

# Camp Reflections 2014

## Centenary of the outbreak Of the First World War

### 'Scouts'

#### Day 1 - Coast watching

**Input** - The Royal Navy was put on a war footing by Churchill from 1 August. And almost immediately Baden-Powell began thinking about appropriate work Scouts could carry out. The Chief Scout's Outlook in Headquarters Gazette for August 1914 includes ideas of some of the tasks Scouts could undertake at this time of national emergency. At this very early stage, Baden-Powell's notion was that it should be the Sea Scouts' duty to watch estuaries, ports and other important facilities, such as coast guard stations, the idea being to free up men for military or naval service. Scouts were to do anything required by the coastguard in the way of taking messages between different points and should be considered for any other services which boys would be capable of carrying out.



The Scouts were to be supervised by the Coastguard but would actually be under the orders of their Patrol Leaders, thus putting into practice one of the core principles of Scouting, that is that the boys themselves, through the Patrol system, should be responsible for their activities and actions. The coast watching idea caught on very quickly and within a few weeks Scouts of all descriptions became involved. Scout Troops throughout the country immediately offered their services to guard the coasts.

**Prayer** - Loving God, We thank you for the willingness of so many scouts to stand by their fellow countrymen in their hour of need, and their selfless desire to serve and not to be served, to give and not to count the cost. Amen.

**Our Father...**

**Action** - Seek opportunities today to help each other.



## Day 2 - Working on the land

**Input** - Scouts in the First World War were asked to carry out many different types of duty, partly in order to release men for service in the military. One of the less glamorous but most important tasks the Scouts carried out was to assist farmers on the land. This role became more crucial as the War went on, as more and more able-bodied men left their work to join the armed forces, either voluntarily or, after 1916, by compulsion. In addition, the German U Boat campaign meant that Britain relied even more heavily on home-grown food than previously and Scouts became vital in ensuring that harvests were brought in and that day-to-day agricultural could be carried out. In the later years of the War, flax growing and harvesting also assumed an increasing importance and Scouts also became involved in these tasks too. By 1918, the situation in the countryside was reaching crisis point. The insatiable manpower demands of the Western Front, exacerbated by the horrendous losses incurred in the Germans' massive offensives from March to June, meant that every available man was being drafted for service in the Army. The demands on Scouts to fill at least partially the gaps in the agricultural work force became ever greater and in March 1918 an appeal was made by the Founder, in response to an appeal from the Ministry of National Service, through the medium of Headquarters Gazette for more Scouts to help work the land. By May, this had become an urgent call for at least 15,000 boys to go and help bring in the harvest. One Troop, amongst many, which heeded the call, was the St. Luke's Mission Troop from Chelsea, whose Scoutmaster adapted the Scouts' annual camp to ensure that they "did their bit".

*(Scout Association archives)*

**Prayer** - Lord of the harvest, thank you for all that you provide for our daily needs and daily bread. May we in our plenty appreciate all those who go hungry, and all those who work so hard to produce the food we eat each day.

**Our Father...**

**Action** - Really try to appreciate everything you eat today and go out of your way not to be wasteful.



## Day 3 - Guarding Railway Bridges

**Input** - An example of the work done - Transcript East Grinstead Observer Sep 1914  
Balcombe Bridges SCOUTS .AND C.L.B

During the time when active preparations for the war necessitated all railway bridges on the main lines being carefully watched and guarded, a number of the boys belonging to the East Grinstead Boy Scouts did useful service at Balcombe.

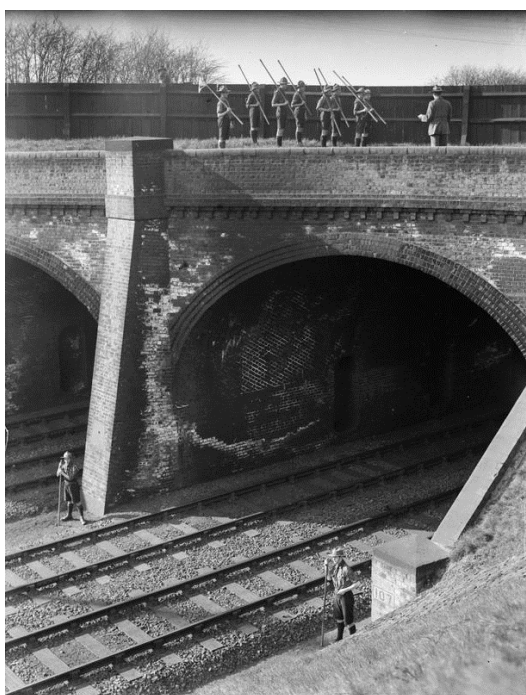
From August 6th to August 12th they guarded two bridges, the first south of Balcombe Station and Tirland Road Bridge. On the latter date they were relieved from their duties at the first named bridge by the East Grinstead Company of the Church Lads Brigade, and they were able to reduce their numbers from 17 to 11.

The boys who were left, continued to guard Tirland Road Bridge till September 1st. Duty was then in rotation, each boy going on for two hours in the day and two hours at night, but they had no alarm calls. Several of the boys were proficient in camp cooking and naturally they were able to prepare their own meals. Mr and Mrs Bee of Badgers Cottage supplied them with water and rabbits and they got their groceries and meat from East Grinstead. Assistant Scoutmaster Smith was in command all the time. They had several visits from the District Commissioner, Major Sir Hanbury Brown who said he was very pleased with everything he saw. He has sent a letter of appreciation of the lads conduct to Mr Du Boulay the Acting Scoutmaster

**Prayer** - Loving God, who guard us through each and every day, listen to our prayer asking for you to be with us and to keep us safe and free from harm, this day and every day. Amen.

