

# A HISTORY OF ROMFORD SCOUTING

1908-1997.

(Minor updates 2013, 2014 & 2018)



Compiled by John "Bunny" Warren, *District Archivist*.

*A HISTORY OF ROMFORD SCOUTING.*

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*Revised and expanded 2013, 2014 & 2018 by Mark Hutton.*

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It should be noted that until 1966 Romford was part of the County of Essex, then, by virtue of the London Government Act 1963, it became part of the County of Greater London. For Scout purposes this huge conurbation was divided into seven parts, and we became part of Greater London North-east.

In the early days, Romford Local Association embraced Hornchurch, Upminster, Harold Wood, a branch of the 2nd Romford at Newbury Park, possibly Dagenham and Chadwell Heath and even Navestock Side. Some, but not all, Hornchurch Troops became a separate District in the 'Thirties, and in 1948 the District was further divided, the 3rd and 5th Romford, 1st Emerson Park, 1st Ardleigh Green, 1st and 2nd Gidea Park and 1st and 3rd Harold Wood becoming "Squirrels Heath". References to these Groups therefore disappear from this history after that date.

Readers may be a little confused by apparently random use, above and in the earlier Chapters, of the terms "District" and "Local Association". A Local Association was a body which fulfilled more or less the same functions as today's District Executive with its sub-committees, with the proviso that a L.A. was not necessarily co-terminus with a District, and a District might include more than one L.A. Indeed, until 1926, when we became a District in our own right, Romford was in Mid-Essex and Romford District which included Local Associations in Romford, Brentwood, Chelmsford and Billericay. The situation arose again in 1947 when Squirrels Heath was, for a few months, a separate L.A. within Romford District before becoming a separate District. This untidiness was abolished by the Chief Scout's Advance Party (see Chapter 6).

## ABBREVIATIONS

LH.QJH.Q	Imperial Headquarters/Headquarters from 1961
D.H.Q.	District Headquarters.
L.A.	Local Association.
P.O.R.	<i>Policy, Organisation and Rules</i> . Each Group was provided with a free copy of the current (1995) edition, and further copies may be bought from the Scout Shop.
D.C	District Commissioner.
A.D.C.	Assistant District Commissioner. [N.B. Since the Twenties, A. D.Cs have generally been appointed for specific sections or specific duties e.g. A.D.C. (Scouts), A.D.C. (Leader Training). These are normally stated in full in the text.]
G.S.M./G.S.L.	Group Scoutmaster/Group Scout Leader from 1967.
S.M./S.L.	Scoutmaster/Scout Leader from 1967.
S.M.(S)	Scoutmaster (Senior Scouts).
C.M./C.S.L.	Cubmaster (male or female)/Cub Scout Leader from 1967.
R.S.L.	Rover Scout Leader.
V.S.L.	Venture Scout Leader (from 1967)
BSL.	Beaver Scout Leader (from 1983)
“A”	before any of the above    Assistant.
“A”	before any of the above    Acting
“D”	before any of the above    District. E.g. District Scout Leader.

[For the benefit of the uninitiated, a D.S.L. (e.g.) is, in effect, an Assistant A.D.C. for a specific section.]

P.L.	Patrol Leader.
P.2nd/A.P.L.	Patrol Second/Assistant Patrol Leader from 1967.
P.L.(S)	Patrol Leader (Senior Scouts) to 1967. <i>Not</i> Senior Patrol Leader.
T.L./S.P.L	Troop Leader/Senior Patrol Leader from 1967.
Sixer.	Leader of a “Six’ in Wolf Cubs. Unchanged in 1967.
“Scouter”	is a generic term to cover warranted leaders of any rank.
“Cubber”	was a somewhat inelegant term once sometimes used to cover all Wolf Cub Leaders in the same way. It is not used in this volume.

*“If you ignore history, YOU are condemned to relive it”*

Claire Rayner  
On radio 2, 16/8/95.

# A HISTORY OF ROMFORD SCOUTING

## PREFACE

In January 1908, a new publication appeared on the bookstalls of the United Kingdom. Titled "Scouting for Boys", written by Lieut. General R.S.S. Baden-Powell, and priced at four old pence (about 1½ pence in today's money), it was the first of a series of fortnightly parts which were to revolutionise life for millions of boys and girls throughout the world.

This book is the story of the impact which this publication, and the movement which it started, had upon the boys of Romford. It updates and expands upon the short history of Romford District written by Joan Walker in 1982 and is written not simply for nostalgia but so that future generations can, hopefully, learn something from the events of the past: may avoid making the same mistakes all over again, and, more positively, discover that some forgotten successes will stand up to another try.

For the over-riding impression which the author has gained from his research, and from over fifty years' membership of Romford District, is that, in spite of two world wars and huge developments in technology in the latter years of the century, beneath the surface the needs and aspirations of boys have changed very little.

So many people have played their part in these 90 years that it has been difficult to decide who to include, and who not. In some cases, mention or otherwise has been dictated by the availability of sufficient material - committee minutes read 30 or 40 years on can be quite maddening and, as a historian, it would be wrong of me to rely on memory. For the same reason some events may have been omitted. Many of the folk who are not mentioned will, however, play very prominent parts in the histories of the Groups from which they came. A separate register of those who have received awards for good services has been compiled and is available for reference at the District H.Q.

I will be happy to assist those Groups which decide to write their own histories - as some have done - with material which I have gleaned along the way and which may no longer be available in the Groups. I will be especially keen to help any of our younger members who would like to tackle such a project for an award, or as a school project perhaps, or just for fun. If I can set a budding historian on the road to success, I will be a happy.

When Ralph Reader ventured into authorship in 1950, he titled his book "OH, SCOUTING IS A BOY." Making due allowance for the fact that we now have girl members, this would not be at all a bad slogan as we venture into the twenty-first century and, before long, into the second century of Scouting in Romford.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author's thanks are freely offered to all those members of the present District Association who have come forth with reminiscences and with artefacts for the District archives. Some of these artefacts have been shown on training courses and it is hoped to display them more permanently in due course. Acknowledgement of published material has been made in the text as it arises, but I would also like to thank Paul Moynihan, Archivist at Headquarters, and the staffs at Romford Central Reference Library and time Public Record office for their help.

## 1 - EARLY DAYS

In 1908, the year in which *Scouting for Boys* was published, Romford was a relatively unimportant market town in the countryside which surrounded the growing sprawl of London. The Great Eastern Railway had already started to have an impact on the "country town" image of Romford and with an eye to commuter business they were to play a prominent part in the establishment of the Gidea Park estate, but the growth of Romford to its present size was still very much in the future.

Nevertheless before the year was out, a Troop (later to be known as the 1st Romford) was formed at St. Edwards School (then in the Market Place) and on 16th December 1908 a sub-committee of the Trinity Guild at Trinity Methodist Church resolved that a Troop of Boy Scouts be formed" and to ask Mr. F. W. Ashby to be it's Scoutmaster. This Troop was, in fact formed, and became the 2nd Romford. The Scoutmaster of the 1st Romford was D.C. Mackness and his Assistant was F. Hay-Davies who later became District Chairman. F.W. Ashby did become Scoutmaster of the 2nd Romford, and he later became District Commissioner.

The constitution of the 2nd Romford Troop (reproduced in their Jubilee Year souvenir booklet, 1958) refers to sections to be formed at Newbury Park, Hornchurch, Squirrels Heath and Park Lane. The Newbury Park section certainly existed until 1938 (in the early days under their "Scoutmistress" Mrs. N. Shelford) when they became a separate Group in Ilford District. A Park Lane section was in existence in 1917, when they combined with the 1st Romford to hold a Concert at the Corn Exchange in aid of their funds. It is possible, but unconfirmed at present, that this section eventually became the 1st Hornchurch. Whether the Hornchurch and Squirrels Heath sections were formed or whether the Troops in those places started life as independent Troops, is not known.

### STIRRING TIMES

Writing in 1935, Mr. Ashby explains how "Twenty-six years ago" (i.e. in 1909) two lone Scouters (presumably himself and Mr. Mackness):

*"..without much knowledge of Scouting, or its requirements, met one evening for a chat on the work and its possibilities, with the two Troops working without rules or regulations and doing very much as they pleased. The outcome of the chat was a visit to Headquarters and an interview with the Chief Scout's Secretary, Mr. Eric Walker, and one of the Scouters coming back with a Warrant as one of the first Essex Scouters, and a*

*week or two afterwards the Romford and District Boy Scouts' Association was born. The Executive consisted of two Scouters and four assistants. What stirring times - boys shouted and ridiculed and pelted with all kinds of things - but what times we had! 1st Romford with 40 and 2nd Romford with 60, the two oldest Groups thus formed have always had the closest friendship with each other even to this day We thought it a great day when the third Group was formed and when the Association obtained its first Secretary One of the first officers was the Rev Charles Steer, who was afterwards our own District Commissioner."* (Scout Pie 1934/5)

The Directory of Commissioners published quarterly by Headquarters shows that in 1912 we were a part of Mid-Essex and Romford District and our District Commissioner was the Rt. Hon. Lord O'Hagan. Lord O'Hagan lived at Pyrgo, and, according to "Who Was Who" he founded a battery of Royal Horse Artillery in the 1st World War and was invalided out in 1918. He was still in Romford in 1921, but subsequently lived in Hampshire and became Deputy Speaker and Deputy Chairman of the House of Lords. During 1918 and 1919 J. O. Thompson of Chelmsford was Acting D.C.

### A USEFUL BODY OF' INDIVIDUALS

The 3rd Romford Troop (Scoutmaster Percy Weston) was in existence by 1913, and probably much earlier, and during 1913 they were prominent in having their "Parade Orders" published nearly every week in the *Romford Times*. Their Summer Camp at Little Clacton was also fully reported together with a report on a concert held in the hall of the White Hart Hotel in May in aid of their funds, during which the Chairman (Mr. H. Hollebhone, J.P., tenant of Gidea Hall) observed that "The Boy Scouts were in themselves a useful body of individuals, and were a body most attentive to their instructors." He had recently seen them constructing an open-air oven and baking a cake. He also commented on the lack of any Government funding for Scouts, although he thought they deserved every consideration. He supposed the expenses fell to a great extent upon the Scout masters.

