

Story 13

Competition Camp at Beaudesert

The year must be about 1974. The District Commissioner had resurrected the old rules for the "Saxton Sword" camping competition. Although the sword itself had long disappeared. A minimum of six scouts plus a leader to attend the camp from five o'clock Friday till lunch time Sunday.

The Group at this time owned a Bedford van. Someone had painted it with a careful coat of navy blue paint, I think it was Briars. Looking at this van it needed identity plates similar to navy vehicles. So I asked the sign writer who decorated the firm's vans to paint "divisional" plates on the rear doors, one had the Walsall Central badge, the other the West Mercia County badge. The doors were sign written with the white stripe and trident to depict our scarf. WALSALL SEA COUTS down the sides, with the Admiralty Badge, the navy crown and Anchor from our shirts on each front door. Very nautical, the van certainly looked the part.

I could not leave the firm until the men had been paid, so we were two hours late in starting out, arriving at Beau at seven o'clock. Because we had missed the initial inspection and registry we had already forfeit the competition.

The team consisted "Fire lighter" Griffiths and his smaller brother

mini fire lighter	Griffiths
my son Rufus	Griffiths my son
Dave	Harrington
Will	Harrington
Nick	Harrington
Andy	Crabtree

Enough team members but a bit short on surnames.

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By the time we had erected a Stores Tent and a fourteen footer, with an eating shelter near by it was dark.

Jan and I had shopped the night before for the provisions and it had been agreed at the Pre-camp meeting that we would have packet curry and rice for that first meal. Something simple, simmer the contents of the packet, boil and swill the rice, job done. Janet had also baked a Lemon Merange flan for us.

The team had strung a taut line between two trees to make a ridge, installing a trailer cover sheet pegged and secured at the corners. A table and two equipment boxes made the seats with a 25 litre can at one end for a top seat. We had found a few old building bricks from the walled garden and constructed a fire grate of sorts. Three pressure lamps completed the scene, quite homely.

With a single bottle of cheap white wine, just a taste each; I was poised to dip my spoon in the tomato soup before me, when tap on the shoulder drew my attention. John The District Commissioner asked if I would go around the other groups and mark out of three the quality of their evening meals. Standing up I offered my seat to John, saying have my meal. There is plenty to go round and I'll come back for mine hen I've been round the other sites. I have never seen such squalor, just about everyone was eat of a plate in their laps, dim hurricane lamps with sooty glasses, abound , I saw nothing boiled, baked, or cooked in foil . The ground around each site was littered with used frying pans, I had no idea how to award any points to anyone. Sadly I wandered back to our enclave, brightly lit with the pressure lamps and John about to demolish his sweet. There was plenty to go round the boys had saved for me a complete meal.

"It has been a long time since I enjoyed a meal like this" was his comment, every time I met him after that at Meetings or parades, he always mentioned that evening.

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The rest of the camp was eventful. Abseiling in the Quarry; Six types of camp fire; A knotty session;

Saturday afternoon the programme asked for each group to put on a base, covering a subject in scout training. In the absence of any boat items we chose various types of camp fires ie. Trench cooking fire

Star fire

Gilwell camp fire

A Reflector fire

A Camp kitchen fire

The wind was fresh and the reflector of our display made a bigger fire than the demonstrator. Ah Well! You win and win again. As a side line we cooked twists and Dampers

Saturday Evening there was formal Camp Fire in the Hollow, some where n this period thee had been cause to learn Crest of a Wave, we were abysmal and none of us knew the verse any way. Our troop anthem or rather Jos Carvers anthem is The Chinaman " chickle e chore chan, his head was big and his feet were small, so the poor little fellow could hardly walk at all" The song or our rendering of it took everyone by surprise

A short service the next morning and clearing up occupied the whole time. It was a general dismiss flag down. Finish

No winners, losers, no presentations, I think the Third loused it up for the District. I certainly have never seen any reference to it