**Our Father...**

**Action** - Make it your special care to look out for and help others today.





## Day 4 - Messengers

**Input** - Throughout the country scouts were used as messengers. Carrying important messages and information from and to the police and the military. Passing on information to local citizens. They did this at the risk sometimes of their own lives. For example in Winchester in 1914 a County Rally was organised for 4 July 1914, exactly one month before the outbreak of what was to become the First World War. The Government recognised the contribution which Scouts could make to the war effort and Boy Scouts became messengers to the army and conveyed mobilisation and billeting notices among other things for which, after 100 days, they were awarded a War Service Badge. Winchester's Boy Scouts were actively engaged in wartime activities at this time.



*(From 100 years of scouting in Hampshire power point)*

**Prayer** - Loving God, may the messages we give out to others, be messages of peace and understanding. May we pass on to others the love that we have been given and the things we have been taught in scouting. Amen.

**Our Father...**

**Action** - Today think carefully about what you say and what you do before you say or do anything.



## Day 5 - First Aid

**Input** - Amongst the earliest of the proficiency badges Scouts were encouraged to earn were those concerned with the alleviation of injuries and illness. The skills many Scouts acquired before the War became highly sought after and there are numerous examples of Scouts assisting in hospitals and convalescent homes across the country with the care of the sick and injured. Their services as hospital orderlies and messengers were equally highly valued. Scouts also raised much money to provide Ambulances both on the front and at home



*(Scout Association archives)*

**Prayer** - Loving God, you give us the skills, through scouting to save lives and care for others. Help us always to be loving and caring with others less fortunate than ourselves and especially with those who are sick, injured or who have special needs. Amen.

**Our Father...**

**Action** - Remember the third scout law in all you do today, 'A scout is friendly and considerate'.



## Day 6 - Work behind front lines

**Input** - Places of rest and refuge were provided to give the men somewhere to relax and recuperate from the rigours of the Front and also, perhaps, to provide more seemly alternatives to the "estaminets" and other dubious establishments to be found in most of the towns and villages in Northern France and Flanders. The huts were supplied in

co-operation with the YMCA and other organisations and, from modest beginnings, grew to play an important role in helping the men who patronised them forget



for a while at least the trials and tribulations of their existence in the trenches. The staff for the hut was selected from the Scout Movement, an appeal being sent out through the Headquarters Gazette to members of the Old Scout Society. The problem, as always, was securing the funds for the establishment of further huts. One was paid for and run by a Scoutmaster called Burchardt Ashton and was sited near Ypres in Belgium near to the notorious Ypres Salient. This so-called hut was, in fact, a marquee and was subsequently moved to other sites in the region. The success may be judged by the fact that, in late December 1915, a hut was opened at Etaples and became probably the best known of all. Etaples is situated a few miles to the south of Boulogne in Northern France and by the middle of 1915 had become the main base for British troops. The base was not far distant from the Front and was subject to fairly regular shelling and air raids but the Hut never closed. To emphasise its Scouting connections, it was staffed by former Scouters and always had the Scout Colours flying.

*.(Scout Association archives)*

**Prayer** - Loving God, may we always think of the needs of others and seek out opportunities to use the gifts we have developed through scouting to serve others. Amen.

**Our Father...**

**Action** - Look for opportunities today to help others.



## Day 7 - Enlisting

**Input** - Many Scout Masters enlisted immediately and many scouts old enough to enlist (and even some too young!). Figures computed at the very end of the War by Scout HQ show that somewhere in the region of 84,000 British Scouts served or were serving in the armed forces, of whom over 8,000 were killed. There is no indication of numbers of wounded. A further 2,800 Scouts from the Empire also served, largely from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa but men from all parts of the Empire answered the mother country's call, from Newfoundland to the Gold Coast (now known as Ghana). Empire Scouts, of course, were well represented in these contingents. Scouts from India served in Mesopotamia as well as on the Western Front; Scouts from Fiji and various Caribbean Islands such as Trinidad were present too. According to the figures gathered together by Imperial HQ in 1919, of the approximately 2,800 Scouts from all the Colonies and Dominions who served, 273 were killed. Again, these figures are almost certainly an under estimate.

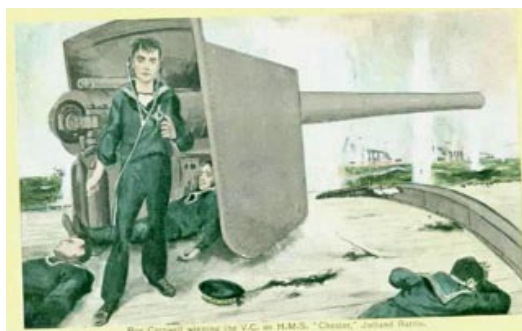
*(Scout Association archives)*



**Prayer** - Loving God, we think today about all those who died in the First World War, about those who were wounded and those affected by their deaths. May the peace for which they fought never be forgotten and may scouting be an instrument of your peace. Amen.

**Our Father...**

**Action** - Try to be an instrument of peace and reconciliation in camp today.



Jack Cornwell (the first scout Victoria Cross)

*Reflections compiled by and prayers written by Rev John Seddon MA National Chaplain (RC)*