

Researching our first Jamboree

By ANN SCHOLES

In March 1999 the Frankston District badge was placed on my right-hand pocket and I was reminded that it had been adapted from the 1935 Frankston Jamboree logo. I knew, of course, that our Group, 1st Baden-Powell Park had been named after Lord Baden-Powell who presided over this event but little else was known about Australia's first Jamboree. Many said our hall was located on the Jamboree site yet none were able to identify its boundaries. I had heard that a cairn marked its entrance but its location was unknown to those with whom I spoke.

It was not until August 1999, when I agreed to research our Group's history, that my attention again focused on the Jamboree. After discussions with Lillian Beard of the Victorian Scout Heritage Centre I confirmed the existence of the cairn and the lack of on-site information for Scouts wishing to tour the Jamboree site. The exact location of the cairn remained a mystery but, after advice from Sally Steward (District Leader – Adult Training, Frankston) I was to search the area round Jamboree



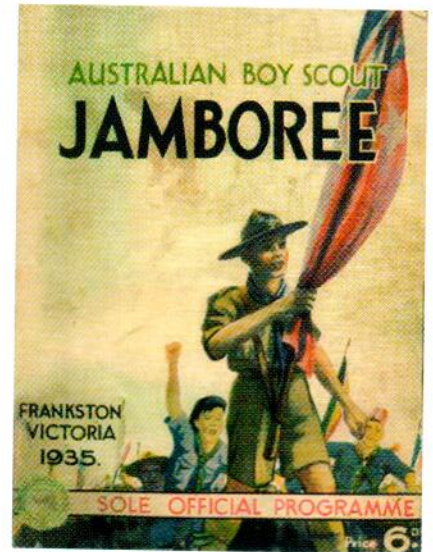
Avenue. The plaque was not immediately apparent, yet as I dodged traffic at the junction of Overport Road and Yuille Street, I came upon a mound of rock and mortar. Its inaccurately worded bronze plaque left me feeling neither enlightened nor uplifted.

October Group Leaders' Meeting received the vehemence of my feelings. The response was rapid: District Commissioner Russell Bradd requested that I research the Frankston Jamboree with a view to establishing a suitable memorial at a more appropriate location.

My husband John seemed eager to assist. Our investigations started with a phone call to the Frankston City Council. Although Jamboree records were unavailable, the council was most supportive of our efforts. A council held bronze plaque, struck after the 50-year reunion, was soon to be laid at the site of the Jamboree Reunion at the Frankston Police and Citizens Youth Centre, Towerhill Road. We were provided with a copy of the book *Frankston: Resort to City* by Michael Jones and several important contacts.

Ern Hosking and his sister Florrie were to be of great assistance. Their father had been a member of the local Jamboree committee and they had shared family participation in the Jamboree experience. Vivid memories, memorabilia, and a list of contacts gave impetus to our project.

Bruce Melen from the council's planning department had been a member of the Movement. His interest in the Jamboree had been inspired by surveys of Sweetwater Creek, the southern boundary of the Jamboree site. During the course of his work numerous items of Scout

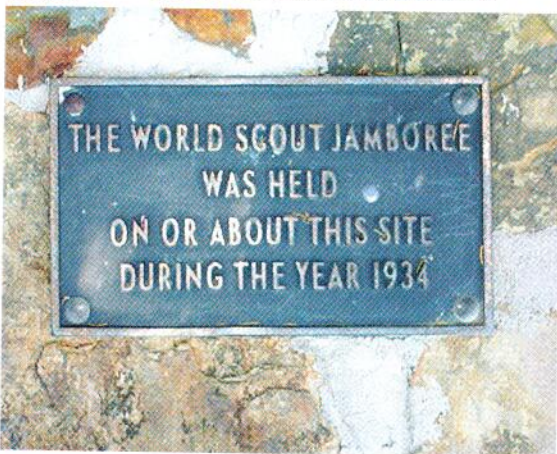


memorabilia were found. Subsequently, Bruce produced Jamboree map overlays. Using these, in conjunction with topographical maps, we located the site of the arena and the main campfire hollow. We were now ready to tour the Jamboree site.