### EARLY DAYS

In May, the Troop (the 3rd Romford still) "waited upon Scoutmaster Percy Weston ... to present him with a gold Swastika, the official badge of thanks of the Scout movement". The swastika is a very ancient emblem (the word is Sanskrit in origin) and, according to Tim Jeal [*Baden-Powell*, Hutchinson,

1989], when the German Nazis adopted it as their emblem, B.-P. was reluctant to stop using it, as he had done for nearly thirty years. He finally did so in 1935 when he learnt that holders wearing it whilst travelling in Europe had been assaulted. The full story is told in an article by Stan Lucas, Secretary of the District Scout Fellowship, in *District News*, November 1996.

In 1910-11 B.-P. was a member of the committee which planned the Gidea Park Garden Suburb Exhibition (1911). [Article by R. Lonsdale in *Romford Record* No. 9]

## **SCOUTING OPERATIONS**

An advance notice in the Romford Times during 1913 reads as follows:

*Attention is called to scouting operations taking place in Pyrigo Park on Easter Saturday. Instructions have been sent to all officers in the district, and it is hoped that every Scout will make a special effort to be present. Special and detailed instructions will be given by Scoutmasters to their various Troops, but in the meantime it is as well to know that operations will last from about two to five, followed by tea and camp concert round the camp fire. Not the least enjoyable part of the evening will be yarns from an old South African warrior who was with the Chief Scout in Mafeking. It is anticipated that about 200 Scouts will be engaged, and every Scout should make certain of attending.*

Our own "Baden-Powell" Scouts did not have it all their own way, however. Frequent reports also appeared during 1913 for Romford branches of the Imperial Scout Corps, the British Boy Scouts and the British Girl Scouts' Nursing Corps. These three were evidently associated, since they held a joint camp at Great Warley in May. The "British Boy Scouts" had been started in 1909 as a breakaway movement by leaders who feared, wrongly as Tim Jeal has shown, that B.-P. intended "his" Scouts to be a pre-military force. It achieved considerable early support in London and Birmingham, but from 1912 "entered a period of rapid decline" [Jeal]. The "imps", on the other hand, still existed locally until 1929.

Nor did everyone approve of Scouting. Under the heading "VIGOROUS ATTACK ON SCOUT MOVEMENT" a Mr. H. H. Elvin is reported as condemning Scouting for its militarism and for teaching the young to desecrate Sunday by holding activities on that day. The report relates to Ongar rather than Romford and so is not reproduced in full, but it is interesting to note that, amongst other things, Mr. Elvin said "... any movement which infers that this country has enemies against which

it has to provide is not going on the right lines". Less than a year later, we were at war with Germany.

In August 1913 the Havering and Stapleford Abbots sections of the "Romford Y.M.C.A. Scouts" gave an "interesting display at Pyrigo Park ... under the command of Instructor Hale. The occasion was a tea and entertainment given to the cottagers and workpeople at Pyrigo Park. The display was given on the beautiful lawns of the mansion, and was keenly watched by a company consisting of Lord and Lady O'Hagan, Lady Strachie and the wives and families of the cottagers and workpeople on the estate." "To the parents Lord O'Hagan said that the aim of the Scout movement was not to make soldiers of the boys, but to make them sharper, to make men of them, and to make them useful and helpful to their parents" No other reference to Romford Y.M.C.A. Scouts has surfaced, unless they were the 3rd Romford referred to above.

## **THEN CAME THE WAR**

Mr. Ashby's reminiscences continue:

*"Then came the War. What an appalling tragedy. Scouters and elder Scouts called to the Colours, and all hopes of keeping Troops together seemed an impossibility, the poor Commissioner at his wits' end, every post bringing an S.O.S. for help... Clergymen and others stepped into the breach; many Groups carrying on with Patrol Leaders in charge - glorious fellows, we take our hats off to them. Very few officers returned to their Groups after the War."*

The report of an Empire Day Parade in May 1915 states that only two of the five Troops in the Romford Association were able to attend, It is thought that the two Troops not already mentioned were the 1st Dagenharn (Wesleyan) Troop and the 1st Chadwell Heath. They were certainly both represented at a District meeting in January 1917, and in 1913 "Scoutmaster Ashby of Romford" was reported as having examined sixteen members of the 1st Dagenham Troop for their Second Class badges. Dagenham did not appear in the records as a separate District until March 1925.

## **GUARDING BRIDGES**

By 1915 regular reports of our "rival" originations had disappeared; in their place ever lengthening Lists of local men who had lost their lives "at the front". Parade orders for the 3rd Romford Troop (by now known as "The Greys") continued to appear until mid-1915, when they, too, disappeared. Occasional reports of activities by the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Romford Troops continued to appear, however, and these give hints of war work being carried out

by Scouts. At a concert in aid of the 2nd Romford, for instance, it was reported that "last year there was no camp, the Troop being on duty with other local Troops in guarding the railway etc." The 3rd Romford held a Supper and Distribution of Badges in April 1915, at which "War badges, for Scouts who have done 28 days duty of not less than three hours a day, on actual service in connection with the war, such as guarding bridges, carrying dispatches etc., were awarded to Patrol-Leader Donald McDermott, C.E. Dunlop, J.D. Puddy, B.R. Fox, and R.A. Williams." It is intriguing to note that each Scout attending the 2nd Romford concert was asked to take a new-laid egg, "to be sent to Mrs. Eric Wright for despatch for the use of wounded soldiers". In case it may be thought that "guarding bridges" was simply a game, it should be noted that, at the outbreak of war, there were 80,00 to 100,000 Germans domiciled in Britain and there were fears that they would try to interfere with our communications. [*Edwardian Children* Joanna Smith, Hutchinson 1983; *Baden -Powell*, Tim Jeal]

## **COURAGE**

On February 2nd, 1915, Scout E. Harris of the 2nd Romford was awarded the Silver Cross, but no details have emerged at present. [Source: "My Record Book" published by Headquarters, 1938] This might have been for courage under suffering, since the Cornwell Badge, now awarded for this purpose, was not created until after World War I, in memory of Boy Seaman Jack Cornwell, V.C. (who had been a Scout in Ilford.)

By 1916, references to Scouting had more or less disappeared from the columns of the Romford Times. However, on Easter Monday 1916 "over 30 of the Dagenham Scouts paraded under Scoutmaster Pearcey, and proceeded to Upminster Common, where they were joined by about 200 of the Romford District Scouts and were inspected by Sir Montagu Turner, who congratulated them on their efficiency. Scout games were indulged in, and were much enjoyed". There appear to have been close links between the Romford Troops and the 1st Dagenham (Wesleyan) Troop, which lends support to the previous suggestion that they were one of the five Troops in the Romford Association referred to in the Empire Day Report.

## **TOPS AND TAILS**

In spite of the difficulties created by the war, in particular the shortage of leaders, attention was paid nationally during this period to two age groups at opposite ends of the Scouting spectrum.

To start with, younger boys were wanting to join Scout Troops, but on account of their age were unable to keep up with the older boys. An experimental scheme was begun in 1914 and in December 1916 "The Wolf Cub Handbook" was published.. Wolf Cubs were aged 8 - 11; their programme was based firmly on Kipling's *Jungle Book*, they had their own distinctive uniform and their own motto - "Do Your Best". The boys responded with enthusiasm and by 1928 there were in Romford 180 Wolf Cubs and in 1937, 413. All Groups in Romford except those at the Royal Liberty School and Hylands School formed Wolf Cub Packs and they will figure later in this history.

At the other end of the scale, there were problems with older boys. The Government had established a Cadet force, which attracted some of our older members, and there were fears that membership would be made compulsory for older boys (as it already was in Canada, Australia and South Africa [Tim Jeal]), indeed, in 1909 Lord Haldane (Minister for War) had announced his intention (fortunately not fulfilled) of militarizing youth movements, and B.-P. took strenuous steps to combat this, to the extent of resisting his deputy's suggestion that he should seek War Office recognition for Scouting. It was doubtless, in part, to prove the usefulness of Scouts, that he encouraged the "civilian" war service referred to earlier, and following experiments in some Troops a "Senior Scout Section" was introduced in 1917, with a going-up age of 15. By 1919 this section had been given the name "Rover Scouts", with a uniform similar to the Scout section (but with distinctive trimmings), and a badge scheme suitable to their age. At a later date Rovers were given their own motto - "Service" - which became the driving force of at least one Romford Rover Crew as will be seen in due course. The going-up age was raised, in several stages, rising eventually to 17½, which created a renewed leakage problem as will be seen in the chapter on the Late Forties.

## 2 - THE NINETEEN-TWENTIES

### GROWTH

Very little about Scouting appears in the local paper in the early twenties - we appear to have been about as "good" at publicity as we have been in more recent years and this is surprising, since this must actually have been a busy decade with at least fourteen new Groups started:

- 4th Romford (Salvation Army)
- 5th Romford (but see below)
- 6th Romford (R.C.)
- 7th Romford (Royal Liberty School)
- 8th Romford (St. John's)
- 9th Romford (Royal Liberty School)
- 10th Romford (St. Andrew's, Romford)
- 11th Romford (Royal Liberty School)
- 12th Romford (Royal Liberty School)
- 1st Hornchurch
- 1st Upminster
- 2nd Upminster
- 1st Gidea Park
- 2nd Gidea Park
- 1st Harold Wood.

