

The Early History of Sea Scouting

I have never been a Sea Scout, so I tread carefully, (or should that be paddle cautiously?) when it comes to making pronouncements about recent developments in Sea Scouting. However, having read much of what there is to read about the life of B-P and the history of our movement, it does seem to me that the history of Sea Scouting is inextricably bound up in that of the Movement as a whole



Baden-Powell's Seafaring Background

BADEN-POWELL grew up being constantly reminded of his family's naval connections. His maternal grandfather was Captain William Smyth who, from a lowly start, became an Admiral in 1863 and was distinguished in many fields. B-P's father died when he was only three, and not unnaturally he used to love visiting his grandfather who would regale him with stories of the sea as they paced an imaginary 'quarterdeck'.

B-P was brought up to believe - though there seems little evidence for it - that he was related to Capt. John Smith, of *Pocahontas* fame in Virginia USA. (A play based on the story was to feature in the first part of *Scouting for Boys* published 1908.) There were other family stories concerning their links to Nelson.

True or not, B-P grew up with the romance of the sea in his blood, and it was not surprising that his older brother Warington, ten years B-P's senior, set his sights on a career in the Merchant Marine. Warington was an early pioneer in canoe sailing, and had written a book *Canoe travelling: and practical hints on building and fitting canoes*. He completed three years in the training establishment *HMS Conway* before joining the *Hotspur* on the Smith Line in 1864.



Warington Baden-Powell

WARINGTON Baden-Powell was to play an important role in Sea Scouting. (His unusually-spelt forename was quite common in the family deriving from a kinship connection in the Shrewsbury, Shropshire, area.)

He joined *HMS Conway* in August, 1861, aged 14 as entry number 187. *HMS Conway* was a permanently moored ex-Royal Navy ship 'training establishment' which was used for accommodation and training purposes.

The fees were 35 guineas per annum, with clothing and washing an additional £7 5s. (The full cost of £44 would be more than a workingman's yearly income!) The ship, formerly *HMS Winchester*, was acquired from the Admiralty in 1861 and served as *HMS Conway* until 1876. She was launched in 1816 and after a long and eventful career was broken up in 1921 at Plymouth. Unfortunately I have not been able to find any pictures of this *HMS Conway*. The last *HMS Conway* ceased to function as a training establishment in 1974. There is an excellent organisation 'Friends of *HMS Conway*' to whom I am indebted for all the information relating Warington Baden-Powell's time whilst he was stationed on it. The log of *HMS Winchester/HMS Conway* 1816-61 is appended to this article as [Appendix A](#).

At the end of Warington's first year his Commander, Capt. Mowll noted that though his conduct was 'Good' he was 'Rather troublesome'. At the end of his three years at *Conway* he passed out 8th in a class of 25 cadets. His Naval report gave his ability as 'Good', and his conduct as 'Very Good'. However, academically he was only 'Fair' in his ability, application and conduct. Despite this, his overall performance was quite sufficient for him to be awarded what his official record calls a 'Double Extra Certificate'.



HMS Conway Crest in Warington's time



Crest presently in use by the HMS Conway Association

Whilst Warington was on *HMS Conway*, he made a model of the ship. It is currently in the collection of the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, London, but is not on display.

Another of Baden-Powell's brothers, George, also became a Merchant Navy Officer on the India service. It would seem likely that he too might have gone to *HMS Conway*, but I have been unable to locate his records.

Warington had become an authority on the making and design of collapsible and sailing canoes. He tested his designs in practice with many long distance journeys notably on a tour of the Baltic sea ports. In 1871 he published a book that combined his designs and adventures called *Canoe Travelling: Log of a Cruise on the Baltic and Practical Hints on Building and Fitting Canoes*. It is not surprising, given the level of fitness the Baltic Cruise must have entailed, that same year W B-P won a 'Paddling Race' on the Thames, the inscribed silver biscuit-barrel trophy is in the author's collection.



The following year, when he was 15, Baden-Powell accompanied his brothers on a cross-country expedition by collapsible canoe. They paddled up the Thames to its source, carried the canoe across the watershed, then journeyed down the river Severn and up the Wye into Wales. They slept in tents and cooked their meals over open fires. The brothers also crossed Scotland from coast to coast using the Crinan Canal. These journeys in collapsible canoes would still make wonderful expeditions today, in 1872, they must have been amazing experiences. Little wonder then that B-P was to write later on in his life that he started his Scouting as a Sea Scout on his family holidays. (*The Scout* October 2nd 1926).

Warington Baden-Powell resigned from the Merchant Navy aged 26 in 1873 to take up a career in law and became a Q.C. (Queen's Counsel) at the Admiralty. As he left *HMS Conway* without any legal training whatsoever in 1864, this heady progress seems quite amazing and in its own way, paralleled the meteoric rise of B-P in his army career.

The young officer designed and supervised the building of his own 5-ton yacht the *Diamond*. The photograph him at the helm at the helm of his yacht,

For the next three years Baden-Powell had many holidays with his brothers cruising the South Coast. He was often to 'yarn' about those days and the 'scrapes' and rough weather encountered. B-P was appointed cook on many of the expeditions and wrote that he owed his later campfire culinary skills to his survival instincts, it was a choice between cooking something edible or going hungry. B-P acknowledged that had Warrington acted as a father to him and

"infused so much jollity and romance into that early sea-training that it gripped me from the first..."
The Headquarters Gazette, May 14th, 1921.

Landmarks

Brownsea

THERE were many reasons why B-P chose Brownsea Island for his 'experimental camp', but there was no doubt that the closeness of sea bathing and the opportunity to use boats were very appealing.