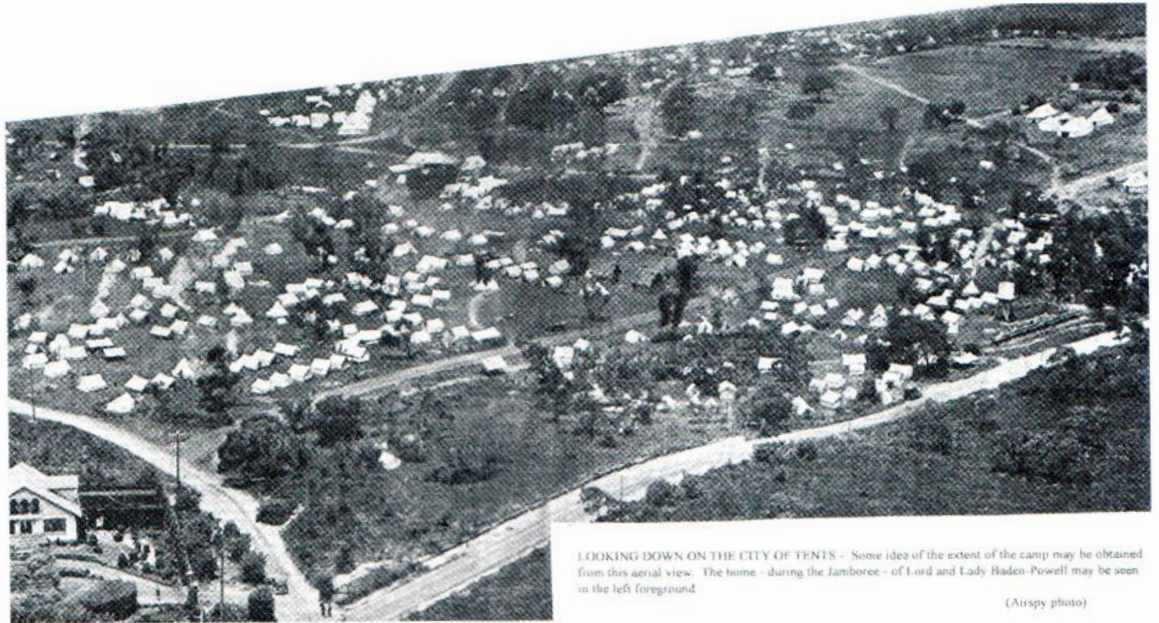
On the Saturday chosen, Sally Steward and Ern Hosking were free to join us. Ern was to describe the scene with a sense of vivacity: the entrance stretching up to the sign "Jamboree", the large shelters with the full width fireplaces and the pipe-track spanning the Jamboree camp. He spoke of the colourful contingents – particularly the turbaned Indians – who had streamed down the hillside to the display arena. We listened in awe. Whilst traipsing along the ridge, the high point which had run between the arena and the main campfire hollow, we suddenly swung left off the bitumen and passed down a track between dwellings.

Beyond the houses lay the remains of the campfire hollow: here arched dunes, six to eight metres high, tower over a swathe of grass. As Ern described the smoke rising from the hearth and the multitudes stretched up and along the rises, the Jamboree took on a sense of reality.

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The excitement of our discovery was to be put aside: we now made our way to the home where Lord Baden-Powell and his family resided during the Jamboree. This property, located on the northern corner of Kars Street and The Range, had once sprawled commandingly across the face of the hill and offered panoramic views over the bay and mountains beyond – a scene the Chief Scout is said to have painted from the top windows.



LOOKING DOWN ON THE CITY OF TENTS - Some idea of the extent of the camp may be obtained from this aerial view. The home - during the Jamboree - of Lord and Lady Baden-Powell may be seen in the left foreground.

(Airsy photo)

Although we now had enough information to satisfy the needs of our District Commissioner, the summer of 1999-2000 was consumed by additional Jamboree research. (Lillian had warned us about the compulsive nature of historical research.) Our stated objective was now the establishment of a Frankston Jamboree website. Equipped with a digital camera and a scanner – kindly lent by our Group Leader, Phillip Simpson – trips were made to the Heritage Centre's store at Ivanhoe and the museum at Como. Our thanks go to Lillian, Jean Patterson and Rex Rippon.

The Jamboree newspaper, *The Jamboree Daily*, the official Jamboree program and a souvenir edition of articles written by *The Age* were to be our primary research material. The Frankston Library was able to supply microfilm of the *Frankston and Somerville Standard*. Most of the pictorials for the pilot version of our website came from the scrapbook of Ivan Stevens, held by the Heritage Centre, Como.