Two of these Troops had early successes. The 7th Romford was founded in 1923, soon after the school was opened, and in 1926 they won the Essex Scouts Swimming Gala at Chelmsford. The 8th Romford are thought to have started in 1923 and they won a cup for "the best turned-out Troop" in 1924. Early records of the 4th Romford were probably lost when the Salvation Army Youth Hall was destroyed by enemy action in 1944, but it is thought that the Scoutmaster in the mid-twenties was a Mr. Ashman and that the junior section (later Wolf Cubs) were called "Chums".

The early history of the 5th Romford is also uncertain and will be referred to again in the next chapter. Nothing concerning the 3rd Romford has been found after 1915, and it seems reasonable to assume that they were a victim of the war. This title was reused in 1937, but nothing has been found to connect the 1st Hornchurch, to whom it was given, with the original 3rd Romford. The 6th Romford (St. Edwards R.C.) had a rather chequered early history as described in Appendix 1. The 1st Gidea Park, founded by Miss Reid-Wilson (referred to elsewhere) apparently met at Gidea Hall (in what part is not known) until the hall was demolished in 1930.

### OUR MAN IN KHARTOUM

In January 1920 Brigadier-General J. T. Wigan became District Commissioner for Mid-Essex and Romford District, to be replaced in 1921 by Brigadier-General C.H. de Rougemont, CH, CB,

CMG, MVO, DSO, DL, JP. Each Local Association in this District had an A.D.C. who, it is suspected, was effectively D.C. Our A.D.C. was the Reverend Charles Steer M.C., who was Vicar of St. Andrews, Hornchurch. A.D.C. Wolf Cubs from 1923 was Miss D. Reid-Wilson. General de Rougemont, of Coombe Lodge, Great Warley, started his army career in 1885, was wounded and mentioned in despatches at Khartoum, and seven times "mentioned" in World War One. If the year of commencing his service in *Who Was Who* is correct, he was evidently in the relieving force at Khartoum, since the siege itself started in the previous year.

In November 1923, Mr. J. P. Foreman of Hooks Hall, Romford, was granted a Warrant as Commissioner for the newly-formed Dagenham Local Association, and it was presumably at this time that the 1st Dagenham left this Association, if they were, indeed, part of it. There were presumably other Dagenham Troops by then otherwise the establishment of a separate L.A. would seem to be superfluous.

In 1925, the Rev. Steer having left Hornchurch, Major Godfrey Pike of Upminster Court became A.D.C. Romford, but in 1926, following a re-organisation of the County, Romford became a District in its own right, and Major Pike became our first, very own, D.C. Major Pike's service was, however, short, and he was succeeded in 1927 by Lt. Colonel A. M. Turner, DSO, DL.

Boy Scouts and Cubs from local Groups formed a Guard of Honour at the Ardleigh Green railway bridge on 25th March 1925, when H.R.H. Prince Henry (later Duke of Gloucester) came to open the Southend Arterial Road [Article by John Drain in *Romford Record*, vol. 21]

We seem to have recovered from "hiding our light" by the latter half of the decade, and the following reports are culled partly from the pages - usually the front page - of the *Romford Times*

In January 1926 140 Scouts attended tea at Wykeham Hall. Afterwards "through the kindness of Major Godfrey Pike, the District Commissioner for Romford" they were treated to a private cinematograph show. Later, in February, there was a Wolf Cubs' Display at the Carlisle Institute (South Street) which was opened by Lady Gwendobne Colvin, wife of the County Commissioner. The 1st Romford, 2nd Romford, 8th Romford, 1st Gidea Park and 1st Harold Wood Packs attended. In September the District census showed 333 Scouts and Rovers and 181 Wolf Cubs.

## PHYSICAL TRAINING

During the summer of 1926, a District Sports was held at Cottons Recreation Ground, and in September, a District Swimming Gala. In 1925, 1926, 1927 and 1928 a Cup (which survives) was awarded for an "Athletic Dancing Championship" This was won by E.J. Alexander (1925), A.S. Halgath (1926) and J. Wells (1927 and 1928) but whether they were Wolf Cubs or Boy Scouts is not stated. Joan Walker has suggested that "athletic dancing" may have been akin to sword dancing. 1927 began with an Inter-club and Scout Boxing Tournament at the Red Triangle Club (Y.M.C.A., Western Road).

In March 1927 a Thanks Badge was presented to the Chairman of Romford Urban District Council in recognition of various assistance (unspecified) given by the Council; and in April a "St. Georges Day Celebration" was held at the Corn Exchange. This included an address by Sir Harold Downer L.L.B., a member of the Royal Society of St. George, the Scout hymn, prayers, and renewal of Promises followed by "community singing". The Scout hymn referred to would not, at this date, have been the Ralph Reader composition which we sing today, but was probably a very early Scout Hymn composed by W.C. Everett of Colchester, in which each verse is based on one of the Scout Laws. A copy of the words and music is in the District archives. The words are copied below although at the time copies could only be obtained from Mr E. A. Blaxill J.P District Commissioner of Colchester.

1. *FATHER of all! we come to Thee;  
We own Thy care, Thy praise we sing;  
Fill us with truest loyalty  
To Thee, our country, and our king.*
2. *Teach us to speak and do the truth,  
The false in speech and deed to shun,  
So that the honour of our word  
May trusted be by everyone.*
3. *Help us to copy Thee, and do  
The good that lieth near at hand ;  
Thus daily helping, may we learn  
How perfect is Thy law's command.*
4. *O Friend of all, help us to be .  
The friends of all; to understand  
The meaning of true brotherhood  
With every scout, of every land.*
5. *(Courteous to others may we be  
In word and act; true kindness brings  
A love for all God's family,  
A kinship with all living things.)*
6. *Forgive us all the times that we  
Have disobedient been and wrong;  
We would obey Thy holy Will;  
Against temptation make us strong.*

7. *When troubles come, and things go ill,  
Teach us to seek from Thee the grace  
That turns to Heaven a trustful heart,  
And to the World a smiling face*
8. *(Trusting Thy love, we know that We  
From anxious thought and care are freed ;  
Yet we by thrift provision make  
Against our own and others' need.)*
9. *Guard Thou our minds from thoughts impure,  
Our lips from all defilement stay.  
We are Thy knights! O make us strong  
To follow Thee through all life's way. Amen*

In 1927 Syd Feldwick (who first joined the movement as a Scout in Croydon in 1913) came to Romford from Guildford and formed one of the District's first Rover Scout Crews at the 2nd Romford. He became District Rover Scout Leader in 1932, was Group Scoutmaster of the (now defunct) 1st Collier Row Group from 1934-1939 and after war service was Assistant District Commissioner (Rover Scouts) from 1945 to 1958. He and his wife Margaret later became joint managers of the newly formed District Scout Shop.

## BRAVE BOYS

On January 18th 1928 Troop Leader J. F. Wooderson of the 1st Romford was awarded the Silver Cross for bravery. The presentation was made in April by General R.B. Colvin, County Commissioner (Essex) and the *Romford Times* reported: at "Dovercourt last August (Wooderson) dived from the sea wall to rescue a girl who was drowning. Although he was not a strong swimmer, he succeeded in keeping the girl above water until other members of his Troop came to his assistance with ropes".

In September of the same year Cub Sixer J. Cass, 2nd Romford, was awarded the same medal "For rescuing two boys from drowning in the sea at Thorpe Bay" No other details have been found.

## THE GROUP SYSTEM

Prior to 1928, Boy Scout Troops, Wolf Cub Packs and Rover Crews were registered separately, but in that year the Group system was instituted and the newly-formed Groups had to re-register. This was done without regard to the age of the various sections involved, and this accounts for some apparent anomalies in Group registration numbers which survive until today.

It seems that, in those days, parades terminating at St. Edwards Church assembled at Romford Station. There are hints that they then proceeded via Eastern Road, Junction Road and Main Road, but this is not certain. The shorter alternative, of course, was South Street, but even in the Twenties this was quite a busy road. The District Wolf Cubs held an Empire Day Parade starting at the station

in 1928, and the St. Georges Day Parade in 1929 followed the same course.

At a District dinner in January 1928 (attended by the Hon. Charles Rhys, M.P.) the District Commissioner, in replying to a toast, said that "more Scoutmasters were needed."

### ACROSS LONDON IN QUICK TIME

The Royal Liberty School Troops were in the forefront of overseas travel for Scouts and in August 1928 it was reported that when returning from France they "showed their fitness by trekking across London with their cart in quick time." The original 7th Romford was so successful that by 1928 a second Troop (the 9th Romford) was started at the school, followed in 1929 by two more Troops, the 11th and 12th Romford. The 9th and 11th, however, did not survive beyond 1939, but the other Troops outlasted the war, the 12th being run for over a year by its Patrol Leaders) and continued to have independent existences until 1969 when they were merged, finally closing in 1978.

In 1934 the 11th Romford, whilst camping in Belgium, won a trophy in a local swimming gala held *in the River Meuse* at Dinant! The school Troops invariably did well, also, in District and County Swimming Galas, having the rare opportunity - in those days - of training in the school's own pool.

In September 1928 the Rover Scouts of the District held a camp at Grey Towers, Hornchurch when the programme included instruction in folk dancing. Miss D. Reid Wilson (A.D.C. Cubs) presented the Rovers with a bust of the Chief Scout (for what purpose is not stated.) Miss Reid Wilson's name crops up frequently around this time and she was evidently one of the "personalities" who abound in Romford Scouting.

The Wolf Cubs, not to be outdone no doubt, had a District Tea at the 1st Romford's H.Q. (Brownsea Hall 1) when a totem pole for the highest marks in District Competitions was awarded to the 1st Harold Wood Pack. Another early success for a newly-formed section.

