

The History of Coloured Scouting in the Western Cape

In the 1930's, Scouting among the Coloured community was formalised when Captain 'Piffy' F.F. White founded the *Pathfinder Council of the Cape Division* and became their first Divisional Commissioner in 1934.



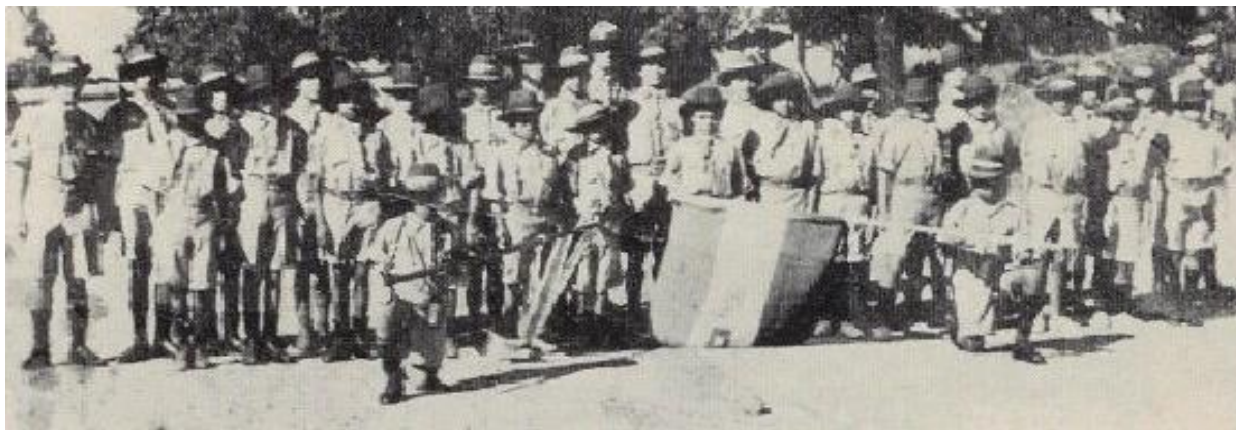
However prior to this Scouting had been spreading rapidly in the community. The first Coloured Troop was the 1st Cape Town Pathfinder Troop (Silver Tree) and they were invested on the 16th September 1933 in the grounds of Hope Lodge School in Roeland Street.



Captain Piffy White

On the 15th March 1933, Thomas J Paries joined the movement in the first Patrol of Pathfinders in Cape Town. He was invested on the 17th June of the same year as a member of the 1st Cape Town Troop.

He was a member of the Silvertree Boys' Club and proudly he had indicated on his application form that Scouting was the form of activity he most wished to enjoy. The 15th March 1933 could thus be said to have been the birthday of the Pathfinder Movement, although only formally registered in 1934, the 1st Cape Town Pathfinders Group was born.



On The 16 September 1933 the 1st Cape Town (Silvertree) was the first Coloured Group to be invested. Thomas Paries Assistant District Commissioner on the Cape Flats is back row second from left .

'Tom' Paries remembers receiving a booklet 'First steps in Scouting' and being instructed to delete the word SCOUT and replace it with the word PATHFINDER.

Today there is no longer a Pathfinder Movement and we are all Scouts.

Many years later the former Chief Scout, Carveth Geach, introduced the 'Think Link' scheme. Members of the Movement had to realise that on an International level of communication all Scouts were brothers.

All South African Boy Scouts are organised in the same way in the various Associations and the same scheme of work is followed.

No one was an island entire to himself. Members had to remember to keep this essential dictum before them.



Thomas Paries (Founder Member), Alex Philander (Div Comm), Sophia Oliver (ADC Athlone) and Joseph Manual (DC Athlone) circa 1972

Another man inextricably woven into the tapestry of Cape Western Scouting is [Charles Thebus](#), 'Skipper' to all, who 'went home' in 1972, having spent the last years of a very full life as Warden of Gilray, the Cape Western Training Ground.

This gentleman creditably represented his country at World Conferences and reached the rank of Chief Scout's Commissioner.

Charles Thebus's introduction to the Movement was at 79a Roeland Street, Cape Town where Thomas Paries had started a while before him. Charlie had been sent there to get ideas to start a boys' club and arrived at the Silvertree Club on a Pathfinder meeting night.

He became so interested that through him the Movement reached the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town. He was responsible for the formation of the 1st Wynberg Troop which was one of the oldest and longest running troops having celebrated a 40th Anniversary

Other pioneers of the Movement in were James Gallant, [Alex Philander \(Jakala\)](#), Gerard Hermans, Arthur Williams, Jack Allies - the first Chief Scout's Commissioner in our Association - and 'Attie' Arthur Pietersen who took Scouting to the country areas and established the first Troop at Paarl. Martin Lewis was in the 1st Paarl Troop and was a Assistant Divisional Commissioner for the Country Areas.



Skipper Charles Thebus, who rose to the highest rank of Chief Scout's Commissioner, with his successor (on right) Aaron Domingo and a former Chief Scout Colonel Johnston (centre) in 1968

1940 - 1950

The Cape Western Division, which originally wore as a divisional emblem the Dassie of the Cape Pathfinders, was with the forming of the *Coloured Boy Scouts Association* on the 12th January, 1945 changed to a Bokmakierie, while the National Symbol was an Arrowhead used in addition to the Scout Fleur-de-lis.



Heading up the Coloured Boy Scout Association was The Chief Scouts Commissioner, and the Chief Scout of South Africa held this position for all four parallel (Coloured, Black, White and Indian) Scouting Divisions.