After three months of intensive effort our son Richard converted text and pictures into website format and on Australia Day 2000 Russell Bradd was, for the first time, to view the new website. This site is currently hosted by Phillip Simpson on www.yican.com.au/1935/. His

generous support for the project has including the burning of CDs. From the outset our site has received worldwide constructive advice, both

technical and historical.

Contacts made by word of mouth and as a result of articles published by the *Frankston Standard*, bring new





MAIN
CAMPFIRE
HOLLOW -
TODAY

material to the project: a photo of the weatherboard chemist's shed received by post from the daughter of the pharmacist; memories of sunburnt legs wrapped in newspaper; and a diary entry referring to "inhabited" mutton which "made good stew" on the last night of the Jamboree hike. Such lively material augments the

hackneyed stories of Lord Baden-Powell on the white horse and the epidemic of fainting attacks on New Year's Day 1935.

The events of New Year's Day and its aftermath are recounted in the journal of Don Charlwood. In fact, his writings cover the period December 24 until January 13. Don, an eminent author – whose books are still available – attended the Jamboree as

a 19 year-old Rover. With the permission of the State Library who hold his diaries, Don allowed me access to his hand-written Jamboree entries. (My work on his diaries was to be my Wood Badge project.) His account of the Jamboree hike, the Rover Moot and the final hours of the Jamboree provide invaluable percep-

tions and insight. An edited account of these events has now been added to the "Impressions" Section of our website. Background information drawn from his earlier entries was used to create a presentation for the Annual General Meeting of South Metro Region on July 4 2000.

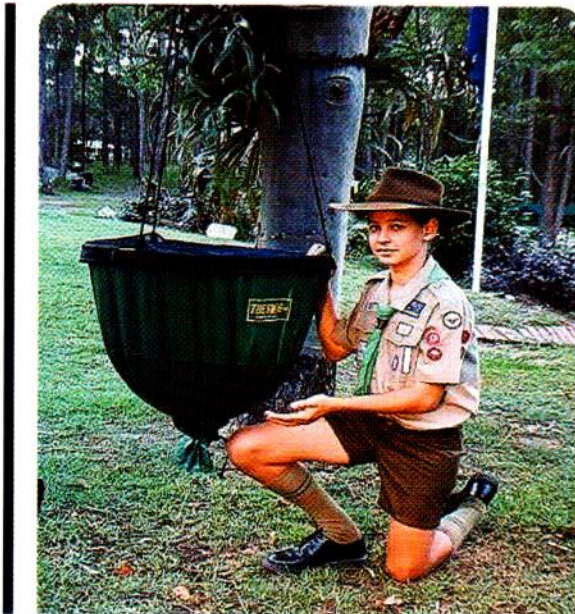
Jamboree research has established a growing network of friendships and on the morning of April 10 2001 some local 1935 Jamboree participants met at the RSL home Overport Road, Frankston. They brought items of memorabilia, memories and that very special sense of magic shared by those who attended Australia's first Jamboree.

While nothing can substitute for participation in this historic event, Frankston District Leaders have displayed a strong pride in and support for this project. Our District Leader Scouts, Mozz Richardson promoted awareness of Australia's first Jamboree among those attend-

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LORD BADEN-POWELL – EQUESTRIENNE. BELOW: VICTORIAN CHIEF COMMISSIONER ARCH HOADLEY WITH LORD BADEN-POWELL AT THE CHIEF SCOUT'S FRANKSTON RESIDENCE.



ing the 19th Australian Jamboree. Several Groups have used the site of the main campfire hollow for investigations and on one occasion, the Norwich Cubs of 1st Baden Powell Park took part in a boomerang friendship ceremony based on the Frankston Jamboree's closing ceremony. In September 2000, Frankston District held a Wood Badge presentation at the site of the main campfire hollow.

District Scouts have lodged an application for National Trust classification of the reserve at campfire hollow. Continuing communications with Frankston City Council have raised awareness of the Jamboree's significance and, in particular, the importance of the campfire hollow site. Further to negotiations, council announced in early March that the campfire hollow site will be named Frankston Jamboree Park. As an interim measure, Frankston District Scouts would like the cairn moved to



THE WEATHERBOARD CHEMIST'S SHED

this new location. They will, however, be working towards a more informative commemorative plaque on this historic site. Future plans will be implemented after negotiation with Frankston Council, Branch and local residents. They will include a sequential upgrading of indigenous vegetation.

Further details can be obtained from Ann or John Scholes on phone (03) 9787 7228 or email scholes@alphalink.com.au. Ann Scholes is District Leader – PR, Frankston District, Vic



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