A Local Association registration in 1928 lists only eleven Groups - the 1st, 2nd, 7th, 8th and 9th Romford, the 1st and 2nd Gidea Park, the 1st Hornchurch, the 1st Harold Wood and the 1st and 2nd Upminster. The 4th, 5th and 6th seem to have been temporarily defunct. The 11th & 12th Romford

had, however, still to be formed in this decade, and the 13th Romford, 2nd and 3rd Harold Wood, 1st Ardleigh Green and 1st Emerson Park soon after. in view of our perpetual concern over shortage of leaders, the following statistics are perhaps of interest:

	LEADERS PER GROUP	BOYS PER LEADER/HELPER
1928 (3 sections)	3.2	14.33
1996 (4 sections)	11	4.73

The area of the District in 1928 was stated as "Romford, Hornchurch, Upminster, Harold Wood, Havering, Noak Hill, Collier Row."

In 1929, a World Jamboree was held at Arrowse Park, Birkenhead to celebrate the coming-of age of Scouting, and it is probable that Bill Archer, then a Scout in Ilford, but later our District Commissioner, was there. His copy of the souvenir book - a full size, bound book, not a booklet - is in the District archives.

### 3 - THE NINETEEN -THIRTIES

Some of the information for the latter part of the Nineteen-Thirties is taken from four editions of "Scout Pie", the District Magazine, which were published between 1935 and 1938. Copies are available in the District archives. This was a period when Romford was growing rapidly, with new housing development particularly at Collier Row, Rise Park, Rush Green and Gidea Park.

In 1933, Upminster became a separate District embracing most, but not all, of the area administered by Hornchurch Urban District Council. The 1<sup>st</sup>, 2nd and 3rd Harold Wood, 1st Ardleigh Green, 1st and 2nd Gidea Park, 1st Emerson Park and 1st and 5th Hornchurch remained in Romford District. The new District comprised two "Local Associations" viz. Hornchurch and Upminster, and in 1937 Imperial Headquarters requested that, to avoid confusion, the 1st and 5th Hornchurch, which remained in Romford District, should be renamed. They were accordingly given the titles 3rd and 5th Romford respectively, both, apparently, reallocations of lapsed titles rather than reversions to earlier titles of their own. (The last record found of the original 3rd Romford was during the 1st World War. There must also have been an earlier 5th Romford, since seven Groups with higher Romford numbers are known to have started in the 'twenties whereas the 5th Hornchurch reported in "Scout Pie" No. 2 that they were founded in April 1935) Another 1st Hornchurch existed in Upminster District by 1945, and the whole District was renamed Hornchurch in 1956.



In 1934, Colonel Turner resigned as District Commissioner on moving to East Essex, and an illuminated address and book containing signatures of Romford Scouts and Scouters was presented to him. F. W. Ashby, one of the first 'officers' in 1908 was appointed in Col. Turner's place. An article, including a photograph, about Mr. Ashby appears in "Scout Pie" No. 2.

At a District Executive Committee meeting in 1934 a letter was read from the Cub Secretary "regretting the continued disregard of circulars issued" and complaining that he had further instances of information not having been passed on by G.S.Ms and others.

In an article for "Scout Pie" No. 1. in this year, Lord Hampton, Chief Commissioner at Headquarters, wrote "... may I put out the need for doing all we can to improve the physical standard of our boys". Sixty years later, in 1994, this had echoes in government concerns about the fitness of our schoolchildren. Nothing changes!

#### MORE BRAVE BOYS

In October (1934) the Cornwell Badge was awarded to Patrol Leader Ellis (2nd Romford, Newbury Park section) for fortitude in several years of painful illness, and Rover Scout Gordon Raper, 1st Gidea Park was awarded the Royal Humane Society's medal for saving a man from drowning at Southend in July.

In 1935, the District Scout Swimming Club had 170 members (of a total District membership of 1163). They had the exclusive use of Mawney Road Baths for two hours a week throughout the summer and one hour in winter, and "there were often attendances of over 100 members in an evening" Anyone who remembers the Mawney Road Baths (now demolished) will conclude that they trained in shifts, and changed standing on each others' heads! However, the next available pools were at Seven Kings and Brentwood (open-air) and swimming was an achievement greatly desired but difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, Scouts had to swim fifty yards as part of the First Class badge unless there were medical reasons why they could not. Jim Aylett, 12th Romford (A.D.C. Scouts after the war) was Secretary for Swimming.

In 1935 and 1936 two donations of £50 each were received from the Romford Police Court Mission in appreciation of the Association's work on behalf of probation boys. These are no further details in the minutes. Four Romford Rover Scouts attended the second World Rover Moot at Ingaro, Sweden in 1935.

#### THE POOR CHILDREN'S' TEA

In January 1936, the Rover Secretary was granted a loan to cover expenses with regard to "The Poor Children's' Tea". The actual event does not seem to have been reported in the press or in the minutes, and no other details have emerged.

The statement of accounts for 1934/5 shows a turnover of nearly £86 and assets of £165.10.7. (£165.53). A rifle club (of which little other information has survived) is shown as a liability to the tune of one penny!. This had apparently been written off by 1937. The club evidently owned some rifles which were surrendered to the police in 1938 (presumably in anticipation of the war) but it appears that no arrangements were made for their eventual replacement. As a result of the inauguration of a Scout Badge Competition the number of badges gained during the year 1934-5 almost doubled (from 94 to 187).

## CAMP SITES

During 1936 the District obtained the use for camping of a piece of land known as "Woodlands" in Slewins Lane, from Haynes Park Estates Ltd. Mr. Edmund Crisp, A.D.C. Scouts, took on the wardenship, and work continued on the site until the war. Events then apparently overtook this project and in June 1940 it was reported to the Executive that "the Association had been released from all liability in connection with the lease of Woodlands". Around this time, use for camping was also obtained of land at the northern end of Bedfords Park, and a hut erected. This hut suffered war damage, being reported in 1914 as being in bad repair, and it was removed in 1945. There had been considerable discussion in Committee as to where it should be moved, but the final outcome was not recorded.

## 1937: THE CORONATION OF KING GEORGE VI

"Scout Pie" reported:

*On Coronation Day "By 8.30 am. over 60 Scouts were scattered all over the District selling the Official Programmes. Although it rained in torrents during the early afternoon, we sold our quota of 1000 by the evening. The Scouts even invaded the local cinemas to sell the last few. Also during the morning. we sent representatives to the Town's Thanksgiving Service, took the collection, issued hymn sheets, and in the evening helped with Community singing in the parks.*

*"The Association was asked by the Council to provide a twenty minutes display as part of the Town Coronation Pageant. It was decided that this should take the form of a general march past - that is a District parade - followed by a tent-pitching competition, the erection of a model camp, a demonstration of signalling and the building of a bridge, all to proceed simultaneously. This programme was ably carried out and the Association put up a really effective display, the details being as interesting as the whole was striking."*

About thirty Scouts from the District attended the Scout and Guide Coronation Service in Westminster Abbey, and five King's Scouts from the District had seats along the Procession route. [Coronation report in Scout Pie No. 4]. These included Don Hakes and Harry Carver of the 1st Romford. ["1st Romford Scouts Ancient and Modern, 1982"]

## WORLD JAMBOREE 1937

The District was represented at Vögelenzang (Holland) by 3 "officers" and 16 Scouts from the

2nd, 8th and 13th Romford, 1st Ardleigh Green, 1st and 3rd Gidea Park. An extract from a report by "Freddy" Rowswell in "Scout Pie" No. 4. follows:

*The profoundest thanks are due to the Dutch Scouts for the provision of shower-baths, which helped so much to mitigate the tremendous heat. As we were well below sea-level, cut off by sand-dunes from the coast, no sea-breezes came our way.*

*We were soon afflicted with the usual Jamboree malady - swapping of badges, thirst for autographs of members of other States, and the spending of our hard-earned shekels on clogs,*

*The general camp-fires in the dunes will never be forgotten. On each occasion some 25,000 people were present. Some of the programmes were broadcast, though it hardly seemed needful to use radio at all to let the yells or the applause of such an audience be heard all over Holland. Sub-Camp IV. had their own camp-fires too, and one of these was broadcast. Probably the best item in these was the East Indians' dancing; at the final general camp-fire the greatest applause seemed to be given to the Scots' high-speed bagpipe performance, and to the Americans' Eagle Dance.*



Freddy Rowswell was one of the "characters" of Romford Scouting. A classics master at Brentwood School, he ran the Brentwood School Troop in addition to the 3rd Gidea Park, and was keenly interested in overseas travel for Scouts, specialising in what were then unusual locations for British holiday-makers. Under his leadership, the 3rd Gidea Park became the first British Troop to camp in Sicily (1950): an account by Scout Brian Hood of that camp appeared in *Scout Pie* in December of that year. In 1951 their summer camp was in Lapland, 150 miles north of the Arctic Circle, the second overseas camp of that year. This is, however, leaping ahead in time.

## **ROVER SCOUT SERVICE**

In 1936 former Scouts from the four Royal Liberty School Troops formed a Royal Liberty Rover Crew (inspired by Rover Hugh Knights, who sadly died within a year - see Tribute in *Scout Pie* No.3) and on one weekend as Ian Petre reported in his *Cumculuin Auscultendi Duroliti* [Log of a Romford Scout]:

*‘hired barrel organ at Stratford, brought it by train to Romford, spent Saturday trundling it round Romford Market, South Street, High Street, making hideous row and holding passers-by to ransom for charity’.*

## **1936 GRANT OF CHARTER MAKING ROMFORD A BOROUGH.**

Scouts took part in the Romford Charter Tattoo.

*‘An old Rover Scout organized a satisfying and macabre show based on the legend of St. George and the Dragon, which was well and convincingly acted by the large Scout contingent and, in contrast with the Coronation Show, illustrated that Scouts can play and work with the same gusto. [Scout Pie No. 4]*

On Charter Day itself, the Scouts were responsible for the sale of Charter programmes, the formation of the Guard of Honour for the Mayor and other general duties during the day. Rover Scouts assisted the Police with crowd control in Romford town centre.

