

## Story 04

### Map Reading

It was Mid Summers Day a Friday. A poor day wet but warm and a bit windy, because of this we asked the cubs to turn up at Killock with a pair of Wellingtons each, just in case.

The previous weeks at the regular Cub Meetings to this hike, we had spent our time drawing and learning Convention Signs on an Ordinance Survey map. Different classes of road, footpaths, bridges, all the usual stuff, contour lines.

We had assembled a model hill. I had fretted out in hardboard, a few layers marked out and sawn to match the area around Little Wenlock. It gave the boys some idea how the lines drawn on the map had some significance, in indicating sloping ground, where the steep bits were.

We turned at Gorway Road up as soon as the boys came from school all dressed the part I had a two ton Luton Body Van at the time. It was already packed with food, tents, all the regular equipment. The cubs threw their kit into the van and climbed aboard. The plan was for Rufus a Venture scout to come with us. He was familiar with the van. While the other Ventures travelled separately to the Cabin, there to prepare for the cubs to arrive. Once we were set down at the start of our route, he would take the van to the Cabin, to rig the 14'0 tents. In other words get the site ready.

There were 12 or so Cubs, the starting point was the far end of the road coming out of Iron Bridge, by the river bridge at Buildwas. We had a drink and ate the sandwiches we had brought from home.. All was well, we crossed the main road and found a track, or we thought so. We were in a farm yard. A fellow quickly appeared from a shed on hearing Cub noises and directed us to the other side of the hedge, which I and Bernard thought was a tumbling stream. There was about three inches of water flowing down this gap between two hedges, our helping farm hand assured us it was the path indicated on the map. Off we set. It was as well I had instructed the boys to bring wellingtons.

After a short uphill paddle the ground levelled the water was only shallow and there were the electric over head cables that followed the path, all we had to do was walk beneath them till we met the road around the Wrekin.

The map we had confirmed that the “right of way” was directly beneath the high tension cables. What had not occurred to us to me and Bernard was the map was out of date. The electric cables we were following were new ones and the path was just over a slight rise to the North of us . To compound the mistake the route of the path we wanted was diverging from the cables we were following. This left Bernard and I leading twelve or so cubs across ploughed fields, soggy meadows and eventually to a blind corner of a field surrounded with a high hedge and a land slip. The ground had slipped into a series of steps about 200 mm wide by the width of the narrow end of this field 80 feet . The steps made a convenient stairs to descend the slope. Where each step had formed there was a kerf behind it full of water. We approached the hedge looking for an egress when I noticed that one of the Cubs had only one wellington.

“Where’s your other wellington?” He nodded towards the slope. The cub and I went back to the steps and after groping in a few kerfs we found it. There was a small brook at this low point of the field and we swilled out the very liquid mud, leaving him with a very wet foot, but two wellington.

We studied the situation for a while, the other side of the hedge was a metalled road. The plan was now to pass the cubs over the hedge. Bernard climbed over first and I on the field side, hoisted each lad high enough for him to be caught by Bernard and handed to the road. The rest of the hike was rather dull after that. We skirted to the West of Little Hill making good progress now that we were on familiar ground. The path veered around the bottom of the Banana Slide and there was the cabin looking like home, tents rigged a huge camp fire, hot drinks. The clouds broke at this moment over Shrewsbury letting a great beam of sunlight to bathe the plain below us, a wonderful sight. The effort seemed worthwhile after all. Once we had eaten and poked a few sticks into the fire the boys were grateful to go to their tents and sleep.

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The next day I proposed the mapping theme to continue. After breakfast the dads that had wished to attend and all the cubs gathered in the van, the scheme being, to take everyone to the Golf Course area by the M54, there to drop off the cubs in three groups, each group to be observed unknown by the dads. It was to be as much a challenge for the dads to track the boys unknown, as for the youngsters to find their way back to the Cabin. It worked in parts, two groups adopted the theme, reading the map finding out where they were and seeking the best way back, using the map and compass. When the maps, compasses and instruction sheets were handed out, I gave each cub fifty pence to spend at the village shop in Little Wenlock. I had called into the shop earlier to guarantee any shortfall in the cub spending, just in case what they wanted cost more than fifty pence. This idea in part would prove to be a collecting point where we could monitor their progress. Well it worked two out of three.

The third group knew what to do before they were out of the van. There's the TV Mast on top of the Wrekin, the Cabin is just the other side a "Bee line" was the answer.

The planned visit to the Tuck Shop was promptly forgotten. The group set off with determination directly towards the TV Mast a true Bee line. Ploughed fields, copse and woodland, a field full of sheep, until they came to an electric fence, here I caught up with them, the orange coloured lines were familiar to everyone. The orange conductor did not appear to be continuous, I surmised that it was old stock control and now defunct. Grasping the conductor I felt nothing

"It's dead" I proclaimed with authority. The misguided leader of this group took the initiative, straddling over the fence he held the wire and received an electric jolt, until that point I had no idea that a boy as young as this knew such words, now the others knew as well. We found the track around Big Hill and were soon home.

### Map reading

The planned evening meal was fish fingers and chips. In the stock of food bought to camp was six by one litre bottles cheap sunflower oil, this was tipped into a large Dixie and wedged securely in the embers of the camp fire, which had burned all day. The oil quickly came up to temperature, so that a "had been frozen" chip started to cook as soon as it touched the oil. There were plenty of chips purchased, we reasoned about ten oz's each and a few more to allow for disasters. Plus seven fish fingers each plus a few for disasters. The method of cooking fish fingers was to place them on the chips once the chips had risen to the surface of the oil. It worked a treat. It all smelled just right until the smell of burning rubber pervaded. On closer observation one of the cubs was so keen to be served he shuffled closer and closer to the cooking until he was standing in the fire and his wellingtons were on fire. Explain that to his mom.