

The Hendersons and the 12th Portobello (RHS) Scout Group

The Hendersons' involvement with the 12th Portobello (RHS) Scout Group spans most of the period that the "RHS" badge applied. These are my recollections, such as I know and recall, of the involvement with the 12th of my father Stuart, my brother Graham and myself, Douglas.

Stuart Henderson

Stuart must have joined very early in the history of the Group, possibly joining as a Wolf Cub within a year or two of the Group starting. As a Scout he was in B Troop and was Troop Leader in 1941 – the 1942 Troop photo shows him holding the flag in the centre. Just over a year later he was enlisted and his training and involvement in the later stages of the 2nd World War curtailed involvement with the Group at that time. Evidence from this project shows that he re-engaged with the Scouts in the late 1940s, acting as Quartermaster and Chief Cook at the 1947 Camp at Butterstone and attending the 1948 camp to France and Switzerland.

Around the end of the 1960s Stuart built a canvas kayak in our garage (Otter), just in time for fibreglass construction to take over and render it obsolete, hey ho!

As a father of 2 boys in the Group, Stuart acted as Group Quartermaster for a few years in the 1970s, looking after all the kit stored either under the floor of the gym hall or latterly in the old toilet (bog seems a more "Scouty" term for it) in the playground at Jock's Lodge.

Graham Henderson

Graham, my elder brother, was a Cub, Scout and Cub Leader (Baloo) within the Group. His nickname (we all had to have one) at camp was Prince William of Orange although he was more commonly known as Willie. Being six years older than me we were never in any of the sections at the same time, until such times as I became a Venture Scout/Assistant Leader.

Sometime around the mid-1970s Graham produced the camp song book and played his guitar at campfires. I do recall that the use of the books led to a vastly increased range of songs in the repertoire.



Douglas Henderson

I was a Cub, Scout, Venture Scout and Assistant Cub Leader with the 12th. I don't recall all that much about my time as a Cub. I think I joined just at the end of the Miss Hamilton era, and Eric Sprigg was Akela. I do remember a visit to the cottage at Lauder, Drummond Hall, and falling from an upturned tree root into the massive river (a stream really but at that age, everything seemed bigger than it was) whilst trying to gather wood.

I was in the Land Scouts initially but during my years in the Scout troop we transitioned to become Sea Scouts. Gordon McConachie and Jim Dallas were the main Leaders at the time. The patrols all had different names and I recall being associated with the Springbok patrol.

The Scouts provided me with a fantastic range of activities of which I have fond memories and am very grateful. These included canoeing (kayaking really), skiing – including day trips to Glenshee or Glencoe and week-long camps staying at the Boat of Garden caravans and Aviemore chalets. My first skiing experience was being taught snowplough by Gordon in the dense fog at the top of Cairngorm. It was day four before I could see more than 20 yards ahead of me.

I really enjoyed the other activities we did such as Operation Albatross which I did as a Scout and led as a Venture Scout. Other memories are things like Wide games in town, and sausage sizzles on the top of Arthur's Seat in the pitch dark.



The Summer Camps that I was at were 1970 (Loch Ken), 71 (Penpont), 72 (Loch Tummel), 73 (Earlstoun Loch, Dalry) & 74 (St Fillans) as a Scout and several more as an Assistant Leader.

I loved playing plate golf (I only disposed of my last plate a few years ago!) and a highlight of that was the Humble Cup where the Leaders played the scouts. If I remember correctly, the winners had the dubious pleasure of drinking Dandelion and Burdock out of the cup.

Other fond memories of the summer camps were things like the Horace Hunt, the leaders always seemed to find the scouts, and for a few years there was a competition to see how many people we could get into a telephone box!

One of the more serious incidents that I recall was a rescue being mounted for Alan Wardrop at Dalry, when he got stuck on a rock in the river due to the rapidly rising water level when the upstream hydroelectric plant got turned on at tea-time!

Another opportunity that the Scouts afforded me was sailing, at the later camps and at Fisherrow. I recall going out in the dinghy one blustery day with Eric Turnbull, and as we came out of the harbour wall, we got blown rapidly towards the shore only to capsize before we got there. How we ever got the dinghy the right way up without damaging it I have no idea – don't tell Jim!

I was in the patrol who won the District Competition and the County Competition in 1972, the first time the 12th had won the County since 1941. Led by Colin Watson, the patrol also contained Donald Johnstone, Malcolm McLean, myself, Alan Wardrop and Scott Murray.

Two years later, when I was PL, we won the District Competition, the first of a winning run of at least 4 times apparently. I vaguely recall also being part of a patrol in 1971 or thereabouts but quite frankly mostly recall having no idea what was happening the whole weekend.



I also enjoyed being part of the Venture Scouts with Alan Buchan as the Leader. We ran operation Albatross a few times and we did some long walks on Arran and Rannoch Moor (some of Rob Lawrie's photos show these). Sadly, I developed a habit of picking up blisters or groin strains and I'm not sure I completed one yet!

I recall that the Venture Scouts also had annual Christmas dinners at various hotels. The menus were no doubt standard 1970s fare such as prawn cocktail, chicken supreme and black forest gateau!

After Venture Scouts I remained involved for a few years as an Assistant Cub Leader when Graham Dodds was Akela – I was also Baloo, I think.

Both my sons, Scott and Alan, attended Beavers and Cubs at the 5th Portobello Scout Group based at Duddingston Primary School, their leader being Michael Halcrow, linking back to the 12th Portobello.

My thanks to all the Leaders who gave up their time and taught me a wide range of activities and life-skills.

Douglas Henderson, January 2023