The 'Humshaugh' Scout Camp

The 1908 camp near Humshaugh was B-P's first camp for established Scouts. There were no water activities other than a dip in the North Tyne, though the campers did visit the then-famous HMS *Calliope* at her moorings in Newcastle. There is evidence that it was intended that the campers be provided with 'sea experiences' at Blyth, Northumberland. The visit may have been thwarted, as other undoubtedly were, by the appallingly bad weather.

By the time the camp was over Scouting was widespread throughout Britain. The *Hexham Courant*, reporting on the Humshaugh camp states that there was a least a patrol in every town through the land. For those established on the coast and by waterways, it was natural that water activities would form a large part of their Scouting.

Scouting for Boys

First published in instalments from 1908 onwards, Boy Scouts reading the very first issue of the series of *Scouting for Boys* had their thoughts directed from the outset towards the sea and ships as its cover showed a line-drawing of a Scout on a cliff longingly looking at a ship out to sea.

In it, B-P maintained that

"...A scout should be able to manage a boat, to bring it properly alongside a ship or pier..."

This, with other advice on boat handling, was under the heading 'Watermanship'. Not long afterwards in December 1908, the 'Seaman Badge' was amongst the first five 'efficiency' badges ever issued. The 1908 Seaman Badge, is shown alongside.



The Beaulieu River Scout Camp

The 1909 camp based on the Beaulieu River, Buckler's Hard and the TS *Mercury* was the third and last Boy Scout camp organised and led by Baden-Powell. It included the water-based activities which had been planned for, but could not take place during the 'Humshaugh' Camp.

It is often said the TS *Mercury* was the genesis of Sea Scouting and in fact there are already plans to celebrate the centennial of Sea Scouting in 2009 using the date of the Beaulieu River camp as its inception. This, however, seems to be yet another 'chicken and egg' situation. There may not have been Sea Scouts with the TS *Mercury*, but certainly the official scheme came later.

Sea Scouting proper

BADEN-POWELL knew from his own experiences and the work done at the Beaulieu River camp that here was another form of training that would be just as useful to the Country as mainstream Scouting and, in his brother Warrington, he had on hand just the man to write the book!

Warrington outlined the concept of Sea Scouting on a Scoutmaster's Course in London in January 1911. B-P wrote:

"The general scheme of Sea Scouting for Boy Scouts was outlined by my brother Warrington Baden-Powell, who although a King's Counsel in Law, is also an old sailor, and has kept up his interest in the sea by spending most of his time sailing when he is not at work in the Admiralty Court. As he possesses the heart of a boy, he is well fitted to explain the aim of Sea Scouting.

"Sea Scouting is not necessarily a scheme for turning out a boy as a ready-made sailor with a view to his going to sea. But rather to teach him, by means which attracts him, to be handy, quick and disciplined man, able to look after himself and to help others in danger.

"Boat handling, swimming, and saving life in the water can be taught to inland troops just as well as those belonging to the coast..."

"When it is possible to get a floating club house ... the sea spirit enters still more into the boy's mind..."

B-P was never a man for letting the grass grow under his feet, so whilst Warrington was writing his book B-P was preparing the ground.

On March 25th, 1911, B-P wrote a letter to the Admiralty asking for permission to establish sea scouts as Seamen, and Coast Watchers. Approval was given. Coast Watching was, as far as B-P was concerned, not a 'time-filling' activity, but a real need.

As one might expect of Major-General, B-P had always maintained a 'prepare for war if you wish to maintain peace' stance. He was to go further in 1908 when addressing what he thought to be a private meeting in Newcastle, as identifying the future threat to the country as coming from Germany and identifying the north-east Coastline as a possible invasion route. At the time this was seen as libelling a 'friendly power', questions were asked in the House and B-P was called upon

to account for his remarks. He said he knew from first-hand experience the strength and efficiency of the German forces and how the German military mind worked. Although there were no German landings on the north-east coast as such, (though there were naval bombardments) had B-P's predictions been acted on, who is to say that the First World War, if not avoidable, might have been curtailed by better preparedness?

B-P envisaged Coast Watchers operating within Sea Scouting. Coast Watchers however, would be able wear sou'westers instead of sailor's caps.

In advance of his brother's manual, B-P published a 'delightful booklet' on Sea Scouting published in May 1911 by James Brown and Sons, Glasgow, priced 6d. The booklet announces that the Manual is on the way, and 'floats' many ideas such as that a Sea Scout Troop would be styled 'The Ship's Company'.

Early Sea Scouts

IMMEDIATELY Sea Scouting was announced, there were many Boy Scout groups, especially on the coast, who wanted to transfer to the new scheme. Unlike mainstream Scouts, there were sufficient adults wanting to be Sea Scoutmasters to satisfy the demand. Many of the volunteers came from the ranks of the Coastguard, and this enabled some Sea Scout groups to be established before Warrington's book was published.

Captain Daintree, RN, had been detailed to investigate the potential of Scout coast watching by the Board of Trade, and he met "intending Scoutmasters or local commissioners' interested in the idea of Scouts becoming Coastguards at home and abroad." The September 1912 edition of the *Headquarters Gazette* carried features on Sea Scouts Groups whose history also predated Warrington's book.

By June, 1911, Kentish Scouts were Coast Watching under the leadership of Lieut. Garrett at Dymchurch.

By April, 1911 the Sea Scouts in Vancouver, Canada now had a fine Guardship. (A guardship was the name given to a Sea Scout meeting place when it took the form of any form of vessel.)

