

“Boy Scouts.”

Claremont Patrols in the Field

This scheme is fully set forth and explained in “Scouting for Boys” by General Baden-Powell, and, if carried out in the spirit there shown, it can hardly fail to be of great value in the development of the ordinary lad. By it are taught and fostered habits of self-reliance and of self-control, thoughtfulness for others, kindness to animals, presence of mind, helpfulness, manliness, and courtesy. Healthful, invigorating and educational games and interspersed with, and overlap, practical usefulness and stuffy in an interesting and attractive form. The movement is not intended to supersede or to clash with existing organizations, but rather to strengthen them.

We are glad to see that the idea has begun to develop out here. We hear of “Patrols” being formed in various places, and one of the earliest, if not the first in the Colony to be formed, was the “Owl” Patrol, formed at the Claremont Public School, with Fred Stern as Patrol leader and Mr. Geo. French as instructor. This was soon followed by the formation of a second patrol, the “Wolves,” and in April these patrols had a short outing. The number of patrols has now grown to four, and the following is a brief account of their second outing. The lads seem to have enjoyed their holiday very much, and are looking forward with pleasure to the time when they will be able to camp out for a longer period, in more favourable weather, and, possibly, with a larger gathering of patrols from other parts of the Peninsula. The following contribution is mostly from the lads’ own description of their doings.

On Tuesday, 23rd June, our three patrols met to discuss the possibilities of having a four days’ outing during the vacation. The weather was very unsettled and as we were expecting fairly heavy rain many of the lads’ parents would not consent to their taking part unless some arrangement were made for shelter in case of rain. However, this difficulty was got over easily, and we found that there would be four of the “Owls,” six of the “Wolves,” and four others, and thus were able to make two patrols up to seven each. It was arranged that each scout should bring his own bread and 2s. 6. This amount proved sufficient for all purposes, as the expenses for the fifteen totalled up to 1s less than £2.

At 9.50 a.m. on Tuesday, the 30th, we mustered at the school, and, after a few words of advice and direction from our Scoutmaster, commenced

proceedings with prayer, Bible reading, and the hoisting and saluting of the Union Jack, these proceedings always forming part of our meetings. At 10.30 we formed in “road patrol” order and started off in high spirits. The march for the first three miles was easy, as on the hard road the baggage did not feel heavy, but when the hard road was exchanged for the sand-track at Turff-hall corner, our feet became much heavier, and well-stored haversacks and blankets more so, and to add to this we had to take turns at pulling along the hand-cart which bore along our commissariat and extra blankets. This was no easy task, as the wheels sank far down into the yielding sand to very nearly a spoke’s length.

After more than a mile of this we crossed to another, and worse, sandy track. This track was flooded, and for the rest of the way we went barefoot, scoutmaster, patrol leaders, corporals and scouts all pulling at the cart cheerily in turn.

Well, at last, within half a mile of the halting place the off-wheel sank into the wet sand and over went the cart. We worked at it sharply enough though to prevent the blankets and food being wetted, and then, finding it impractical to go on further with the same load on the cart, we carried half of the stuff forward to camp, and then returned for the other half, while the scoutmaster and one scout made the fire and prepared the dinner, and then as soon as we all arrived, the staff was fixed and the Union Jack run up and saluted for the first time in camp.

We found the place so very wet that we all agreed to go barefoot, so as to lessen the chances of taking cold. Between camp and the open veld the land was flooded knee-deep.

Our first dinner was Irish stew, and, due either to the cooking, our strenuous exertions of the morning, or the cold and wet combined, we thoroughly enjoyed it, and then went off to cut reeds for our bedding, and made ourselves as comfortable as possible. We then had our alarm stations given us, and were exercised therein, as well as the various signals, calls, etc. At 5.30 we had tea, and soon after assembled around the camp-fire for a jolly evening. At 9 came “cocoa,” and then prayers, and very soon after that we went to a well-earned sleep; several of us were, however, too excited to go to sleep at once, and kept up chatting and recounting to each other our varied experiences of the day.

On the following day, owing to heavy rain, we had to give up the idea of scouting far across the veld. We began this day’s work with self-measurements and general instructions, and then, during a stretch

of fine weather, we went out in four groups, N., S., E. and W., from a central point, and did some sketch-mapping, coming back in time to cook our own dinners. On this day each pair of scouts had to cook dinner separately. At a given signal one of each pair had to go and forage for wood, while the other prepared the meat and potatoes ready for cooking. Four of the seven pairs of scouts used only one match each, and so obtained an extra mark. Very soon the fires were burning well, the meat frying splendidly, and everything went on merrily. As soon as each pair had finished, the food was carefully inspected by the scoutmaster, and passed when considered by him to be properly cooked. Marks were awarded all through this important part of the scouts' work. In the afternoon we learned some more of the principles of signalling, and had some practice in semaphore work. Within a few minutes of being dismissed from this our scoutmaster blew the "rally" for alarm posts in case of fire, and in what he said was remarkably short time, the patrol leaders had reported "ready," and away went the buckets to and from along the lines of scouts set to work as if carrying property and carefully placing it out of harm's reach. We then practiced differently, using sand instead of water for extinguishing the supposed fire.

Next, we had one of our original scouting games, which we have named "The Cypher Dispatch," and then, in spite of the wet bush and veld, some fine scouting fun fell to our share, the patrol which had to intercept the dispatch winning by every point. Then we strolled about, taking as much notice as possible of everything around until tea, after which we thoroughly enjoyed an evening of impromptu sketches from fairy tales, etc., Vincent making a fine stage-manager and coach.

