

**The 17<sup>th</sup> Dorking (Westcott) Scout Group** was formally established on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1923 and celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1973 by donating the wooden seat by the Lych Gate at Holy Trinity Church and publishing a souvenir booklet. The Local History Group has a copy of this excellent and well-illustrated publication and although the Westcott Scouts disbanded on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 1998, we are happy to take this opportunity to recall some of the highlights of their history.

The first Skipper was the Reverend Holt, Curate at Holy Trinity Church. The scouts met in the Reading Room but had their own campsite on the Bury Hill Estate, courtesy of Col. Barclay, and Sir Norman Touche later allowed them to use 'The Barn' in Stones Lane as the base for wide games within the Broomfield Estate.

The souvenir booklet recalls how, in 1937, the troop took part in a massive 'good turn' by helping to collect a huge quantity of food and delivering it to St Helier, the LCC's new slum-clearance housing estate then being built at the terminus of the Northern Line. The scouts were effectively employed during the war, assisting with evacuees from London and helping with Air Raid Precautions, but camping was allowed to continue provided that the tents were effectively camouflaged. Summer camps, pantomimes and jamborees are described with many anecdotes, including references to Westcott Plum Duff and the occasion that British Rail delivered the troop to Devon but sent all their camping equipment to Warwick. They were given emergency accommodation in a first class railway carriage with fire buckets to wash in until the tents etc were discovered and delivered three days later. We also learn how a catastrophe was avoided in August 1949 when Patrol Leader Donald Lloyd saved a brother scout from drowning in Westcott Mill Pond, for which heroism he was awarded the Scout Gilt Cross by the Chief Scout.

**Anybody who was a cub or scout will find the souvenir booklet a very nostalgic read. A copy is held, with the WI's Village Scrapbooks, by Colin Pilbeam at Bay Tree Cottage opposite the church (Call 880539 if you wish to borrow them).**

What can the Local History Group add? Well, although the 17<sup>th</sup> Dorking (Westcott) Troop was officially registered in 1923 it is evident that there were scouts in the village well before then because the May 1917 edition of the Parish Magazine notes that:

*"On Easter Monday the Scouts assembled at the Rookery by the kind invitation of Mr Adams. As a test in case of emergency, they were sent to eight farms in the neighbourhood with messages to be delivered in a certain time. Having delivered their dispatches, their papers were signed by the recipients, and the Scouts returned to the Rookery to report themselves. The result was pronounced very creditable.*

*In consequence of the depredations of sparrows, and the necessity for taking every measure to preserve the crops this year, it has been thought advisable to employ the Scouts to collect sparrow's eggs. This does not authorise the boys to collect bird's eggs indiscriminately, but only the eggs of such birds as are harmful to fruit and grain. The work will be done under supervision, all eggs having to be shown, and prizes will be given to those who collect the most eggs of destructive birds."*

Even earlier there was a report that: On an inky black November night in 1912, a troop of Dorking Boy Scouts made up of 3 patrols from the Congregational Church, 1 from St Paul's and 2 from the Central Troop, attempted to capture Westcott by managing to reach Westcott Green by 8 o'clock without being apprehended by the Westcott Scouts. Most of the Central and St Paul's Scouts were caught but by managing to outflank the defenders and approach The Green from Coast Hill the Congregational Patrols were successful. At

the end of the evening the Westcott Scouts formed up and the Dorking Scouts marched past at the Salute on their homeward journey.

The examination of early editions of the Dorking Advertiser has also revealed that in July 1924, 23 Westcott Scouts in the charge of Scoutmaster Rev F W Holt travelled by char-a-banc to visit the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, and that in December they were given a Union Jack by Mr J B Geake to accompany their Troop Flag. In 1926 Lady Kirk of Tanglewood gave the Troop a trek cart and the scouts exchanged a full size billiard table, given them some time earlier by Mr G G Taylor, for a  $\frac{3}{4}$  size table from a boy's club at Eastbourne. This fitted more conveniently into their Reading Room HQ. A rummage sale in July raised £8 towards their Summer Camp Fund. The camp itself, at Hayling Island, was attended with companions from Holmwood and in the friendly rivalry between the two troops George Ryde won the swimming and Archie Thompson the tent pegging, while Cecil Wright distinguished himself as cook. In 1927 Miss Venus took over the leadership of the cubs (formed on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1925) from Mr S F Williams, the headmaster of the Village school.

**Meanwhile:** The Local History Group has borrowed the 17<sup>th</sup> Dorking archives from the Dorking District Scout HQ where they were deposited when the Scout Group closed and is adding a host of information to our records including the names of all the original members of the Cub Pack and details of the Scouts who joined the Troop during the 1950's and 60's.