Amongst the early groups in England and abroad were:

1st Cleethorpes

The first members of this group had started their own patrol on reading the part issues of *Scouting for Boys!* Scoutmaster R J Chester was from the Church Lads Brigade and some of his lads had asked him to become a Scoutmaster. The troop specialised in Sea Scouting as soon as it was announced, having a Coastguard instructor. They had a dinghy and took it out under the guidance of a 'sea dad'. In September, 1912, the group had not been able to find a wreck for a 'guard ship' and met on land. Many lads from this group found employment in steam trawlers out of Grimsby.

1st Ratcliffe, London

This was the first London troop to take up Sea Scouting. It was founded on March 5th, 1909, by a Mr Lukus, but was not seafaring for its first few months. On June 10th, 1910, however, the group set sail in their Scoutmaster's 9-ton cutter to Canvey Island for a camp. That was just the start, they went on to buy an old whaler from the naval dockyard at Plymouth, and involved Lieut. Keen of the Port of London Authority who then went on to form the P.L.A. Sea Scouts. (Lt Stuart Garnett in the second edition of his *Seamanship for Scouts* refers to 'Ratcliff Sea Scouts' *Idler*' as a large vessel.

1st Skegness

Twelve of the senior boys were placed under the instruction of Chief Coastguard Officer Hook, and they became the nucleus of a Sea Scout Troop, which camped at Normanton-on-Sea, in May, 1911. The Scoutmaster was Mr F Rose. They obtained a grant and built a Coastguard Station where Coast Watching was practiced.

Hamble Sea Scouts, Mercury Group

My information comes from the Group's own web page which, if correct, must indicate that they have a very significant history. It would appear that there were five patrols of Scouts established on TS *Mercury* in 1908. They were of course not Sea Scouts, as this branch of the movement had yet to be formed, but were referred to as Marine Scouts. They were under the leadership of Rev. Bloomfield. In April, 1910, a *Mercury* Scout called Enric saved another lad from drowning by jumping into the river Hamble from a boat to effect the rescue. He was subsequently awarded the first Silver Cross in Scouting. The group were registered as Sea Scouts on July 10th, 1910.

Gibraltar Sea Scouts



Scouting in Gibraltar has a long history, with the 1st Gibraltar Troop being founded as early as March, 1908, which must surely make them first Scout Troop to be formed outside Britain. Since then, there have been as many as five groups on 'The Rock', but the 5th Gibraltar Sea Scouts, formed in 1914, is the only one still active. Its history may not go back as far as some of the other Sea Scout groups mentioned in this article, but they are included because the group features elsewhere in *Scouting Milestones*.

The image on the left is of part of an envelope franked with a Gibraltar stamp featuring the ship's crest of HMS *Blankney*. The stamp is 'tied' by a pictorial cancel commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the Sea Scouts in Gibraltar.

The first parade of the Sea Scouts in Gibraltar was on Empire Day, 1914, with Sea Scouts wearing white neckerchiefs made from the bed sheets of HMS *Cormorant*, the accommodation ship at Gibraltar! The pipe band attended the first World Jamboree at Olympia London in 1920. Amongst its leaders was Pipe Major Rob Roy, the 'Piper of Tobruk'. The Sea Scouts' house was destroyed in the Bedenham explosion of 1951. Sea Scouts from Gibraltar often met B-P and Lady Olave B-P when they visited the port, notably in

1934 during the Cruise of the *Adriatic*.



Sea Scouts from Gibraltar at the 1920 Olympia Jamboree. (The Jamboree Book p. 11)

Sea Scouting and Seamanship for Boys by Warrington Baden-Powell

THE manual appeared in July, 1912. Warrington had a forthright style, which was not as easy to relate to as that of his more famous brother. In his preface he writes:

"I have difficulty in writing on such wide and technical subjects as pertain to the sea and ships, in a manner of sufficiently elementary treatment and condensed form as is necessary for young boys and a small book. What older boys 'don't like they can lump', and what any boy does not understand he can ask his Scout Master, and what the Scout Master wants - he can ask me."

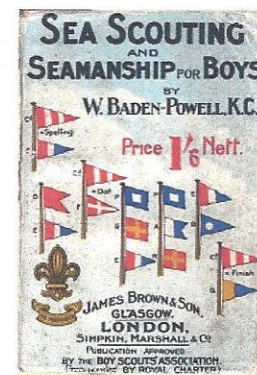
However, like *Scouting for Boys* before it *Sea Scouting and Seamanship for Boys* lays out a complete and coherent philosophy and training plan, some of which is still in evidence today. Rules, organisation, badges, ranks, uniform, and advice on training are clearly stated.

"Coastguards or retired Navy personnel are to be used for badge testing wherever possible. It would be advisable for each group to appoint a 'sea dad' who would generally be a 'Coast Guardsman', ex-naval officer or skipper of a fishing vessel."

One thing was to be quite clear: "Sea scouting is simply a brand of boy scouting." This was often expressed as, "Scouts first, seamen afterwards."

Warrington concluded his book with a chapter called *Pipe-down*. In it he wrote:

"This little ship [Sea Scouting] is well underway; and, so far as can be judged without actual trial, appears to be in every way fully found and fit for her first cruise."



'Underway'

THE Chief Scout wrote in his 'Outlook' in the January, 1912 edition of the *Headquarters Gazette*:

"A practical scheme has been worked out for us by Mr Hordern, of which my brother, an old sailor, has compiled a book of instruction, and as Lord Charles Beresford has accepted office as Chief Sea Scout, we may look for big development in this branch."

