



## Rediscovering a 1932 Scout hero

By WINSOME and ROBERT CAUNCE

When Eric Sumner, formerly of the Melbourne bayside suburb of Mentone, passed away in April 2009 in his 94th year, he left only a medal and sketchy details of his story as a young Scout. A piece of Victorian Scouting history was nearly lost forever.

Eric was always so proud of his days in Scouts. He encouraged his own son Peter and great-grandsons Tim and Alex to join when they were able. The family heard many Scouting adventure stories over the years but the one that caught our interest was when, at the aged of 15, Eric saved a young boy from drowning in the Yarra River at Studley Park.

For this he received a Scouting medal of honor, the Gilt Cross, for gal-

lantry with moderate risk, at a ceremony at the Melbourne town hall. Eric still had the medal but age had wearied it and his memory and many details of the event and story were missing.

Upon his death, the family decided to investigate the story behind the medal. Lillian Beard and the dedicated team at the Scout Heritage Centre agreed to help 'fill in the gaps'. They spent many hours over the next few months investigating and piecing together not only the facts but also researching badges, ribbons and the certificate that would have accompanied the medal but had become lost over the years.

The investigation went all the way to England and was helped along by the Hon D. M. Baden Powell who was able to obtain a copy of the actual entry in the Awards Register in England. Kay

Perkins reproduced the wording on the copy of the certificate using pen and ink.

Such dedication to detail by the team at Heritage went way beyond what was expected or hoped for by the family. Without their help the family would not have been able to uncover such amazing detail of such a special event in the life of young Scout Eric Sumner. It was an amazing gift to our family and we will treasure the artifacts and the certificate – signed by Baden-Powell himself.

Our only regret was that we did not undertake this investigation sooner, and allow Eric to relive those memories once again before he passed away.

- Robert Caunce is Assistant Cub Leader at Mentone. Winsome Caunce is grand daughter of Eric Sumner.