

A Victorian historian shares his experience of researching local Scouting

Researching local Scouting

By GERARD FLANNIGAN

Scouting has changed dramatically since its foundation in 1907. Undoubtedly there will be further changes in the future due to demands. But some traditions won't change. In the last few years we have seen many Groups celebrate their centenary and during that time they have fondly reflected on their history and the old traditions.

For some Groups, it may not be clear as to when they were established. The Scout Heritage Centre at Como Park, South Yarra, does have some information on certain Groups although they themselves are not the custodians of each Group's own history.

Ideally, historical records should be kept in the Scout hall, although, due to varying circumstances, the records may be with the Group Leader or a committee member. Sadly for some Groups they may be very few records at all. There certainly may not be the long list of names of all scouts who passed through the hall doors. There are however avenues to peruse that may give an insight as to the activities that your Group was involved in over the years. And through those records, names of past Scouts and Leaders may come to light.

I was recently trying to establish 1st Hurstbridge's history and in particular when it was established. I am an avid family historian and, as such, utilise many resources to uncover activities of ancestors. One of my many sources is the National Library of Australia (NLA). While it is based in Canberra it has a wonderful on-line facility, called Trove, in which you can look at old newspapers. The NLA is progressively scanning as many Australian newspapers as it can.

During my research into 1st Hurstbridge I made some amazing discov-

eries into camps and competitions they attended as well as other Scout Groups camping in the Hurstbridge area. In the early days of the Scout Movement Hurstbridge was a small country town that was accessible by electric train and therefore made the 'bush' easily accessible for what are now inner city Scout Groups.

The first article from The Argus



newspaper I found on the NLA site was a Scout event held in October 1913 in which there a variety of competitions were won by many different Groups. I found this article to be very interesting for not only 1st Hurstbridge's involvement but the many events that were held.

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/7242382>

You can see from this article that there are many different groups participating and winning a variety of events. Perhaps this the forerunner of the Stradbroke Cup or Cohen Shield?

From this I continued searching and discovered the camps the Troop went on, the fundraising they conduct-

ed to purchase equipment, the community service they performed, their meeting nights as well as names of Leaders. Through research I confirmed that 1st Hurstbridge was formally established on August 15 1913. Therefore we still have some time to prepare for our centenary.

So what does this mean for your Group? Well, the NLA Trove site has a multitude of newspapers now scanned for viewing. Your search on the site can be narrowed down by ticking the boxes on the newspapers you want to include in your search. This may include a local newspaper. However, I would always encourage you to include The Argus newspaper in your search. I found that The Argus had quite a lot of

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news articles relating to Scouts. You can access the Trove site from this link that will take you straight to Victorian newspapers:

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/titles?state=Victoria>

You should consider searching with keywords such as your Group's name, eg "1st Group Name". Depending on the number of results you get, you may then want to consider using the name of your Group, minus the number, plus the word "Scouts". Admittedly this will provide a large number of results, of which many won't be relevant, however, I did find that the Group number was not always mentioned in the articles.

When the newspapers are scanned, software is used to provide a text version on the left side of the screen. Due to the image quality of the scanned copy the text version is not always correct. If you do find errors in the text version you can submit corrections directly to NLA. Any correction you make could assist others who follow you in searching.

Once you have searched all possibilities, you may then want to consider research at the State Library of Victoria. They have nearly all Victorian newspapers microfilmed. The current system is not like that of the NLA Trove. There is no word search function. This is a slow read through a micro filmed newspaper but it can yield results.

Another useful source is your local library or local historical society. Many of them have old newspapers and again it is a slow process but the rewards can be great.

- Gerard Flannigan is Chair, Nillumbik Executive Committee.



Abseiling in Watsonia

By PETER BANNAN

Scouting members can now abseil in metropolitan Melbourne thanks to the refurbishment of an abseiling tower located adjacent to the Watsonia Scout Centre. The 8-metre tower underwent a major transformation through the hard efforts of members, Leaders and friends of the Diamond Valley Scout Group.

In late 2010, the Greensborough RSL, through their trust fund, in conjunction with the Banyule City Council generously passed onto the group \$7500 to transform the run down tower into an adventurous asset for youth to enjoy in Melbourne. The tower was partially constructed in the 1980s, however due to shortfall in funding was not finished until today.

Over 12 months the small group of volunteers formed together on weekends to ensure the tower was finished before the conclusion of 2011. Tasks to be completed included securing new anchor points to the top of the tower, securing new boards, digging out dirt to lay soft fall, securing a new ladder to enable participants to reach the second level of the tower, after initially undertaking safety checks on the existing four telegraph poles.

The tower was officially opened in November 2011. Youth members of the Diamond Valley Scout Group and surrounding Scout Groups in Banyule and Nillumbik, parents, Leaders, families, friends and Scouting officials joined by committee members of the Greensborough RSL to officially open the tower.

Group Leader Craig Farquharson says the new abseiling tower is a huge boost for Scouting in the local area and will provide youth the opportunity to gain the abseiler badge and enjoy an adventurous activity at a low cost and easily accessible location.

The Group recently conducted Abseiling Participant training courses for those interested in joining the 'Diamond Valley Abseilers' team. Ten participants joined existing qualified abseilers in March to go through the skills required to run a safe and operational tower in Watsonia.

To book the tower for a Troop outing while earning the abseiling proficiency badge, please make appropriate contacts with John Robinson. All the relevant contact details are included in the top of page 85 of the Victorian Info Book 2012.

- Peter Bannan is Diamond Valley Rover.