The selection of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford G.C.B., M.P as Chief Sea Scout must surely indicate that Warrington Baden-Powell was either too busy, or did not want the limelight of the post. Baden-Powell had known Lord Beresford for some time, as there is a record of correspondence between them as early as 1904. Lord Beresford though was only a figurehead as he himself admitted in an interview in a later edition of the *Headquarters Gazette*. His work as an M.P. precluded his active involvement in Sea Scouting. Rather perversely, he did indicate in a *Headquarters Gazette* article that it was his active involvement with his men that had made him a successful Admiral.



He was, however, present at the first Sea Scout Rally held on July 20th, 1912, at Earl's Court Lake, where there was a parade featuring a replica of Drake's Flagship, HMS *Revenge*. Lady and Sir Charles were welcomed by a 100-strong Sea Scout Guard of Honour. Rocket Apparatus, Breeches Buoy and Life Saving at Sea were all demonstrated. There was a whale hunt with a mechanical whale, and a Red Indian attack by canoe, where all the participants ended up in the water, much to the delight of the onlookers.

By March, 1912, the new Sea Scout Regulations had been issued to all Commissioners and although Sea Scout badges would not be available until June, Sea Scouts could start working for them immediately. On the left is the then-new King's Sea Scout Badge. I wonder how many of these have been thrown away by people thinking they have no relevance to Scouting?

Sea Scouts quickly captured the public imagination; they were cheered and cheered when a group of them appeared in the Lord Mayor's Parade of 1912, complete with whaler.

Seamanship for Scouts

THERE is no doubt that Warrington Baden-Powell's book had great impact and it remained in print until at least 1949, but I am not certain that it remained as central to Sea Scouting. By 1915 a second edition had appeared of another book *Seamanship for Scouts* (illustrated above) by Lt. Stuart Garnett. The



book was originally published before the Great War of 1914. I have a copy of a 1952 edition. Warington Baden-Powell's book is not mentioned. Lt. Garnett quotes as his credentials for authorship that he was the Master of the Scout Ketch the *Mirror*, of which we shall learn much more later on this page. It seems probable that it was this book rather than Warington's that became the Sea Scout Manual.

Warington Baden-Powell died on April 24th, 1921, from tuberculosis. The Chief said that it was this that prevented his brother from taking a more active role in Sea Scouting. Warington left a small legacy to 'assist promising young seaman in our ranks.'

Early Setbacks

The Leysdown Tragedy



Scouts of the 2nd Walworth Scout Group training by the old Waterloo Bridge, London, before the tragedy in their ill-fated cutter. Scoutmaster Marsh is at the helm

On August 4th, 1912, a terrible tragedy occurred off Leysdown, Isle of Sheppey, when nine Scouts were drowned. There was a sudden squall, which struck and capsized an ex-naval 32-foot cutter which was taking twenty-three scouts of the 2nd Walworth Troop and their Scoutmaster Mr S J Marsh and helpers on their way to a week's camp at Leysdown. The cutter was two miles out, turning for the shore, when a sudden squall hit the boat causing the occupants to be flung into the sea. The boat righted, but then capsized again. All but one of the boys were swimmers, otherwise loss of life might have been much higher. As it was, nine Scouts died, all but one from the 2nd Walworth.

Those who died were: Noel Filmer, 14; Thompson (Tommy) Filmer, 12; Albert Dack, 11; Harry Gwynn, Patrol Leader, 13; Edward Smith, 11; William Beckham, Patrol Leader, 12; James Skipsey, 12; Percy Huxford, 12 and Frank Masters, 14.

Frank Masters was not one of the Walworth Scouts but a helper from the Training Ship *Arethusa*

The group were neither unprepared nor novices. They had been chosen to give a demonstration at the Sea Scout Rally at Earl's Court only one month previously. The Scoutmaster Mr Sidney John Marsh was young city businessman, an ex-Dulwich College boy, who believed he was fulfilling a Christian mission in working with less privileged boys in Walworth. He had also, since 1904, been an Assistant Paymaster in the Royal Naval Reserve.

The same journey to camp had been made the previous year by Dulwich Mission Scouts who made good friends with Leysdown's senior Coastguard, Chief Petty Officer Streeter. Marsh and Streeter had planned the Walworth Scouts' voyage together. Streeter had been waiting for the arrival of the cutter at Leysdown. He had word of her at 1.30 p.m. and ran to his Lookout Station. He was unable to see the boat because of the weather, but then it cleared, and he could see the cutter about 2 miles out. The wind veered round as the cutter put about to make a run for the shore. Streeter was horrified to see her keel over, throwing boys into the water. He immediately launched the lifeboat crewed by four of his men with himself at the tiller and lost no time in reaching the scene. Boys were in the water crying out for help and Scoutmaster Marsh was on the point of drowning. Marsh was rescued but immediately plunged back in again to save a drowning boy. The lifeboat rescued at least eight boys and Marsh, but they were not able to recover any of the bodies.

Mr John Filmer, father of two of the boys, an ex-naval man, was present on the boat when she capsized, but like the Scoutmaster, could not prevent the tragedy. He told reporters that the boat keeled over without any warning flinging him into the water.

"Of course, the first thing I did was to look round for my boys." he was later reported as saying. "I saw Tommy being held up by Mr Marsh. Some distance away, for there was a strong tide, was Noel the elder boy, clinging to the dinghy we had been towing."

By the time the Coastguards arrived, both lads were drowned. Like the other casualties they were not able to withstand the cold or fury of the waves. Mr Filmer's watch stopped at five minutes to two, setting the time of the incident. Five Coastguards were assisted by two civilians, RH Bawden and WJ Twinning, and their role has been sometimes overlooked in what was beyond all doubt a terrible a catastrophe, but it should not be remembered that thanks to their heroic efforts 20 members of the party including SJ Marsh and other adult helpers were saved.

