was in Dunstaffnage bay). There was also a weekend camp on Loch Goil at a site called "Swine Hole". It was plagued by masses of midges.

1966 Easter Dunkeld, Craiglush Lodge. (Fee - 4 Pounds per head)

1967 Morenish Farm. On the North shore of Loch Tay.

(I "retired" about this time).

1968 On the West side of Loch Ken "Ringower". Scouts and Sea Scouts camped together.

1969 Loch Tummel.

1970 Loch Ken - Ken Ervie (opposite site from 1968) (Both Troops)

How the 12th Portobello Sea Scouts built their Boat

I think it was about 1957 when Walter Thompson and I became Sea Scout leaders. The photo on the left shows



Walter and I at the Annual camp of 1961 at Newtyle Farm, Dunkeld, with some of the parents and families on visitors' day.

It was shortly after that, at a Scouters Conference (held annually in Perth) that the suggestion that the 12 Portobello Sea Scouts might build their own boat, was "floated". During a casual conversation which I had with a Scout Commissioner

(sorry, but I do not remember his name), he asked about the troop's water activities. I said that, although we were lucky enough to have

weekly access to the school swimming pool we did not have any sailing boats. It was then that he asked if we had considered building our own boat. Since I have

no experience (and little aptitude) in such matters my reply was an emphatic "No".

However, he went on to suggest that he might be able to arrange for an experienced boat-builder to run an evening class (in Portobello) provided we could supply about 10 older scouts who would attend the class regularly. Only a

few weeks later, true to his word, an evening class was arranged for a Monday night at The Ramsay Technical College in Portobello (probably 1961). The Course tutor was a Mr McInven (an elderly but quite jocular Scot). I don't think we ever had 10 scouts at the class but about 8 (scouters and sea scouts) did attend regularly for (I think) two terms.



How many sea scouts does it take to fit a clench? In the photo on the left, Ian Hood and Graham Addison watch closely as Sandy Johnstone (inside the boat), Stuart McNair and Alan Walkinshaw (I think) combine to fit the clench. Mr McInven had been provided with building plans for a R.N.S.A. dinghy - (Royal Navy Sailing Auxiliary - which is a 14 ft long Clinker-built dinghy widely used for naval cadet training). Traditionally this craft carries a Gaff rig - one which uses spars which are short enough to be stored inside the boat when the sails are not in use. However, the decision was taken for us to use a Bermudan rig (a triangular sail using a 25 ft tall mast) instead, as this is recognized to be a more efficient sailing rig. The hull of a Clinker built boat is built

with each plank overlapping and riveted to the one below it. It was also decided to try to increase the stability of the vessel (to assist learner sailors) by making some of the planks a little wider than was called for in the plans. All the very technical work like laying the keel, splicing two spars together to make the 25 ft mast etc were done by Mr McInven during the week, leaving the less skilled work (like riveting) for the scouts to do on the class night. Riveting is the term for securing the planks and the ribs together. It means drilling a hole through the planks, inserting a 4-inch-long copper nail (called a clench), fitting a copper washer, hammering it tight and filing it to a smooth finish. There were about 250 of these to be fitted!

Special items, like the very heavy galvanised iron "drop keel" and the rudder were "acquired" from Naval sources. Brass tracks (for the sails) were fitted to the mast and boom. Many other items were also acquired and fitted (a winch for raising the keel, wire shrouds to support the mast, a gooseneck, kicking strap and blocks, oars, fairleads and cleats. Traditionally the dinghy would have had metal buoyancy tanks, but instead we fitted the more modern inflatable plastic bags.

The choice of a name for our creation was not difficult. It seems that, for several years "12th Knight" had been the name of our various entries for the annual Scout "Soap Box Derby" (a race for home built carts).

The completed boat was transported to our sailing base at Fisherrow harbour (Musselburgh) and a mooring was laid near the east wall. At first the boat was used under oars only. The picture on the above right (circa 1963) shows Robin Caton and Ian Hood providing the power while Jim Dallas steers.



A set of Bermudan sails, once used on a Redwing Dinghy was acquired and soon we were participating in sailing races organized by the Fisherrow Yacht Club. Both sails were white and the mainsail bore a large letter "R" at its head. Visible aboard Twelfth Knight in the photo on the left are Walter Thomson, John Dinnie and Hamish Johnstone.

