

Remembering Scouting days at Epsom

Richard Paice (Crawfurd 1954-61) and David Bryce (Forest 1957-62) wrote to David Birt after his article in the 2010 OE magazine

Richard Paice writes...

Dear David

It gave me enormous pleasure to read your article... your memory or research was admirable. With hindsight it seems it was very much a Forest/Crawfurd focus.

Like you I now struggle to remember many of the names, but maybe others like me will respond to your article. In the Burton Bradstock photo I am second left in the front row, sitting next to Alan Davidson (Crawfurd 1955-61), now I believe in Australia. In the Iceland plane departure photo he is standing on your left.

Back to Burton Bradstock, kneeling behind me is Guy Poulton (Crawfurd 1956-62) son of the Epsom Biology Master, now living in Herefordshire.

That trip to Guillestre was staggering. I certainly remember the incident with Picken almost being left behind at a French station, and on a patrol side trip, running out of fuel on those scree slopes, climbing down to a remote mountain village, where the locals spoke a French/Italian patois and buying bottles of paraffin and lighting it in a billy lid to heat ou food.

It was around a campfire there that Neil Davidson (Rosebery 1953-58) inspired me to apply to Oxford and I believe that it was through recounting our Icelandic adventure in a critical final interview with the principal of the college that got me my scholarship! He certainly mentioned it in his letter of congratulations

I was lucky to go to Scotland which was amazing, much more rigorous and

challenging than Iceland, because the Major, Stuart McIntosh, was in full command and could really push us.

In the Iceland photo I am third in, next to George Pincus. On the steps without a beret on, I believe, is John Bush (Hart-Smith/Carr 1956-62), who later went on to manage his sister Kate Bush's career.

Curiously 48 years later I was staying with friends in Edinburgh, and by chance was recounting the Iceland trip. The husband exclaims that the Major's widow was a close friend, living in Edinburgh. [Major McIntosh, the Chief Guide on the Iceland trip, and his horse were swept to their death while testing the fording of a river]. We met over dinner the next night and I had a great time reminiscing with her over the whole saga, and hearing her side of the story. It gave the whole traumatic event a sense of closure.

My memories of the senior Scouts was meeting on Saturday evenings. As I was in Crawfurd, getting home late on Saturdays was the norm. The hut seemed full of antelope horns, shot somewhere in Africa!

Andrew Davidson, Geoff Arnold (Crawfurd 1954-60) and I all worked to get our Queens Scout badge, and ended up going to Gilwell. I subsequently became a Rover scout with Colin Warden (Crawfurd 1954-59) at a Banstead group

Efforts to help a scout group came to nothing, when I returned to England after a year in France and one in Africa. The local London one expected me to be available on a weekly basis and I was travelling far

too frequently for them. Like you I believe that my scouting experience was one of the most formative elements of my time at Epsom – certainly most memorable. We were certainly most fortunate to have such an enterprising Scout Leader in Beady Burton.

Thank you again for stirring such wonderful memories... you certainly managed to put a lot back into the Scouting movement.

David Bryce writes...

Dear David

You may recall I had two brothers in Forest, John and Peter, older than me. I am not an active OE, but I do enjoy receiving the magazine, which I read from cover to cover.

I particularly enjoyed your article on Scouting with the accompanying photographs, as I was very involved in the camps and expeditions. I know I went to the Alps – it must have been 1958, but I don't remember much about it other than the fact that we smoked in the tent to get rid of the midges!

I believe the boy who hung on to outside of the train was none other than Ian Picken, and he had to be brought in by unscrewing the carriage door. The next year I was on the Scottish trip when we trekked from Edinburgh to Aberfeldy and back. We went through some fabulous countryside, and some private estates not open to the public. Our leader and owner of the Icelandic ponies was Major McIntosh, an intrepid and daredevil character. At quiet moments when riding during the day, I can recall him shouting out: "Pickles", (meaning Picken) "give us a song", and we would break into some hearty refrain.

It was a wonderful trip, but I had to have

two baths to get clean when I got home. I still have photographs of this trip and a full set of colour slides taken in Iceland.

Turning to your photographs, in the cooking shot, leaning in the centre of the picture is Fawkes and on the right, possibly Gelber.

In the shot on the airport tarmac I am positioned halfway up the gangway on the right, my left arm flexed at the elbow, and looking down fiddling with my camera, a habit my wife of 32 years still finds irritating ! In front of me and facing the camera is James Walsh, who belonged to a troop of non-College boys. [He is a GP and long-time Lib Dem Councillor in West Sussex]. Below Walsh and to his right is Snelling Junior. His older brother was also on the trip. Looking over your right shoulder is the unmistakable face of Johnny Bush. The boy on the top step is definitely Pilcher, because I don't believe Picken went to Iceland.

On the left side of Cedric Burton. I am pretty sure is Mr Dowrick. I remember the spectacular countryside, the hot springs, and the shock of McIntosh's drowning. At one of our later stops a man took me to the back of his house to show me something he was very proud of. It was a tree! In a short time we became competent horsemen. It was a wonderful adventure for a 16-year-old boy, and I am always grateful to those who made it possible.

On a sad note I notice that Brian Tate and Ian Picken have passed away.

A brief biographical note: I left Epsom in 1962, and trained at St Thomas's Hospital qualifying in 1968. My first job was House Surgeon at Poole General Hospital to Mr Rolf Shepherd, whose obituary was in the 2010 *OE magazine*. In 1971 I joined my father in general practice and he retired two years later. I retired in 2008.