One of the rescued lads, Scout Schofield, was only brought round after half an hour's resuscitation by the Schafer method. Scoutmaster Pottock of the 2nd Cobham Troop tried to assist by swimming out with a lifeline, and very nearly made the scene. Scoutmaster Picket of the Sheppey troop helped to render first aid once the party returned to land.

Immediately after the incident Chief Petty Officer Streeter said that Scoutmaster Marsh was "...so distracted I fear he might loose his reason."

One of the drowned, Patrol Leader William Beckham, had two brothers who were in the boat and saved. His mother told a reporter that she owed their lives to Scoutmaster Marsh to whom she would be eternally grateful. (David Beckham, England Football Captain 2000, is closely related to this family.)

Even at this distance in time, I have found details of this tragedy and the subsequent funeral harrowing to say the least. The personal circumstances of some the boys adds more pathos, especially that of Harry Gwynn. Harry's father had died when he was only seven, and his mother the Whitsun before the tragedy. Her last request was that Scoutmaster Marsh adopt her son as she believed he 'was just the father for him'. Marsh had legally adopted the boy but was unable to save him from the water.

The First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr Winston Churchill, M.P. ordered the destroyer HMS *Fervent* to bring the coffins up the Thames for burial. As she passed by, all shipping on the river lowered their flags in salute. There were thousands of sympathisers on hand when the ship docked at Rotherhyde.

The Union Flag covered the white coffins on their journey to St. John's Church Walworth, where 100,000 people filed passed them. Scouts from the Walworth Group stood at attention, heads bowed in front of each coffin and by rota remained in place throughout the night.



A postcard image of the five Coastguards and two civilians who help save the Leysdown survivors, pictured above the stricken vessel.

Boy Scouts from many different countries attended the mass funeral held on August 10th, and, despite continuous rain, the route of the funeral was lined many deep. Boys Scouts, linked together by their staves, kept back the crowd as the cortège passed by. Immediately behind the clergy and in front of the horse-drawn hearses, marched Scoutmaster Marsh who had the total sympathy of the silent crowd.

The Daily Express estimated that there were over a million people present.

B-P sent a wreath in the shape of a lifebuoy for each of the victims. There were photographs of every aspect of the funeral in a special 16-page issue of the *Daily Mirror* of Monday, August 19th, 1912.

Only eight of the victims were buried that day. Percy Baden Powell Huxford, named in honour of Baden-Powell because he was born during the Relief of Mafeking, was not amongst them. His body had been swept out to sea and was not recovered until August 13th, nine days after the tragedy. His funeral was on the August 15th, when he was interred with his friends. The pain of his parents in waiting for his body to be recovered, yet having to endure the funeral of the others, can hardly be imagined.

The *Headquarters Gazette*, in August, 1914, showed this memorial designed by Sir Gilbert Scott R.A., and executed by Miss Read. It was funded by 100,000 penny donations and placed in Nunhead Cemetery in the summer of 1914 in honour the nine Scouts. One of the donors wrote the following:

"Dear Sir,
I enclose 12 pennies towards the memorial to my brother scouts. I feel I ought to send more than one penny as if I had not had a sore throat I might have been one of them,
Yours Truly
James Cook
2nd Walworth Scout Troop."



A cast of the memorial was exhibited in the Royal Academy.

There would of course have been an official inquest into the tragedy and no doubt investigations at Scout Headquarters, but I am unaware of the official findings. However, in the *Headquarters Gazette*, of October, 1912, the following regulations were published, but as they appear to be almost unrelated to the circumstances of the Leysdown Tragedy they might indicate that no blame was attached to the Scout Association.

1. No boat shall taken over for the use of Sea Scouts until approved.
2. No boat shall be used by Sea Scouts unless in charge of a competent person, and properly manned.
3. No Sea Scout shall form part of the crew of any rowing boat until he has passed for his Swimmer's badge or form part of the crew of a sailing boat until he has become a 'Waterman'.

'Waterman' was a rank rather than a badge though a pre-requisite was to hold the Swimmer and Boatman badges. A 'Waterman' was entitled to wear an eight-plait lanyard, which he had to make himself. There then followed a list of regulations for 'Sea Scout Committees', who were to monitor Sea Scout activities and ensure the rules were obeyed.

During the research for this article in the Scout Archive at Gilwell Park in September 2001, the archivist, Paul Moynihan, had an amazing story to tell. He had been contacted by a scrap dealer in 1997 who wanted to know if the name Percy Baden Powell Huxford meant anything to him. The archivist recognised the name Percy Huxford as being one of the victims of the Leysdown Tragedy. The scrap dealer said he had a brass plate with this boy's name on it amongst others. Mr Moynihan went to visit the dealer and found that he had the brass name plaque from the monument. It transpires that on June 4th, 1969, the *Evening Standard* carried an article about the theft of the actual statue, which was cast in bronze. The police felt that it would not be recovered, but already melted down. Its scrap value then was only £40.00. I do not know if the separate metal nameplate was stolen at the same time, but Paul Moynihan confirmed it was the stolen plate, which was then donated to the UK Scout Archive.



The story does not quite end there. There is a 'Friends of Nunhead Cemetery' group. They were responsible for a campaign, which resulted in a new memorial of Portland Stone, in the form of an open book, being erected in the cemetery 1992. Scouts everywhere should be grateful for the work of this group, as, without them, there would have been no memorial at that time to commemorate both the Sea Scouts who lost their lives, and to remind us of the bravery of those that tried to save them. I am personally indebted to Mr Rex Batten of the group who has written a most instructive book on the subject (see 'Sources').

