

# QUEEN'S SCOUT CORONATION TRIP

In 1952, I was one of two Geelong Scouts who were the first to be awarded their Queen's Scout after the death of the King. I was very excited and proud to be selected to represent Australian Scouting at the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth in June, 1953.

The Contingent consisted of 6 Victorians, 2 each from South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland, and one each from Tasmania and West Australia. The Contingent Leader was Colonel A.G. "Tops" Oldham, his catch phrase of "Let's press on" always will inspire me.

We sailed from Melbourne on April 16, 1953 on the RMS "Orion" being farewelled by the Governor of Victoria, Sir Dallas Brooks. We called at Port Adelaide and Perth, and our complete contingent sailed out of Fremantle on the journey of our life.

Out into the Indian Ocean with King Neptune giving us a great "crossing the line" welcome, and after eight days to Colombo. Then to Bombay, Aden, Naples and a tour to the Pompeii ruins, Marseilles, Gibraltar and then arrival at Tilbury Docks, London on May 19 - a four week run! At all our stopovers we were met by the local Scouts, who gave us a grand time - many friends were made, and badges exchanged.

Our home base for the next six weeks was RMS Discovery, tied up on the River Thames.

We made tours of most of the historical places around London - not a second was wasted. With overseas Scouts from some twenty countries we went to the East Anglian Jamboree at Sandringham Park.

Then sight seeing at Windsor Castle, changing of the Guard at White Hall, and on to camp at Gilwell Park - we arrived and all the tents were up! Then back to London, for the BIG DAY. We slept the night at Horticultural Hall, when we again met and talked with the Chief Scout, Lord Rowallan.

The big day started at 3.30 am. Early breakfast, and we took up our position at 7 am. Then the heavens opened, but we had come 12,000 miles to be part of this great day, and a bit of rain wasn't going to stop us! Eventually the Coronation procession arrived at Westminster Abbey at 11.30 am - the service took until about 2pm when our new Queen Elizabeth took her place in the Coronation procession.

After the gun salute, fired from the Embankment near Tower Bridge, we eventually left our position, collected our gear from Horticultural Hall and, then after tea, watched a one hour fireworks show. We were told the grand finale was 1500 rockets being fired off all at the same time - a fantastic sight! - with an uninterrupted view for us on board RMS Discovery.

The following Saturday was a special day for seven of us - we went to Mansion House where along with two hundred and twenty

other Queen's Scouts we were presented with our Queen's Scout Certificate by Chief Scout Lord Rowallan.

And then we toured - Dieppe, Versailles, Paris, Edinburgh, a cricket match at Lords, Edinburgh Tattoo, Lord Rowallan's estate, Loch Lomond - and on and on!

And all too quickly our trip was over - it took four weeks to get back home on the RMS Strathhaven. I arrived home on 2 August, 1953, with three pence in my pocket.

But what a great four months we had - a

real education as we lived, worked, played, toured the world together and met some wonderful people.

Members of the Contingent have had a lifelong friendship - in 2003 it will be fifty years since I went to the Coronation, and we hope to have a reunion on the Gold Coast of the entire fourteen Queen's Scouts of the 1953 Coronation Tour. We may be a little balder, greyer and perhaps not as fit and sprightly as we were fifty years ago, but we still have the spirit.

*Albie Mattingley,  
Queen's Scout*



The Photo Above shows (from right) Alan Cook, Albie Mattingley, Lord Rowallan, Mac Cockburn, Ernie Jeffrey, Geoff Strongman, Bevan Stansbie, and Ian Harding chatting after the awards.

## TO CONTACT US . . .

The National Office of Scouts Australia supplies the administrative support to AQSA.

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