## **KIM’S HALL**

During the ‘thirties Scouts and Rover Scouts apparently from the whole District had a Physical Training Class on Mondays and Boxing and Athletics on Fridays, both at Kim’s Hail, Hornchurch Road. Kim’s Hail was donated, prior to 1934, by Captain Samuel Williams of Little Tomkyns, Upminster Common, who was A.D.C. (Rovers) in the early thirties, and was used by the 1st Hornchurch (later 3rd Romford) as a Group H.Q., in addition to use by the District for physical training activities, it appears that in 1946 there was some disagreement as to whether Capt. Williams had given the hall to the Group or the District, and this was resolved by his making a Deed of Gift in favour of the District. This was reported to the District Executive in June 1946, and a scheme of management approved the following month. Following the division of the District, the hall was made over to Squirrels Heath District. (This was formalised by a minute of the District Executive Committee on March 8th, 1949). Samuel Williams was also, presumably, the donor of the Samuel Williams Trophy for Scout swimming, which is still in use.

The District gave “assistance” (unspecified) at the opening of Rise Park in 1937.

## **BADGES AND UNIFORMS**

Proficiency Badges available to Scouts in 1937 included Beemaster, Bird Warden, Folk Dancer, Mason, Plumber, Prospector and Tailor. The list of Proficiency Badges for Cubs is very similar to the present Activity Badges, but not so many of them. Candidates for all proficiency badges, Wolf Cub and Boy Scout, and for all tests in the Scout First Class badge and Wolf Cub Second Star were tested by examiners appointed by the District. This ensured even standards and it was also B.P.’s intention that boys would thus meet new people, thereby expanding their horizons, and the examiners might also be enthusiasts in their subject who could encourage the boys to make further progress. The principle has now, perhaps sadly, been largely abandoned.

A Boy Scout uniform of the smallest size and cheapest quality could be bought in 1937 for 14/- (70p) [Scout Shop advertisement in *Scout Pie*]. That would, however, have been about a quarter to one-third of a week’s wages for some of their Dads. The uniform did not, of course, include long trousers, but did include the old “wideawake” hat.

## **THE COUNTY MARATHON**

A regular annual feature of the Thirties, continuing into the forties and *fifties*, was the County Scout Marathon. In this event, teams of three Scouts cycled to a central point, visiting specified places en route, camping overnight (having found their own site) and writing a log of their journey. At the finishing point a detailed inspection of boys, equipment and cycles was carried out and log-books collected, in earlier days for marking later, but latterly a large team from the BP. Guild of Old Scouts read the logs - on an ‘assembly line’ system - while the inspection and tea were taking place so that results could be announced on the day. This event was extremely popular, over one hundred teams from the county being usual (the 12th Romford magazine reported 160 teams in 1946) and in many years the District ran a District Marathon to serve as training for this event. In later years a hiking section was added. After 1965 the newly-created County of Greater London North-east ran one or two similar Marathons, but they were then dropped. The District Marathon survived until 1968 when it, too, was dropped because of parental reluctance to allow their boys to camp in unknown places. The Barton Challenge [see Appendix 3] was later amended to take its place.

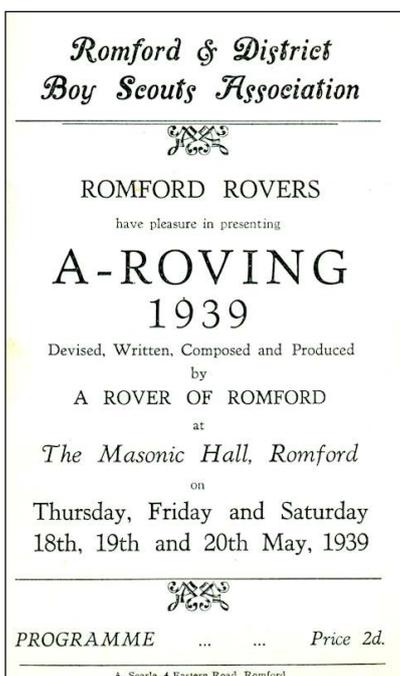
## ASSOCIATION OFFICES

In the early days, the District apparently rented an office in Brownsea Hall 1, but this was destroyed by fire in 1934. Executive Committee meetings were then held at various locations, notably the meeting room at Mawney Road Baths. From about 1937, however, the District had the use of a large detached room adjoining "Albyn Cottage", St. Andrews Road. A figure for "office rent and heating" re-appears in the accounts for the year ended September 1937, but, oddly, nothing appears in the minutes about the arrangement, which, however, continued until the last District meeting was held there in June 1959. The author believes the room may have been the original St. Andrews schoolroom.

## VOLLEY BALL

From at least 1934 a District Scout Volley Ball League existed. Matches were played in the various Troops' normal meeting places, and this proved to be an excellent way for the Scouts of the District to get to know each other. The game was actually hand-ball rather than volley-ball: our own Romford rules were published in Scout Pie No. 5 (December 1950) and the league was still in full swing then. Later, from about 1944, continuing until about 1949, there was a District Football Team which held matches with other Districts. A District Football Committee existed, and in 1946 they reported that the team was doing well, but little else has been found. There was evidently an arrangement for Scouts to play cricket at Heath Park School, as in 1942 a difficulty arose over others using the ground at the same time.

## "A-ROVING"



Two events concluded the Thirties. For three nights in May 1939, Romford Rovers presented "A-Roving 1939" devised, written, composed and produced by "A Rover of Romford", at the Masonic Hall, Romford. Proceeds were in aid of the "Romford Scouts Campfire Fund". Nothing else concerning this fund has been found: one wonders if it had something to do with the Poor Children's Tea mentioned earlier.

The talented "Rover of Romford" was actually Eric ("Sam") Sergeant, 12th Romford, whose name tragically appeared, just a few short years later, in the World War II Roll of Honour. There was, however, a sequel. In 1945, Eric's younger brother Desmond was co-producer with Bunny Warren of a Gang Show by the 12th Romford Troop. In the Troop's log, Des. recorded:

*"Ever since my brother produced the "A-Roving" shows, I wanted to produce one myself, and "Gang Show" was the fulfilment of my wants. My only regret after the show was that "Sam", or as I knew him Eric, was not there to help Bunny and I through our rough Spots"*

Also in May, a District Scout camp was held at Bower Park, Havering, attended, according to the press report, by 257 Scouts and Scouters. The 12th Romford log records: "At tea-time there was a very fine assortment of cakes to offer to the visitors, the tea however tasted very strongly of stew, the dixie having been used to cook the dinner in the morning". (in 1937, an 8th Romford report on a camp stated "but that idiot Charlie had let some paraffin from his bike lamp get on the bread, so that mucked up our supper". Ah, well, boys will be boys!)

## SCOUT PIE

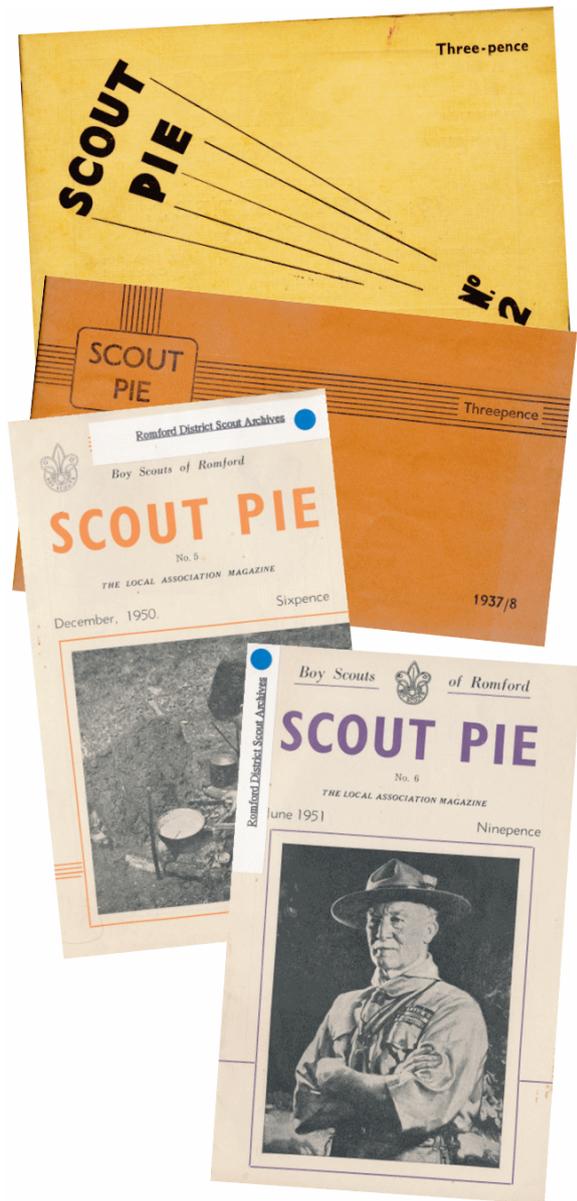
Scout Pie appears to be an annual Romford District Scouts publication. First produced for the year 1934 - 1935 issue 4 was issued for the year 1937 - 38. There is then a break presumably due to the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war with issues 5 and 6 being published in 1950 and 51 respectively.

The contents is best described as a cross between a district AGM report, District directory and district news letter. The first four editions contain reports from each group as well as reports from district officials and district reports for each section including Cubs, Scouts, Rovers, the swimming section, football section and boxing section!

As well as a directory of all Scout leaders and district officials Scout Pie contains an extensive list of badge examiners.

Scout Pie also contains a record of the district accounts and district calendar but it is the group reports, news articles and adverts for Romford shops that are of most interest to the historian.