On Saturday August 3rd 2002 Ms Cheryl Stonehouse, a *Daily Express* reporter, wrote an article entitled *A River of Tears for the Lost Boys*. So close was it to some of the above that we might be forgiven for thinking that this page might well have informed the article, which concluded with an appeal to raise funds to mount a new plaque in the chapel, an old church, now roofless, in the cemetery. I am not aware of how much was raised by the appeal but know for certain that several there were several Scouting benefactors, and clearly funds were sufficient as a resin cast was made of the original bronze plaque photographed above that was rescued from a scrapyards by the Association's Archivist (again the inspiration for this might have been from these pages?). In June 2003 the new plaque was dedicated in a service of remembrance attended by family members of some of the lost boys, Chiswick Scouts and representatives of the Scout Association.

In March 2007 Milestone's reader John Harvey writes that had to attend a funeral recently in Nunhead Cemetery and whilst there he found the new stone memorial to the Isle of Sheppy Sea Scout victims which prompted him to try and find more information about the tragedy, leading him to the *Milestones* site. He wrote:

" The list of names including two brothers and the ages of the victims moved me deeply...Not a large memorial but very tasteful and obvious enough to notice and tug at the heart strings"

Milestones is most grateful to John for taking the time update us on what is clearly a fitting tribute, taking away perhaps some of the anguish associated with the loss of the statue. Should any reader have reason to visit the cemetery with a camera we would welcome an image of the 1992 stone 'open book' memorial and also the 2003 plaque in the Chapel.

The Ketch *Mirror*

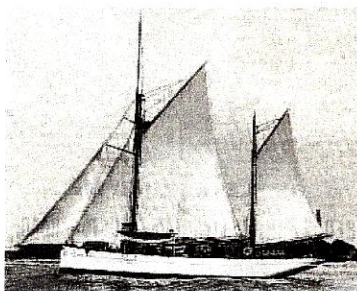
Sea Scouting was well under way, and Baden-Powell must have been very pleased with the public response to fund boats for this new arm of the movement. In July 1912 the *Daily Mirror* newspaper presented a 50-ton Ketch, named the *Mirror*, equipped with the latest wireless equipment, and that was just a start. It was hoped that such gifts would enable all Sea Scouts to have the opportunity of a range of boat-handling activities. The gifts came in all shapes and sizes from sea-going yachts to dinghies for troops established on canals and reservoirs. The first public appearance of Baden-Powell's fiancée Olave Soames with B-P, was to be when they inspected the new vessel on the September 21st, 1912. The delightful picture-postcard, reproduced here, shows the equally delightful Olave chatting to an awe-struck Scout, who may just still be alive to remember the occasion. The caption reads:- No16 Miss Soames "B.P.'s" fiancée chatting with a Scout on board the "Mirror".

[It may interest readers to know that the very rare postcard image of Miss Soames on board *Mirror* was loaned to Milestones by John Ineson, a Scout Ephemera Collector and Historian. The card was being returned to him at meeting of the International Badgers Club at Gilwell Park in 2003 when unfortunately the motor caravan in which it was stored at the time caught fire and burnt to the ground! Unfortunately the image has proved irreplaceable, only this scan remains. John Ineson is still a great friend of these pages!]

The *Mirror* was very soon in service taking Sea Scout Groups for seven-day cruises round the south-east Coastline. One of the groups to use the *Mirror* was *Leander*, a Sea Scout Group which had evolved from the original 2nd Kingston Scout Troop. They spent a week on board in August, 1913. These voyages were an early forerunner of the 'sail-training' cruises now provided for young people by a number of organisations. The *Headquarters Gazette*, in November, 1913, tells the very sad story of how the *Mirror* met her end.

"A party of 13 Sea Scouts, under assistant Scoutmasters Carnell and Vowles, were out for a cruise on board the Boys Scouts' sailing ketch the *Mirror*, the fine yacht that was given to us by the *Daily Mirror* last year. In addition to the scouts there was Capt. Olley, commander of the vessel and two seaman on board."

Assistant S.M. Vowles had also been a sailor.



The evening of Saturday, October 25th, was a fine clear night and most of the Scouts turned in. The *Mirror* was tacking across the Thames between Gravesend and Tilbury having passed two steamers when a third, the *Hogarth*, loomed up, close to. *Hogarth* appeared to be making a turn to pass behind the *Mirror*, but crashed into her amidships sinking her.

For some time the yacht hung on the stem of the steamer and some boys managed to get up onto her. Ropes were thrown and four or five more were saved. *Hogarth's* boat was promptly lowered and picked up three more boys from the water.

When the roll was called, Assistant Scoutmaster Carnell, Sea Scout Boatswain Witt and Sea Scouts S Rendall and Purnell were missing. It was noted; "Pluck was shown by the boys and ASM Vowles."

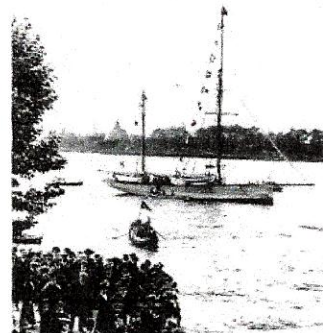
The article went on to say that "Blame is yet to be apportioned" (how unlike a modern disaster!). The *Mirror* was well found, properly equipped and captained, and appeared to have right-of-way.

The Chief Scout wrote of the victims:

"In their short lives they have shown an example to other lads by their voluntary effort to train themselves to be better men."