We are also inviting former cubs and scouts to unearth their photographs so that they can be added to our computer archive. This is one that shows the 1<sup>st</sup> Westcott Rovers in camp in 1934 with Reg Wootton, a Holmwood Rover, Chris Wootton and another Holmwood Rover in the back row; Arthur Tidy, Frank Simmons and Wilfred Evans at the front.



To their credit, the **Westcott Guides and Brownies** are flourishing and have been meeting in Westcott for over 75 years. In 1927, for example, we know that 'The 1st Westcott Brownies, supervised by Miss D Stannard (Brown Owl) and Miss V Stannard (Tawny Owl), held a Sale of Work in the Reading Room. The stalls contained sweets and toys and a host of useful articles all made by the Brownies who had been meeting twice weekly for this purpose.' Is there a 'Guide' historian to assemble the 1<sup>st</sup> Westcott archives and write a history of Guiding in Westcott?

## The Westcott Rover Crew

An excellent illustrated history of the 17<sup>th</sup> Dorking (Westcott) Scout Group was published in 1973 to commemorate the Group's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It recalls how the scout troop was formally registered in 1923 and records that at that time the Skipper was the Rev. Holt who was curate to the Rev Salzman, Vicar of Holy Trinity. The booklet goes on to note that when the Rev Holt left the parish in 1927 the headmaster of Westcott School took over, but then comments: "*That much we know, but from then on until 1937 there seems to be a lack of*

*information. To add to the mystery, who were the Westcott Rovers? We know they existed, for their flag proudly emblazoned with the words Westcott Rover Crew surmounted by a Dorking Cockerel still exists, but no one seems to remember them.”*

That particular mystery has now been solved, and once again it was the Group’s web site that provided the key. The following email to ‘info@westcotthistory.org.uk’ is typical of the sort of enquiry that is regularly received:

*“I have recently been fortunate in finding your website and reading some of the archive material on your meetings. I was especially interested in the information about Westcott in 1901 which was published a year or so ago. My particular reason for interest is the fact that my grandfather and grandmother came to Westcott in the 1890’s from Kent and Norfolk respectively and subsequently met and married in the village. My father and his siblings were born and spent their formative years in the village.”*

The writer was Chris Wootton of Telford and he explained that his grandfather worked for Dixons’ Stores as a baker’s roundsman, and lived above the shop at 7 Main Road opposite the Green. His grandmother’s aunt was married to Fred Dixon, which explains how the two met. Chris went on to say:

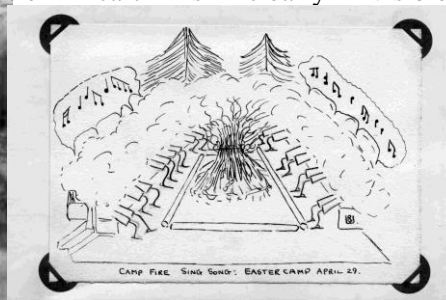
“From my point of view, there may be some material which could be of interest to your group. For example I have a number of photos of early Westcott, including some school photos from 1921 and 1922. My uncle (Christopher John Wootton) who is now 91, features in one of them and has been able to identify all but two of the pupils in the picture. Both he and my father, Reginald Wootton, were involved in the Westcott Scout Group in the early 1930’s and I have the original logbook which includes reports and photographs of events.”

The photographs will feature in the History of Westcott School that is being written to celebrate its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary but the scout log book actually describes the formation of the Westcott Rover Crew at an Investiture Camp held at Squires Farm, by kind permission of Lt-Col R W Barclay, on the weekend of 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> August 1932. The log goes on to describe a presentation to Group Scout Master Williams for 21 years’ service to scouting, attendance at the British Legion parade on Armistice Day, support for Cub Mistress B M Venus at the Cub’s Annual Tea in the Reading Room, a Social Evening attended by Rovers from St Paul’s Dorking, and various weekend camps.



**Westcott and Holmwood Rove**

The Rover Crew comprised Reg and Chris Wootton, Wilfred Evans<sup>1</sup> and Charlie Cloud. Henry King, D Jarvis, Hampshire & Edser were also recruited. This photo was taken at a camp held with the Holmwood Crew in April 1933. The Westcott Troop’s trek cart is clearly visible.



The logbook also contains several sketches, including this smoky camp fire scene.

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<sup>1</sup> The inclusion of Wilfred Evans (aka Ernest) was of particular interest vide the article ‘From New Jersey to the Nower’ in the 2002 Annual Report which described Nigel Evans’ search for information about his father.