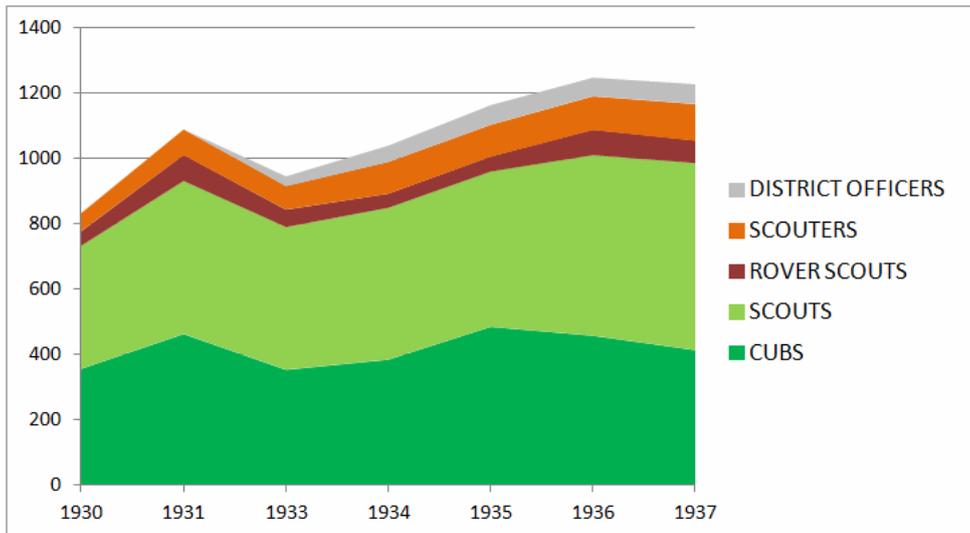
The 1935 – 36 edition includes a full page advert for the “Romford Red Triangle Club” based in north street Romford. Apparently the club was open to “all young people of good will” and its aims were fellowship and service. The advert includes a slip that you can get your Scout Master to fill in for you so that he can recommend you for one month’s free membership!



### CENSUS FIGURES FOR THE THIRTIES

	CUBS	SCOUTS	ROVER SCOUTS	SCOUTERS	TOTAL	NOTES
1930	356	376	44	55	835	
1931	462	468	80	79	1095	
1932	<i>Not Available</i>					
1933	353	436	53	73	915	+30DistrictOfficers
1934	384	464	43	98	989	+50District Officers
1935	484	475	46	98	1103	+ 60 District Officers
1936	457	552	78	104	1191	+ 56 District Officers
1937	413	572	69	113	1167	+60DistrictOfficers

1938 & 1939 NOT AVAILABLE



(The large number shown as “District Officers” is somewhat mystifying but this could include Vice-Presidents, District lay members, and possibly badge examiners. In the ‘thirties, dues to County and Headquarters were not on a *per capita* basis, so these people could be included without financial penalty. Excluding these people, whoever they were, the 1936 figure represents 10.45 boys per leader.)

## 4 - THE NINETEEN-FORTIES.

The first half of this decade was dominated by the Second World War (1939-45). There were many difficulties but Scouting carried on, perhaps because of the legacy of strength in the 'Thirties. The District Annual Report for 1940 shows that most Scout Troops were meeting on Saturday afternoons, that a surprising number of camps were still being held, and at least one Cub Pack was meeting in air raid shelters. A number of Cubs and Scouts were evacuated, and it was reported to the District Executive Committee in 1940 that around sixty adult leaders were away on war service. By the middle of the war Wilf Brown, A.D.C. Scouts was running three Troops in addition to his duties as A.D.C. The 13th Romford Gang Show in 1940 was held in the Brewery Air Raid Shelter!

F. W. Ashby, District Commissioner, died in 1940 while still in office. (An article about him, including a photograph, had previously appeared in *Scout Pie* No.2.) His dying wish (as stated to the District Executive by his son) was that Mr. Will Payne, founder S.M. and later G.S.M. 8th Romford, A.D.C. (Physical Education) and Warden of Bedfords camp site, should succeed him. Mr. Payne, however, declined the appointment and Mr. E. C. Crisp, G.S.M. 1st Emerson Park, became D.C.

### HEROES

In January 1941 the Posthumous award of a Bronze Cross (the Association's highest award for gallantry) was made to 13-year old Ronald Eke, 1st Ardleigh Green Troop as a result of courage displayed when his home was demolished by a bomb and both his parents killed. Ronald died in hospital the following day. A photocopy of the Romford Times report of this boy's bravery is in the District archives, and photographs of Ronald and a Bronze Cross are on page 50 of "*Hitler v Havering*" compiled by Peter Watt [Canton Armitage Press, 1994]

This award was followed in October by a Silver Cross to 15-year old Eric Sheppard, 3rd Gidea Park Troop, "for gallantry and fortitude he displayed when assisting in the rescue of members of his family buried in the wreckage of their home after the explosion of a heavy calibre bomb during a severe air raid on the district in May." [A photocopy of the Romford Times report is in the District archives.]

### B.-P.'S DEATH.

B.-P. died on 9th January 1941, and on the 18th January Romford Scouts, with contingents from the Girl Guides, Boys' Brigade, and Air Cadets, held a

Memorial Service at St. Edwards Church. A photocopy of the Romford Times report is in the District archives, in view of wartime difficulties, it must have been quite an achievement to arrange a District service in such a short time. Later, in 1947, ten Wolf Cubs from the District attended the service in Westminster Abbey for the unveiling of the Memorial to B.-P. Miss King (A.D.C. Cubs) reported to the District Executive: "They were thrilled with the service and were complimented on their smartness and behaviour."

Also in January 1941, Headquarters approved the formation of Air Scout Troops, and by March it was reported to the District Executive that a Troop was already in existence in Romford and meeting at Ashby Hall under Mr. Koester (S.M. 8th Romford) and Mr. Cleaver (S.M. 1st Romford). In September, registration was approved under the title 18th Romford and by July 1942 they were reported as having over 40 members. Mr. A. E. Palmer was later appointed A.D.C. Air Scouts in addition to being A.D.C. War Scouts. By 1943 there were 95 Air Scouts in the District (38, 18th Romford; 57 3rd Harold Wood)

### WAR SERVICE

Throughout the war, Scouts served as messengers in the Civil Defence service. Stan Lucas (later G.S.L. 4th Gidea Park and Secretary of the Romford District Scout Fellowship) recalls:

*"Yours truly was a Messenger at the Town Hall Control Centre during the war, together with Roy Walker and Bob Nunn, both of the 13th Romford and I was with the 18th Romford Air Scout Troop based at Ashby Hall.*

*"When the request came for older Scouts to act as messengers I reported to the Wardens post in Collier Row Lane next to the police station. This was post E8 under Senior Sector Warden Mi Kemp.*

*"Word came that messengers would be based at the Town Hall Report Centre so it was a shift to higher things, and the issue of ill-fitting overalls with an ARP [Air Raid Precautions] badge on it. I recall that Messengers had to do a similar course as the Air Raid Wardens and we sat in the old Court House in South Street to hear about various poison gases and at the end we received a nice certificate.*

*"I remember that messengers slept in a building opposite the Laurie Hall and had to dash across to the Town Hall when the air-*

*raid siren went. In the sleeping area there was a light kept burning all night (blue I think), known for some reason as the 'Fido light' after Mr. "Fido" Palmer. Leaders in charge of the messengers included Will Brown (A.D.C. Scouts, later D.C Squirrels Heath] and Jack Jones [later G.S.L. 10th Romford]. Molly Heffer (?) was one of the ladies in charge of the Guide telephonists - speak to them at the peril of your life! Always a free breakfast and if Mrs. Knight was on duty you got a good breakfast, but if the other lady was on ... was her name Molly? you got starvation rations.*

*"I suppose we treated it all as great adventure, not realising the true horror of it all. I remember how proud I was to wear my National Service badge on my Scout shirt. Was it half a crown (12 ½ ip) we used to get for bike maintenance? Exact duties carried out are a bit vague ... there was one incident in Gidea Park and another in Rosedale Road, where 1 queued up with the rescue team to get a sandwich and cuppa from the mobile canteen. I was sent to Collier Row to the Lodge Lane incident and recall that all three of us (Roy, Bob and self) were complimented on our efforts, and we were to be recorded in the official diary We kept sending messages to the Town Hall whilst some of the Wardens were in a panic, trying to rescue people instead of manning the post. We were promised special lanyards to wear with our Scout uniforms, but these never turned up.*

*"One incident sticks out in my mind. One evening when all three of us were on duty together, a group of wardens were at the rear of the Town Hall for stirrup pump drill. Some old furniture was set alight in a concrete building and as the wardens were reluctant to crawl in and squirt the water, the three of us showed them how to do it. As a result we got wet through and were sent home: I got well and truly ticked off by my Mother."*

A photograph, not of Romford, but of Hornchurch Scouts manning the control room in the basement of "Langtons" is on page 8 of *Hider v Havering* referred to earlier. The Mobile Canteen which Stan refers to is pictured, attending the Rosedale Road 'incident', on page 134 of the same book.

Roy Walker (District Commissioner 1982 - 1989) was a member of the 13th Romford War Service Patrol and, together with Stan Hall (District Chairman from 1991, but then a member of the 7th Romford) recalls helping to erect Morrison (indoor) shelters for those unable to do so for themselves. These shelters consisted of a steel framework, a heavy steel plate for a top, and wire mesh sides

which had to be strained into place with a special tool. Roy recalls that there were 5-6 boys in each team, and the operation had to be carried out with no unnecessary noise. He claims his Patrol's record time was nineteen minutes. Stan says that the 7th time must therefore have been less! The 2nd Gidea Park were also reported in District minutes as having assisted in this work. A photograph of a completed Morrison shelter is on page 90 of *Hitler v Havering*.

In May 1942 it was reported to the District Executive Committee that about 80 Scouts had applied to attend a War Harvest Camp. It is also recorded that Scouts assisted with Civil Defence Exercises, and took part in a number of parades promoting War Savings. In 1942 the District received thanks from the Mayor "for their part in the United Nations parade when despite short notice over 370 members were on parade".