Thursday dawned, after a rainy night, with clouds and drizzle. This day having been set apart for a ten-mile exercise in scouting right away to Strandfontein, on the shores of False Bay, we had to smile and whistle through our disappointment, so we substituted some stretcher-bearing work, attending to and carrying a scout who was supposed to have fallen from a branch and to have broken an arm and a leg. Then came dinner preparation, during which the murky clouds lifted, the drizzle stopped, and out came our glad sunshine, making us glad too. "Oh, sir, can't we go to Strandfontein now?" was asked, and although we had now dined, it was decided that the trip should be taken after all. Well, off we went, and didn't we find the veld wet after the rain. Fortunately it was that we wore shorts instead of being heavily clad, for the way, supposed to be a sand track, lay well under water for a considerable stretch at a time. Of course we had left our boots and

stockings at the kitchen, and wet sand or dry sand, white sand or grey sand, it was all alike to us. A shout went up as soon as we came in sight of the sea, and many of us thought that the journey was over, but we had some very heavy sand-tramping to do. However, we got there within an hour and a half after starting. The scoutmaster then dismissed us for half an hour, and we rushed down to the sea and bathed. We did not practise the "aid to the drowning" as we had intended, because the time was so very short, and we had to get across the swamp and veld before sunset. All too soon the "rally," then back at the trot to the sand-dune near a peculiar outcrop terrace of limestone formation, and then a start for the homeward journey.

Now, in going out, our attention had been drawn by the scoutmaster to many points for observation, and we had had to turn about several times to notice landmarks that would guide us on the way back. Then during our return, as we came across the veld, we were asked to look out for these points again. We reached camp just before dusk, and found that the scouts whom we had left at home to look after our effects had a jolly fire burning and the water merrily boiling away for tea. Well, just as the tea was about to be made, one of the scouts trod on part of the cooking apparatus—over went the boiling water and out went the fire. Just for a moment we looked at him, when one chap says, "Now, lads, a scout must whistle and smile." So to smile they began, and in full spirits set to work to pass the time pleasantly while some made up another fire, and very soon fresh water was boiling and tea was made without further mishap.

After tea a large fire was lighted, and we danced around it. As the fire died out we learned something of interest about the stars which were now shining so brightly, and we were shown how to tell the general direction from them; then came coca and impromptu plays and games until a late hour, as this was to be the last evening of the outing. Gradually, as tired nature willed, the sound of talking and fun died away in the stillness of night, and the need for rest after a long day's work claimed us for sleep—sleep, sweet and sound.

Friday! The last day had come, and come all too soon: a day that we shall remember as being full of pleasant remembrances. First, we had to collect and burn in a heap all the reeds that we had used for bedding and all the litter, and to thoroughly clean up the place. Then sections were told off for pulling the cart along. More signalling was practised, and at 12.30 p.m. we saluted and lowered the Union Jack, which had flown over us in rain and in sunshine, and then came the homeward march. At 12.45 we halted,

made separate fires, and, in pairs, as on Wednesday, cooked our own food. This time we understood better how to go about it. We were strictly timed, and it was of no use going to the scoutmaster with partially-cooked meat and potatoes. He tasted each one, and would not pass it until properly ready for eating. After dinner we had to show our knife, fork, and spoon properly scoured and cleaned, and had then to obliterate all trace of any fire having been made. This was to prevent any scout being able to track us by our halting and cooking place. Marks were given during the whole of the cooking, cleaning and clearing process.

In the meantime two scouts had been quietly sent on ahead with instructions to hide anywhere within 30 yards of the road and within the next mile of road. Shortly before two o'clock the patrols fell in, and were directed to track and, if possible, find the two scouts who had been sent ahead. The two were successfully tracked to within a few feet of their hiding place nearly a mile from the start, but the "rally" was sounded before they were discovered, and the victory thus lay with the two scouts. As we had now arrived at the junction of the Wetton and Lansdowne-roads, we started our last game. The "Owls" went up the Wetton-road, having five minutes' start, as their way was longer. The "Wolves" took the Lansdowne-road, and each tried to arrive first at the granite outcrop behind the Kenilworth Race-course. It was a fine finish, the two patrols sighting each other when within a few hundred yards of the rendezvous. The leading scout of the "Owls" was nearing the place when he had to slow down as a big dog was at his heels, and eventually the forward scout of the "Wolves" got in just ten seconds before he did.

A few words were then addressed to the lads; arrangements were made for a business meeting the next day, and at about five o'clock in the evening the

patrols dismissed at the corner of the Belvedere-road and dispersed, the lads returning to their homes after having spent a very delightful holiday.

"Owl" Patrol: Patrol Leader, F. Stern; corporal, P. Crosby; scouts, J. Stern, V. Theunissen, with A. Wainwright, J. Villet, and patrol leader E. Londt (attached).

"Wolf" Patrol: Patrol leader, A. van Eyssen; corporal, C. Hogg; scouts, E. Wainwright, W. Sewell, W. Blatherwick, D. Willmore, and W. Hogg (attached).

Scoutmaster, Geo. French; adjutant, Cyril J. French.

Owing to the state of the weather the camp-routine was slightly different from what had been intended, and was, in the main, thus:—

7.30, Rouse, bathe, put out bedding, sweep up, etc.

8, Bible-reading, hoist and salute Union Jack.

8.30 to 9, Breakfast.

9.30 to 12.30, Signs, Calls, Signalling, Scouting Games,

Observation, Notes, or Map-sketching, Cross-country Work.

12.30 to 2, Dinner and Off-time.

2 to 4.30, as in morning.

5, Tea.

6, Chat and Observation, Saluting and Lowering Union Jack.

7, Round the Camp-fire, Cocoa, Games, Impromptu Performances, etc.

9, Bible, Prayers and Lights-out

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