

## **David Clark's Scout Eulogy 9 December 2019**

My name is Derek Smith

It is my honour and privilege to say a few words about David Clark's "Adventure in Scouting."

David joined 1st Hersham Scouts in 1942, during the Second World War, at the age of 12. The Scout Troop met in Vaux Mead and on the Village Green in Hersham as they had no permanent Head Quarters.

In the early post war years, some members of the Troop, including David, visited Switzerland and it was from here that they adopted the Swiss National colours of Red and White to become the neckerchief colours of 1<sup>st</sup> Hersham.

David held his first Warrant in 1949 as an Assistant Scout Master.

In the 1950`s, as part of his National Service, he joined the RAF mountain rescue, working in the Snowdonia mountain range of North Wales.

This was a period where David developed his love of mountaineering and climbing, which would, in later years, be passed on to many scouts.

I can confirm that in those later years, we would all get to know Snowdonia very well??

In 1957, I joined 1st Hersham Scouts as a Cub Scout, meeting under the guidance of the cub leaders, Mrs Browning and Joan Todd. We met in the Royal British Legion, at the back of the Southdown Housing Estate, because the Group did not have a permanent Head Quarters.

But all this was about to change when the new headquarters in Burwood Close was opened later in the year and the once disjointed Group would begin to flourish.

David became the Scoutmaster of the 1st Hersham Scout troop in 1958

I did not know David's real name at the time—the only name that he had was "Skip."

A name that was used then, and has been used since, with the utmost respect, by everyone, to the present day.

Skip became Group Scout Master in 1961, when I was about 12 years old. A role that he undertook for the next 29 years.

As well as being Group Scout Master, he also ran the Scout Troop and later the Senior Scout Section

Skip had the uncanny knack of identifying potential leaders, inspiring those leaders to join his team, and most importantly, supporting them and retaining them.

Under Skip's leadership, the 1<sup>st</sup> Hersham Scout Group expanded from 1 Cub pack and 1 Scout troop to 2 Beaver Colonies, 3 Cub packs, 2 Scout Troops and 1 Senior Scout Troop.

In its heyday there were nearly 200 members of the Group.

Skip often described these times as being a wonderful time for Scouting,

Under Skip's guidance and encouragement, 12 Senior Scouts reached the pinnacle of Scouting, to become Queen Scouts—quite a record for a village Scout Group.

Cub Scout Leader, Joan Todd was awarded the “Silver Acorn”, a high Scouting Honour, for her work and dedication to the movement in the Cub Pack section.

The boys of 1<sup>st</sup> Hershams Scout Group were no different from the boys of any other village Scout Group, save for one important factor and that was Skip’s unique, inspirational and motivating, leadership skills.

During his time with the Group, in all sorts of capacities, Skip organised and took part in something like 29 Summer Camps and numerous other walking and climbing expeditions.

The Senior Scouts venturing as far a field as North Wales, the Lake District, Switzerland and Austria.

There was nothing out of bounds or too difficult. Skip saw to that!

And very importantly, our parents trusted him to look after their precious little boys and bring them back from their Scouting adventures safe and sound.

The Motto of the SAS, the Special Air Service, could have equally applied to us in 1<sup>st</sup> Hershams Scouts

“Who Dares Wins”

The River Mole was crossed on a number occasions with an aerial ropeway bridge in an activity called operation “Cadburys Snack”—so called because the advert of the time said “Bridge that gap with a Cadbury’s Snack.”

The activity involved building a raft, with varying degrees of success, to get the first rope across and establish an “A” frame on the far side of the river. Skip, as always, would be the first across the rope bridge to test the system.

I can remember one such climbing expedition to Kandersteg in Switzerland, where we were met by an enormous Dutch climber, who announced on the first day that if we came back from the climbing course, we would get the badge.

We all came back and yes we all got the badge.

We would also make an attempt on the monarch of the Swiss Alps, the mighty Matterhorn, from the town of Zermatt. Skip led this expedition and again we all came back. This time a little wiser and with a great deal of respect for this notorious mountain.

Now all these activities, including the upkeep of the Scout Headquarters required money.

Money in those days was in very short supply. At that time not many scout parents in Hersham owned cars.

Skip positively encouraged every member of the Scout Group to earn their own annual capitation fee during “Bob-a-Job” week,

Many Senior Scouts paid for part of one expedition by undertaking a gardening contract at Weybridge Telephone Exchange, again organised by Skip and his dad George.

Skip was a great fund raiser. With the support of his “hand picked” Group Committee, they organised many revenue earning activities.

For example the Group collected newspapers for cash. This was years before recycling became an “In-Word”.

We would collect Jumble for our annual Jumble Sale. Advertised as the largest of its kind in Surrey, it provided for the upkeep of the Headquarters. For some unknown reason it was always held on a Cup Final day, but it was always a success.

We would undertake sponsored walks and collect “upmarket” goods for the auction.

We would chop firewood, into kindling to be sold, because many people in the village, at that time, had open fires, long before the installation of central heating became more widespread.

Skip’s acknowledged success was in great demand and in 1990 the County Scouts saw that that his leadership skills and influence could be spread further afield by appointing him as a District Commissioner, and later as District President, with responsibility for the many Scout groups in the area.

But all Skip’s Scouting activities could have come to a sudden end as in their wisdom, the Scout Association had earlier decided that all Scouters should retire at the age of 65, believing that by that age, they had passed their prime.

But not our Skip, as on his “Retirement” from formal Scouting, he came back to the 1<sup>st</sup> Hersham Group as Chairman of the Group Committee, overseeing the extension of the Head Quarters and the refurbishment of the kitchen and toilets.

In the year Millennium year of 2000, Skip was awarded the Scout Associations`, highest and most prestigious honour:-

### **“The Silver Wolf”.**

The award being formally presented by the Chief Scout.

The citation simply reads “To David Clark for Services to Scouting of a most exceptional nature”.

In my view, this simple citation is an understatement of his achievements, but understatement or not, the “Silver Wolf” award is a thoroughly well deserved and warranted recognition of his lifetimes work for Scouting.

Skip would tell everyone that he could not have devoted so much time and energy, for so long, to achieve the highest Scouting Award, without the continued support of his wife, Angela.

On behalf of all Scouts past and present, may I take this opportunity to formally say “Thank you Angela for supporting your husband, David, our Skip, with his “Adventure in Scouting,” because without him, our Scouting and life experience would have been quite mediocre?”

Skip was the epitome of all that a great Scout Leader should be. He was an excellent role model and great influence on my life and on the lives of many other young men in Hersham, many of whom are here today and have become lifetime friends.

May I conclude by saying:-

Skip—Thank you for your lifetimes Service to Scouting

Your influence and legacy has spread far and wide.

Thank you for your friendship.

We are all going to miss you.

Without exception, you did your very best for all of us.

Rest in Peace.