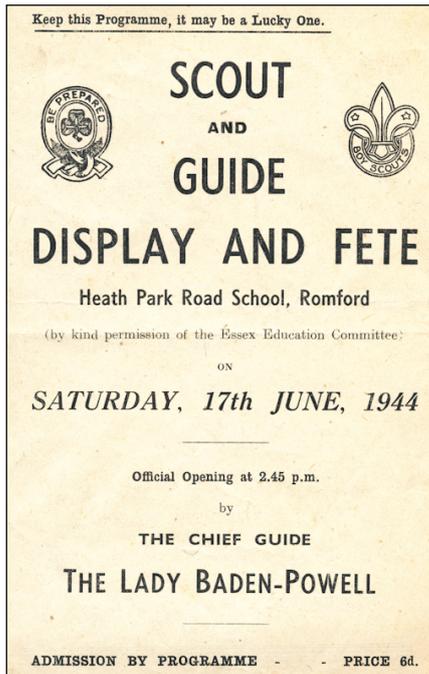
## **CAMPS**

As mentioned earlier, a surprising number of camps were still held during the war and in 1941 the 7th Romford held their summer camp at Budleigh Salterton, Devon, and the 3rd Gidea Park at Wray Castle, on the shores of Lake Windermere. A report on the latter by Freddy Rowswell appears in the Romford Times for 20th August. All District competitions were cancelled in 1940, but were getting back to normal by 1941. Mr. J. Newton Davey (later Assistant County Commissioner for Rovers) was appointed to keep in touch with members serving in the Forces. The District A.G.M. for 1941 was held on a Sunday afternoon.

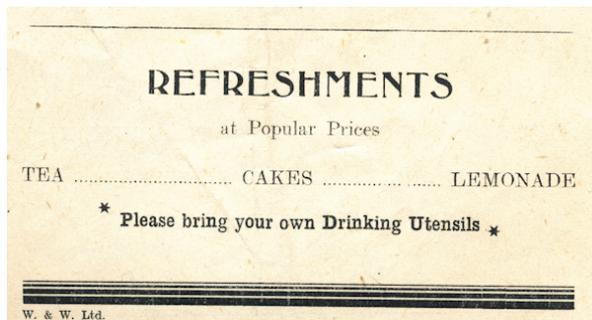
On 8th November 1942 the Rattlesnake Lone Patrol - later the 3rd Collier Row Group - was started by Alf Reeve, an expatriate from the 1st Havering Troop, who became it's Patrol Leader and who later became Scout Leader, a post which he held for many years. Alf tells the story, including how his Patrol were responsible for the arrest of a spy, in his entertaining - often hilarious - book: "A Very Ordinary Troop" [Bower Publications, 1992].

## **VISIT OF THE CHIEF GUIDE**

A Scout and Guide Rally was held at Heath Park Schools in July 1943 and was attended by Lord Hampton (Chief Commissioner), Lady Rasch (Guide County Commissioner) and Major Magor (Scout County Commissioner) and in June 1944 a "Scout and Guide Display and Fete" also at Heath Park Road School was opened by the Chief Guide, Lady Baden-Powell in the presence of Lady Rasch and Major Magor. The displays were "Formation of the Union Flag", Physical Training (Scouts), Brownie Games, "After the Blitz", St. George and the Dragon, Country Dancing, Cub Tests, Charades, Camping Pageant, Physical Training (Rangers) and an Inter-District Pioneering Lest.



The *Romford Times* reported that about 2000 members of the two Associations, with colours, took part in the March Past. An indication of wartime shortages is that under the heading "Refreshments" in the programme, visitors were asked to "bring your own Drinking Utensils". On the Sunday following the rally, a Drumhead Service was held in Raphael Park, attended by bands of the 1st Gidea Park and 3rd Harold Wood Troops. The lesson was read by 11-year-old Raymond Hare, 1st Ardleigh Green.



Early in 1944 the V1 "Doodlebug" attacks having begun, there was a fresh round of evacuation of children from Romford, most of the original 1939 evacuees having long since returned home, and this had some impact on attendance at Cub and Scout meetings for a while.

The first two months of 1944 saw the publication of two editions of *The Monthly Moan*, subtitled "The Mouthpiece of Romford P.Ls." This was a semi-satirical newsheet, published by "Romford Scouts Underground Press", the editors remaining anonymous because "one cannot walk about in a suit of armour these days". In the second (and apparently the last) edition the editors, commenting on lack of support for the Franklyn Shield Competition ask "is it that P.Ls. are scared of it or simply not interested or perhaps it's too much FAG". There have been times in recent years when A.D.C. (Scouts) Paul Leeper has been asking the same questions. The Competition has, however, had varied fortunes. In 1960 thirty-seven Patrols took part and in 1965 when it was held at a mystery location outside Romford (actually Tolmers, Cuffley) there was enough support to justify hiring four double deck buses to get the boys there. See Appendix 4 for more about the Franklyn Shield.

### THE ASHBY AND FORCES MEMORIAL FUND

During the war, consideration was given to a memorial for the late Francis Ashby and those former Romford Scouts who had lost their lives during the war. A fund was established by a minute of the District Executive Committee in September 1944, and launched in April 1945. A permanent camp site was the favoured option and, in spite of wartime and immediate post-war difficulties, various fund-raising activities were held under the banner "Get That Camp Site This Year". The precise objects of the fund were restated to the Executive Committee in 1951 as follows:

1. To acquire and maintain a permanent camping and training ground for the Scouts of the Romford and District and the Squirrels Heath District Boy Scouts Association and afterwards:
2. To assist Groups in obtaining their own headquarters either by way of grant or loan.

However, following the division of the District (see page 15), by a resolution of an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Association held on 14th November 1951, it was decided to divide the fund equally between the two Associations.

## WORLD WAR II ROLL OF HONOUR

An original Roll of Honour which existed after the war is missing. The following has been reconstructed from currently available sources and may be incomplete. In addition, with wartime leader difficulties, it is possible that some names were not recorded, or known about, in the first place.

BANNISTER,	Hugh 8th Romford	GILBERT, Basil	8th Romford
BURTON, E.C.,	7th Romford	GODWIN, Fred	3rd Gidea Park
CASS, V.	2 <sup>nd</sup> Romford	HUGHES, W.A.	12th Romford
CLEMENTS, R.	1 <sup>st</sup> Gidea Park	KENNARD, Selwyn	13th Romford
COOKE, L.A.	2 <sup>nd</sup> Romford	KINSMAN, J.E.	12th Romford
CORNELIUS, R.	12 Romford	LLOYD, David	3rd Gidea Park.
COATES, R.	12th Romford	MOLYNEUX, D.	7th Romford
COOPER, H.B.	12th Romford	POSTON, A.R.	3rd Gidea Park.
DAVIDSON, F.C.	3rd Harold Wood	SARGEANT, Eric	12th Romford
DAY, H. H.	12th Romford	SIBTHORP, G.A.	12th Romford
DEVINE, Ronald	8th Romford	THOMPSON, Norman	8th Romford
ERSKINE, Roy	13th Romford.	WARDEN, Derek	1st Emerson Park.
GARNRAM, Leslie	8th Romford	WATSON, W.	12th Romford
GARNHAM, Philip	8 <sup>th</sup> Romford	WHITAKER, R.G.H.	3rd Gidea Park.

### CIVILIAN WAR CASUALTIES

EKE, Ronald (aged 13) 1st Ardleigh Green.  
 KEEN-NICOLASS, W.W.A. (Home Guard) 3rd Gidea Park.  
 SMITH, JAMES WILLIAM (aged 17) 1st Ardleigh Green.

### DECORATIONS

APPS, RONALD .G.E., 3rd Gidea Park. Military Cross and Bar. (See next page)  
 CALDWELL. CECIL F. 3rd Gidea Park. Distinguished Flying Medal and Cross.  
 COTTIER, DENNIS, 3rd Gidea Park. Distinguished Flying Cross.

TRANSCRIPT of Commanding Officer's recommendation for the award of a MILITARY CROSS to Lt. (temporary Captain) RONALD APPS [Public Record Office, WO 373133]

"On the 22nd April 1944 Captain App's company was the leading company of the attack on NINGTHOUKHONG VILLAGE [Burma]. Crossing the open space in front of the village his company came under concentrated and sustained HMG and mortar fire, and sustained very heavy casualties. Captain App immediately took over command of the leading elements and led them forward close to the enemy bunkers. Here with only 15 men left he was pinned to the ground in the open. He continued to engage the enemy with his remaining men while the wounded were being evacuated by carrier, and maintained his position under heavy fire for three hours until ordered to withdraw. During this time, to evacuate some casualties close up to the enemy, Capt. App himself took over a carrier and drove it up under heavy fire to within 100 yards of the enemy position and close to a located anti-tank gun, and brought away four men. His gallant conduct was an inspiration to all who saw him and undoubtedly saved the lives of the four wounded men who were lying up close to the enemy. He subsequently organised the successful withdrawal of his company bringing away all wounded and weapons.

He was himself slightly wounded" [Crown Copyright. See reverse of title page]

TRANSCRIPT of Commanding Officer's recommendation for the award of a BAR TO THE MILITARY CROSS to Captain (temporary Major) RONALD APPS, M.C. [Public Record Office WO 373/37]

"On the night of 17/18 Feb. 1945 the KYIGON bridgehead [Burma] was heavily attacked by a battalion of Japanese. The attack was preceded by a heavy bombardment which swept the area and caused casualties amongst Major App's company who were largely composed of young soldiers and were shaken. At 0200 hours a very heavy attack developed against Major App's company. This attack went on till 0400 hours when the spearhead of the attack succeeded in over-running three trenches and occupying them. Major App steadied his men and organised a counter attack.

"The reserve was called for but, as it formed up to charge, Major App and a small party threw smoke grenades and charged in. Major App personally shot the Jap Battalion Commander, cleared the trenches and reoccupied the position.

