

## 100 Years of Scouting, 1907 – 2007

*Peter Mayne. Grey Wolf 1974 – 1983*

This year we celebrate one hundred years of scouting. It was in the 1<sup>st</sup> August 1907 that Lord Baden Powell took a party of boys to camp on Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour. From these simple beginnings the movement began.

Here in Eaton Bray, scouting began in 1913 by Mrs Wallace of Poplar Farm, having been persuaded by the Reverend Ernest Scott of Dunstable, the District commissioner.

A troop was soon formed and by 1915 it boasted its own band. Mr Wallace purchased the land at the Rye and gave it to the village as a recreation ground and the scouts had their first camp there.

In 1924 our revered Scout master Mrs Wallace led a contingent of lads from all over Bedfordshire to a jamboree in Denmark, quite a feat in those days, long before air travel. We have evidence that the First Eaton Bray, 27<sup>th</sup> Beds Troop were still active in 1930 but little is known after that.

In 1946 Percy Pitkin, an ex Rover Scout formerly with the 7<sup>th</sup> Luton, but by then living in Northall, formed the 1<sup>st</sup> Edlesborough and Eaton Bray group, and found he was unable to register with Bedfordshire as he was operating from the village hall and a stable at the old vicarage which, of course, is in Buckinghamshire. However, this did not deter him or his able assistant, his wife Kaye. Supported by the Reverend Edgar the troop was shaped. His first patrol leaders were the Miller brothers, Billy and Morton, Bearton, Rutherford and Brandon.

Camping and other outdoor activities were kept local at Park Farm, with Eddie French helping out with Sunday lunch by shooting a couple of rabbits for the lads to cook in real backwoodsman style! Equipment was hard to come by in the period after the war, but part of scouting is being resourceful and Percy told me that he located a Bell tent at Ivinghoe that had been treated with linseed oil. Oh, how that would smell! Still, beggars can't be choosers!

Eventually, however, all groups go through peaks and troughs and the group folded.

Be prepared, never give up, these are the mottos of the Scouting Movement and in the early 1950s Mr and Mrs Holmes retired and moved into Edlesborough and had a bungalow built. Mr Holmes had been involved with the 7<sup>th</sup> Luton Rover Scouts and knew Percy Pitkin, and so did Leslie Sell of Ivinghoe Aston by the way. Mr Holmes had a piece of land he was prepared to sell for £50 to build a Scout hut on. Mr Sell just happened to be the Managing Director of the largest building firm in Luton!

Fund raising began in earnest and a committee was formed of interested parties and the rest, as they say, is history.

In September 1954 a trust was formed of the Vicar D.M. Jones, Mr Leslie Sell, 64<sup>th</sup> Bedfordshire Scout Group and Mr Philip Howes in the name of 1<sup>st</sup> Edlesborough and Eaton Bray to build the hut. The hut was finished and opened by Mr Peter Baden Powell, B. P.'s son, and Peter planted the Silver Birch tree that stands in the front today. A photo exists of Mrs May Oates (Mr Wallace's daughter) and Leslie Sell unlocking the hut, with the lads and parents looking on (see Figure below). One final twist: the District Commissioner refused to travel from Aylesbury to Edlesborough – he said it was too far – and the D. C. from Bedfordshire would only come if the Group was renamed Eaton Bray and Edlesborough, because Eaton Bray was in Bedfordshire!! Politics!!



**Figure:** The H. Q. was opened by Mrs May Oates, Wallace's daughter, and Mr Leslie Sell.  
Mr Peter Powell, son of B. P., planted the Silver Birch.

The Group flourished in the Fifties and Sixties under, amongst others, G. S. L. Geoff Hunter, our first Queen's Scout, and Cub Leader Mrs Blomfield. By the Seventies, the Group was all but depending on personnel from RAF Edlesborough for its leaders and, with the closing of the Radio Station, the Group was about to fold. By this time my son had just been invested and now it was my turn to step up to the mark. With John Rosedale, the remaining RAF leader, and the very strong parent committee, how could we fail?

By the way, I was also a 7<sup>th</sup> Luton Cub and Scout!

Success, they say, breeds success, and with excellent Scout Leaders in John Rosedale and, later, Tony Smith, we were saved by an experienced GSL, Dennis Vincent. The Group consisted of 36 Cubs (with a waiting list of 10), 23 Scouts, 6 Venture Scouts, and a Patrol of Sea Scouts under the direction of Brian Shields, plus people were coming forward to volunteer as helpers and Leaders. I knew the time was right to step down and let the youngsters have a go and thank my lucky stars for all the support I had been given.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2007 I ask all Scouts, young and old, to think about our Founder, and all our Leaders, past and present, to think of the fun we had, and reaffirm our promise and remember a Scout is a Brother to all Scouts.