Earlier on this page I quoted Lt. Stuart Garnett, author of *Seamanship for Scouts* as being the master of the *Mirror*, obviously this was not the case on the night of tragedy. He must then have had a record of safe captaincy as far *Mirror* was concerned.

Lt. Garnett's book, written after the Leysdown tragedy, concentrated greatly on safety. Is it reasonable then to speculate that Garnett's work was allowed to supersede that of Warrington Baden-Powell because the older book, in the light of the tragedy, was seen to be lacking in safety management? If this was the case, despite a new emphasis on safety and a general tightening up on rules, it did not lessen the loss of life. Disasters continued to occur as the number of Sea Scout Groups increased.



Disaster on the River Waveney, Oulton Broad near Lowestoft, Suffolk#

In the *Headquarter's Gazette* of July, 1914, the Chief Scout in his 'Outlook' reports on an inquest the previous month into a tragedy on Oulton Broad. Scoutmaster Thornton W P Lory, Instructor Mr James Lewington and an undisclosed number boys had been drowned.

Research in the Scout Archives revealed that the 1st Carlton (St Marks) Scout Group with the two masters, one instructor and four boys were on a weekend camp at Herringfleet near Oulton Broad. They had camped in a field adjacent to the *Duke's Head Hotel* near Somerleyton on the River Waveney. On striking camp on the bright Whit Monday morning of June 1st, 1914, they stowed all the gear into their boat, a half deck 16' in length 4' 6" in the beam, and rowed down-river to get to Oulton Broad. Once under the railway bridge they raised the mast and tried to hoist the sail. The boat capsized trapping all but one of its crew underneath the sail.

Stanley Wood, aged 17, was the only person to be flung clear. He swam for the bank and ran back to the hotel for help, which was immediately forthcoming, but to no avail. Wood is reported, as saying that he could not explain the tragedy other than there was a sudden gust of wind. All of the party were swimmers. Besides the Scoutmaster and the Instructor mentioned above, the following were also drowned: Sydney E Scarle, 19, Assistant Scout Master; Reggie JAC Middleton, 14; Arthur E Beare, 14 and Sydney Thrower, 15.

The boat had not "...been approved by the Commissioner for sailing purposes, and there is no doubt that she was very heavily loaded and apparently not well stowed."

The commissioner concerned, Mr A Williamson of Yarmouth District, concluded that the boat was too small for the number of passengers and the weight and bulk of the camping gear.



A postcard image of the six drowned boys and the Scoutmaster TWP Lory

The funerals were held at St Mark's Church and there were massed crowds along the road to the Carlton Colville Cemetery. Three hundred local Scouts lined the route and forty mourning coaches followed the horse-drawn hearses. This funeral was very documented by a local photographer who produced no fewer than 16 images that were turned into postcards. The images on this page are two series of cards and are from the collection of John Ineson, Scout Collector and Historian. His collection has been arrived at over a number of years so it possible that other images exist. One of the images shows and names a local Scoutmaster called Scarle talking to a dignitary. One of dead boys had the same unusual surname and so may well have been related.

In July 1914 edition of the Headquarter's Gazette, the Chief Scout in very measured tones states that he had not previously written about the incident *until all the facts were known*. He was very careful not to criticize any individual and he pointed out the Scoutmaster Lory was 'a good amateur sailor' with a young wife who lost her father on the same day. He concluded however that the evidence was that the boat was overloaded and not properly stowed. He remarked that he would not expect to hear of such tragic incidents where proper care over such matters was exercised. He emphasised that Scoutmasters, in looking after other people's children, had a paramount duty to attend to the safety of their charges. The same issue of *Headquarters Gazette* however also reported a *Daily Mirror* article about the *Mirror* tragedy. This hardly independent report was very pro-Scouting and did not apportion blame. Whilst no doubt the Scout Association were relieved not to be publicly blamed, the effect of Waveney incident and the other very tragedies reported on this page, in such a short period of time, must have had a profound effect on all in the Movement and society in general.

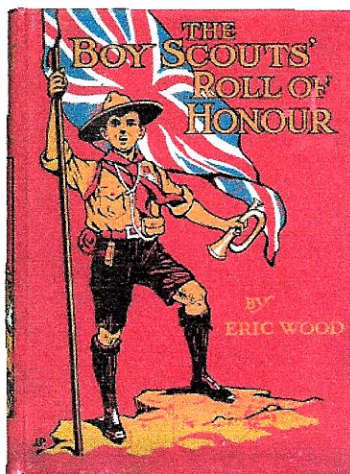


The capsized boat.

The only survivor Stanley Wood was himself to die only two years later when he was killed, aged 19, at the Battle of the Somme. St Mark's Church cemetery at Carleton Colville, near Beccles, Suffolk contains a memorial to Wood and the victims of the disaster Sea Scout disaster.

Life Saving

FORTUNATELY it was not all bad news. As if to offset the dreadful loss of young life, there were many examples of where Sea Scout training had been responsible of the saving of lives. The very next article to the coverage of the Leysdown Tragedy in the *Headquarters Gazette*, was a report from a Coastguard Officer from Padstow who commented on the invaluable assistance rendered to him by Sea Scouts in ensuring all hands were saved from the wreck of the *Bessie*. The lads contributed in a number of ways, "...but were most useful ... owing to their very good knowledge of the life-saving apparatus..."



The book *The Boy Scouts' Roll of Honour*, published in 1914, has a chapter on "the latest thing in Scoutism - Sea Scouts".

There are many accounts of Sea Scout dering-do to be found in its pages and those of the *Headquarters Gazette*, but I include this one because of the connection with the ill-fated *Mirror*.