"His conduct throughout the night was magnificent. Not only did he exude confidence throughout but he inspired his young soldiers to hang on after the forward trenches were overrun and his personal bravery in the final assault was worthy of the highest praise. Forty-two Japanese including three officers were found lying outside the perimeter of Major App's company in the morning."

[Crown Copyright. See reverse of title page]

The awards to Cecil Caidwell and Dennis Cottier were reported at the time by F.R. ("Freddy") Rowswell, Scoutmaster, but I have been unable to find any further information. Royal Air Force records in the Public Record Office are not "user-friendly", so I was advised, and research in a number of published books and elsewhere has proved fruitless. If any reader can provide any further information, I shall be glad to hear of it.

## THE LATE FORTIES: SENIOR SCOUTS

In the very earliest days boys were allowed to remain in the Scout section more or less indefinitely. As shown in the Chapter on "Early Days" this proved to be unsuccessful and, as already seen, in 1917 B.P. introduced Rover Scouts for boys over fifteen. The age was subsequently raised to 17 (and at one stage 17½) but it was found that this resulted in a huge leakage at the age of around 13-14. Boys of this age were wanting to show their paces as Patrol Leaders and "Seconds", but found older boys in their way' and, as Lord Somers (second Chief Scout) wrote in 1943 "a boy becomes a senior at a certain age, and if he has to spend his Scout life almost entirely with the younger boys of the Troop he will in nearly every case lose interest, gradually adopt the pace of the younger boys, or leave the Troop" Consequently many Troops found themselves with a large number of small boys, and a few "Peter Pans". More successful Troops had experimented with separate activities for the older boys, (a scheme was proposed in *The Scouter* May 1943) leaving the field clear for the 14-year olds, and experience with War Service Patrols was taken into account, and in October 1946 "Senior Scouts" were made "official" for the age range 15-17½, with their own Troops, own Patrol Leaders, own activities and own badges designed for their age group. Patrols were named after explorers and the Senior Scout motto was "Look Wide". Although in November 1948 A.D.C. Jim Aylett reported that "he was very worried about the Senior Scouts in the District", those were early days and some Senior Troops went on to become very successful, reaching around twenty members. In later years, County organised some well-supported night exercises for Senior Scouts in various parts of Essex, and we held at least two of our own in Epping Forest. There was a proposal in 1952 to fuse Senior Scouts and Rover Scouts, but this did not actually happen until 1966 when Venture Scouts were created.

In 1945, to commemorate his year as Mayor, Alderman A. J. Dyer presented the District with a cup, to be awarded annually "to the Scout Group which, in the opinion of an independent person or persons, has, during the previous twelve months, most worthily carried out the Scout Law and principles." in practice, the award was made on the basis of Commissioners' visits, camp reports, and co-operation with the District in such matters as attendance at meetings and events, response to Secretary's letters and so on. The cup was first awarded in 1947, jointly to the 3rd Gidea Park and 12th Romford.

Haydn Dimmock, editor of *The Scout* encouraged boys to become his "Personal Representatives" in

their Groups and to send in reports. In December 1946, one of these, Troop Leader Colin O'Hare, 4th Gidea Park, reported:

*The 4th Gidea Park Troop holds regular bike and cycle rides and some of the Scouts recently visited I.H.Q. A recent night stunt was successful. All Patrols are working hard for the new badges. Magazines are being collected for a local hospital, and a bob-a-job week is being arranged. Plans for the future include a parents' evening and a bazaar.*

A portrait of Lord Rowallan, Chief Scout, was awarded each week to the Troop sending the best report and it was won on that occasion by the 4th Gidea Park.

In about 1947-48, the use of the original camp site within the bounds of Bedfords Park having lapsed, Romford was offered a piece of woodland to the north of Bedfords Park (west of the present cricket field). Unfortunately there were difficulties with this site in regard to vehicular access and the impossibility of keeping the public out, and the project therefore lapsed after a few years. While it lasted, a number of Groups used the site (carrying their equipment from the car park) both for camping and day activities. A number of people functioned as wardens of this site, amongst them H. de Caux (Chase Rover crew), Alf Reeve (3rd Collier Row), Jim Fogg (1st Havering) and John Moore (A.D.C. Senior Scouts)

## FORMATION OF SQUIRRELS HEATH DISTRICT

As mentioned earlier, in 1947 eight Groups separated from Romford becoming, firstly, a separate Local Association within Romford District, and in 1948 a separate district (Squirrels Heath) with their own D.C. Mr. E. C. Crisp resigned as D.C. in the summer of 1947 and W. G. ("Bill") Archer, became D.C. from 1948. Bill began his Scouting with the 15th Ilford at St. Andrews, The Drive in 1919. After moving to Romford he became Assistant Scoutmaster of the 7th Romford and was Scoutmaster from 1942. He became A.D.C. (Scouts) towards the end of the war, and D.C. as stated, in 1948. Following his service as D.C., he became Borough Commissioner on the formation of the London Borough of Havering in 1965. Also Chairman of the 3rd Gidea Park Group Executive Committee, he died in 1990. The Bill Archer Trophy for Beaver Sports was presented by his daughter, Joan, in 1991.



## THE DYER CUP

On Wednesday October 15<sup>th</sup> 1947 the Romford Times reported that the results of the Dyer cup were tied for the first time. The cup had been originally presented to the Romford Scout Association by Alderman Albert John Dyer, O.B.E during his period as mayor of Romford Borough Council in 1944-45. By 1947 Alderman Dyer was deputy mayor and it seems the predicament of what to do was brought to his attention by the Town Clerk who was an honouree commissioner at the time. After dismissing the idea of a second cup on the grounds that it would diminish the value of the original, they decided to present the cup to joint winners.

So the Scouts of the 12<sup>th</sup> Romford Royal Liberty School and the Scouts and Cubs of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Gidea Park paraded to St Michaels' Church Gidea Park to be presented with the cup by Alderman Dyer himself.

## WORLD JAMBOREE

In August 1947 thirteen Romford Scouts attended the Sixth World Scout Jamboree at Moisson, France. A photocopy of a report in the *Romford Recorder*, based on an interview with Peter Bridgstock, Troop Leader of the 12th Romford, is in the District archives. For France to host a World Jamboree only three years after the end of German occupation was in itself a remarkable achievement.

During 1948 twenty-three Romford Rover Scouts took part in the Eastern Counties' Rover Moot at Felstead School, and in September the District mounted a camping exhibition on a grass area in front of Lambourne Hall, Western Road (approximately where British Home Stores now stands) in support of a Road Safety Exhibition being held inside the hall.

In February 1948 sixty Troop Leaders, Patrol Leaders and Patrol Seconds from twelve Troops attended a District Patrol Leaders' Conference which was addressed by Mr. F. Haydn Dimmock, Editor of *The Scout*. Three of the Patrol Leaders produced a wall-sheet (which is in the District archives) in which the co-editors, C.B. O'Hare and T. Barnes, summarising a discussion on "courtesy" commented "Briefly, we are not encouraged by the public to be courteous."

## CROW CAMP: PRE-NATAL PERIOD

Also around 1948, some Groups started using the land which subsequently became Crow Camp and also another piece of land in Benskins Lane. The full story of Crow Camp appears as an appendix to

this History. Continuing the camp site theme, in 1948 Essex Troops were asked to contribute to the cost of the trees which now form "Essex Chase" at Gilwell.

In 1949 we hosted French Scouts following the Essex International Jamboree at Hockley. Also in 1949, berets became optional wear for Senior Scouts, Rover Scouts and Scouters and this was extended to Scouts in 1954.

## RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

During the 'forties the initials S.O.R.O. crop up frequently. They stand for "Scouts' Own Religious Observance" and frequent Scouts' Owns were held at various locations around the District (usually reported as "well attended") in addition to the regular St. Georges Day Service. One of the driving forces was Mr. P. A. Mann, S.M. 2nd Gidea Park, and Secretary of the Association of Methodist Scouters. Secretary for SORO was a Mr. Kingsnorth.

There is no record of Cubs' Owns being held at this period, but they will be referred to in a later chapter.

## BANDS

Very Senior Citizens tend to associate Scouts with wide-brimmed hats, shorts, Good Turns and bugle bands. However, very little on the latter has emerged from the archives. The 1st Romford had a band in 1937/1938 (at any event they set aside one evening a week for band practice), the 1st Hornchurch too in 1937 and the 1st Gidea Park and 3rd Harold Wood (both now in Squirrels Heath District) played at the Drumhead Service in 1944 reported earlier in this Chapter. A Scout band was photographed leading our St. George's Day Parade through the market place in 1948, and this was, presumably, one of the last two mentioned.

## SWIMMING

In October 1949 the county swimming gala was held for the first time since the war. Eight teams from across the county competed for the Colvin Cup at the Royal Liberty School Swimming baths. Romford District won with Chingford District second and Brentwood District 3<sup>rd</sup>. Romford District went on to win this event 25 times in a row before it was discontinued in the early 50s.

Throughout the late forties the Romford Newspapers regularly carried the results of Scout swimming galas and sports events.

## CENSUS FIGURES FOR THE FORTIES

	<u>CUBS</u>	<u>SCOUTS</u>	<u>SENIOR SCOUTS</u>	<u>ROVER SCOUTS</u>	<u>SCOUTERS</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>H.M. FORCES</u>
1941	433	507	-	26	52	1018	119
1942-44	CENSUS NOT TAKEN.						
1945	430	539	6	3	48	1026	257
1946	524	573	-	16	53	1160	140
1947	501	512	58	112	75	1199	
In this year we "lost" eight groups to squirrels heath district							
1948	350	361	55	32	48	846	
1949	338	335	47	25	57	802	

Scout figures for 1941-1946 include air scouts and a few Sea Scouts (3rd Harold Wood?). No air scouts shown for 1947, but Rover figure for that year includes 59 Rover Air Scouts. The six "Senior Scouts" shown for 1945 were War Service Scouts. 1941 figures represent 18.58 boys per leader. Note 20% of members in H.M. Forces in 1945.