The Divisional HQ of the Association was in an old building in Caledon Street in the city - but unfortunately the building burnt down and many of the records of the Association were lost.

The Divisional Secretary at the time, Winston Adams recalls that for the next two years and more he worked from home - his parents telephone was the official phone of the Association. Later they were able to secure an office in a building in Athlone and then launched a campaign to build our own Scout Headquarters.

In 1954 the Coloured Scout Association acquired a lease from the Cape Town City Council for a Camping and Training Centre which resulted in Gilray being officially opened by the Cape Town Mayor Mrs Joyce Newton-Thompson in 1958.

Initially Scouter training was provided by the Training Team of the European Division and in 1949 the first two Coloured Scouters qualified for all three parts of the Scout Wood Badge.

In 1952 this Training Team ran the first Scout Course solely for the Coloured Division. Later the Cape Division had its own team for the training of Scouters and owned a fine training ground, 'Gilray', near Cape Town.



The first Pathfinder Training Camp at Froggy Pond in 1936. Skipper Thebus of the Buffalo Patrol with Nugent Liberty and S.E Segers, Assistant Pathfinder-Masters

The photo below was taken at the inauguration of the Rover Scouts on the 30th May, 1955. The caption accompanying the photo read 'With Salvation Army and Scout officers' which indicates that there could at the time have been some association with the Salvation Army.



Back Row (left to right): Rovers H. May, B. Schnugh, R. Hager, A. Weber, W. van Graan, G. Bruyns, J. van Graan.

Centre Row: Mrs. Sen. Major Hill, Rover H. J. Lesar, Dist. Rover Leader Paulse, Dist. Cubmaster E Thebus, Dist. Scoutmaster C. Sasman, Group Scoutmaster A. E. Knowlden, Mrs. Sen. Major Wellard.

Front Row: Dist. Com. A. Johnson, Div. Com. C. E. Thebus, Sen. Major W. Wellard, Major H. Mead, Sen. Major S. Hill, Assist. Div. Com. A. Philander (for Training), Assist. Div. Com. A. Williams (for Scouts).

1960- 1970

The Athlone Scout Centre was built between 1975 and 1978 and in 1977 the Quo Vadis initiative brought about a unified Scout movement in South Africa with the merging of the four separate Scout Movements.

The centre was officially opened in 1978 when the first National Scout Council of the four combined Associations was held in the Athlone Scout Centre with Colin Inglis as the new Chief Scout of the united South African Scout Association.

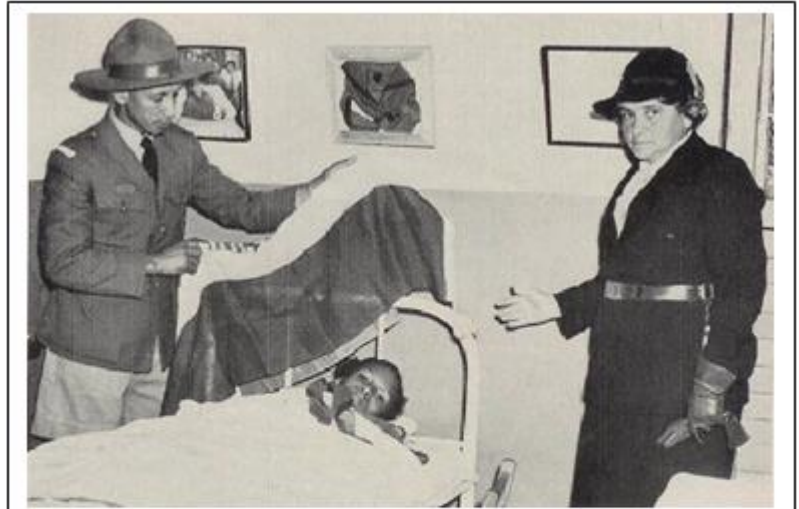
From 1968 to 1975 [Aaron Domingo](#) was Chief Scout's Commissioner for the Coloured Association, a position he had held with distinction and attended the 1975 14th World Jamboree in Norway, and the World Scout Conference.

A very important part of the work carried on, with far too little publicity, was that among handicapped Scouts. There were two Districts where these Groups exist. At the Maitland Cottage Home for cripples, the yeoman service of Mrs Connolly could not be praised too highly. A member of the 1st Claremont Parents' Committee, she was in 1974 awarded the Medal of Merit for organising Scouting at this home single-handed for many years. Later Scouts from the 1st Wynberg Group ran the Troop at the Home.

There was also a Troop at the St Joseph's Cripple Home in Philippi in the Northern Suburbs which did well under Scouter David Trout.

There was also a stable Troop at Klaasjagersberg, a Government Institution for boys from broken homes. This Troop pointed the way for the future. In the artificial social surroundings created at such institutions, much can be done to assist its members to become good normal citizens when they rejoin normal surroundings at their discharge from the Institution.

The dedication of Scouter Connie Petersen in this new challenge was what has made that venture so successful.



Johannes Moolman the only Coloured Scout ever to receive the Cornwell Scout Badge in 1934. It was granted him for high character, great courage and endurance. Severely crippled in his back, he was nevertheless an exceptional Scout at the Maitland Cottage Home in Garden Village. The presentation was made by Skipper Charles Thebus, accompanied by the Girl Guide Commissioner Miss Eam-

Ack: Extracts from: Celebrating 40 years of Coloured Scouting 1934 to 1974