The last week of July, 1913, found the 10th Kensington Sea Scouts on the *Mirror* in the Hamble. A group of swimmers (non-Scouts) including Arthur Purchase were attempting to swim across the river, when Arthur got into difficulties. The *Mirror's* gig (i.e. her rowing boat tender) was swiftly brought into action by Patrol Leaders Owen and Page. Another Patrol Leader, Bennett, guided them to the drowning boy by shouting directions to the rowers. Arthur Purchase had a severe attack of cramp and was utterly helpless to save himself but was soon hauled into the boat. The rescuers were awarded Scout Gallantry awards.

Neither Wood's account nor the *Headquarters Gazette* made any connection between the tragedy of the *Mirror* and the event related above. This is a pity, as there is clearly great poignancy in the saving of life in July and the greater loss of life in October from the same vessel.

War Clouds

THERE was an early justification to B-P's and his brother's work in starting Sea Scouting. When war came in 1914, there was an immediate need to man the coastline with 'Coast-Watchers', a role many Sea Scouts had been trained and authorised to do. There were Coast Watchers who were not Sea Scouts, some from inland towns as far away from the coast as Wakefield; perhaps this is not so surprising when it is realised that Co-ordinator for this work lived in nearby Pontefract. I intend to look more closely at the work of Scouts, including Sea Scouts, in Wartime as a future *Scouting Milestone* but some idea of Sea Scout service can be found in the *Milestone* on Jack Cornwell V.C.

The *Headquarters Gazette*, in September, 1914, included this summary of the work done by Sea Scouts written by Lieut. R H Hordern R.N., whom the Chief had acknowledged as providing the 'practical scheme' for Sea Scouting.

"There are nearly 1,300 Scouts on this (Coast Watching) work ... and they will probably be required as long as the war lasts.
 "The boys on this duty receive one shilling a day in lieu of rations, but no pay for their services.
 "In most cases the Scouts are taking both day and night duty. They are generally in patrols of eight - two on duty at any one time"

The scouts had to be over 14, and take with them three-day's supply of food. In some cases there was a building available but often they had to camp out, which Lieut. Hordern acknowledged would not be such fun when the weather turned.

The Chief Scout wrote message to the Coast Watchers:

"Keep a good look-out. Show that you are not little boys playing at coast guarding, but that you can really do your bit to help our Royal Navy in their big task for the defence of our country, until we have brought the war to a successful finish - even if it lasts a year or more.
 "Stick to it. Play the game for your country and not for yourselves, and at all times 'Be Prepared'."

Aftermath

THE *Headquarters Gazette* of January, 1918, noted that:

"We are pleased to announce that the Admiralty have decided to approve the use of gold 'wounded stripes' by Sea Scouts who may be injured by any act of the enemy. Already a few of our boys have been injured in this way and they, no doubt, will be very proud to wear the small gold stripe on their left sleeve."

B-P in the *Headquarters Gazette*, of January, 1919, states that by the end of 1918, 25,000 Scouts had taken part in Coast Watching. At the end of hostilities, B-P sent a card to each of them. "...telling him what we think of him. Well done Coast Watchers."
 (I would be very pleased to include, with acknowledgement, an image of one of these cards.)

At an investiture at Buckings Palace on December 19th, 1918, King George V inspected a representative squad of Boy Scout Coast Watchers and expressed his admiration for "...a service which had been carried out so well by the Scouts for the good of the country in a critical period of its history."

Coast Watchers were not officially demobilised until March 7th, 1920, and were the only non-service personnel to take part in the official Victory Parade. Some of the fifty Scouts present wore the ribbon of the British War Medal showing they had gone on to serve as fully-fledged members of the armed forces before the war had come to an end.

There is much evidence to be found on the World Wide Web that Sea Scouting continues to prosper at home and abroad. Indeed, it has its own 'Webring'. For a summary of the movement in UK you can do no better than interrogate the excellent [Scoutbase](#) site. Today, there are around 9,000 UK Sea Scouts.

Appendix

HMS Winchester - Ship's Log

1816 Laid down in Woolwich on the River Thames, London as a Java Class fourth rate 60-gun frigate comprising sixteen 42-pound guns, eight carronades and thirty-six 24-pound guns. 1,487 tbn: 173' x 44' 6". She weighed 487 tons and had a full compliment of 450 men and boys.
 Launched 21 June 1822
 1822-52 Flagship in the West Indies for some time and also served in the East Indies, North America and in the Indian Ocean
 1852 Engaged in the Burmese War
 1855-61 Harbour service at Chatham

The Second HMS Conway

Nov. 1861 The Admiralty decided to loan HMS *Winchester* to HMS *Conway* as a replacement for the original ship, which was not large enough to accommodate the cadets. The two ships exchanged names so HMS *Winchester* became the second HMS *Conway*. This was the year Warrington Baden-Powell joined HMS *Conway*.
 In the 1850s, in order to qualify as a merchant navy officer a four-year apprenticeship had to be served at sea. The Liverpool shipping company of Jones, Palmer & Co. and others had, at the opening of the sea training establishment, announced that two or three years on the *Conway* would be accepted by them as the equivalent of one year at sea, so reducing apprenticeship time. In 1861 the Board Of Trade decided formally that two years spent training on *Conway* would count as one year served as a cadet at sea. Thus *Conway* cadets only had to complete three years training at sea instead of the four required for anyone going straight to sea. For this reason Cadets in their last term were called Quarter Boys or QBs. This practice continued for over 100 years until closure in 1974. Cadets received a *Conway Passing Out Certificate* of Exemption when they left *Conway*.

Acknowledgements

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