

Glamorgan West

General

Early Days (1907-1930)

In 1907 Sir Robert Baden-Powell came to Swansea and delivered a lecture on 'Scouting for Boys'. A contemporary post card picture dated November 1907 shows him with the Honourable and Mrs Vivien at Gelrafon. As a result of the interest stimulated by this lecture, several Troops were in existence before the end of 1908, although the earliest recorded warrants relate to the years following. Swansea was warranted in 1909; Neath, Port Talbot, Aberavon, Clydach and Ystalfera in 1910; Mumbles in 1911; Morrison, Seven Sisters, Crynant, Resolven and Reynoldston in 1912; and Cwmtwrch, Skewen, Loughor, Pontadawe, Briton Ferry and Trebanos in 1913. Counties and Districts were established, and the first Commissioners appointed in 1912. By 1914 there were seven Troops in Swansea District and twenty in West Glamorgan County, with a total number of 525 persons. Scouting flourished in West Glamorgan during the First World War. There was no shortage of leaders, and the Scouts were active in various patriotic causes – assisting the police, the hospital services and the local farmers.

In 1919 Captain F.S. Morgan was appointed District Commissioner for Swansea, thus inaugurating over fifty years of distinguished service. In the same year the Chief Scout (as he had then become) returned to Swansea and inspected a parade of 250 Scouts from Swansea and Carmarthen, when the first recorded good service awards were also presented. New troops were established steadily throughout the 1920s, and the Mumbles District was created in 1922. Also in 1922 a number of Scouts from Swansea also took part in a pilgrimage to Rome, and in 1923 the first of a number of major camps was hosted by the county at Margam Park.

The 1920 Jamboree at Olympia saw an active participation from Wales, with about 400 Scouts taking part. One of the star attractions was the 'colliery smash' display in the main arena by 37 boys from the 24th Swansea (Wesley) Troop, which involved erecting a 'pit head' and a 40 foot derrick crane, simulating an explosion, and staging the resulting rescue – including a stretcher case. The whole display lasted fourteen minutes, and was much admired. Various Welsh teams took part in tug-of-war, obstacle race, trek cart race and boxing competitions. One obstacle race team was drawn from West Glamorgan, and got to the final, and in the trek cart race a team from 3rd Swansea Valley did the same, losing eventually to the Danes. Cecil Mason of the 3rd Swansea Valley recorded six individual victories in the obstacle race, and R. Harry won the heavyweight boxing. The 8th Swansea, which put on a display of wood carving, also claimed to be the first Troop in Wales to have been involved in war service, having been employed in calling up reservists in August 1914.

The 1930s

In 1930 the Scouts (probably for the first time) distributed Christmas toys, and in the same year the first County Scouters' Conference was held. By 1931 there were 32 Scout Groups registered in Swansea. [see Appendix 1] In 1931 also the first Wood Badge training course in South Wales was held at the Dyffryn Estate, Neath, run by a team consisting of Clifford Davies, Jack Mill and Frank Croft. These were Training Commissioners, known at that time as Deputy Camp Chiefs. In 1932 Sir Charles Venables Llewellyn gave the County permission 'to use for weekend camps a portion of his estate near the Home Farm, Penllergaer'. Two huts were erected on the site, and Clifford Davies and Jack Mill then ran a second Wood Badge course in the same year. By the end of 1932 the South West Wales Training Team had been formed to run similar courses for West Glamorgan, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Brecknock and Radnor on an annual basis. This team and its campsite continued to render yeoman service until the site was requisitioned for military purposes in 1942. 1932 also saw a County Rally to meet the Prince of Wales (Wales's first – and only- Chief Scout). This was held at Singleton Park, by arrangement with the recently created University College. By this time a number of Groups were building their own headquarters, and several were opened in the early 1930s.

There were some memorable characters around in those days. Arthur Jones, supported by his wife and family, ran the 32nd Swansea (Rhyddings Park) Group for many years, and these were the flourishing days of Clifford Davies. He is remembered as 'the first Scout in Swansea', having joined as a small boy in 1908. Thereafter he was successively Patrol Leader, Assistant Scoutmaster, District Scoutmaster, Assistant District Commissioner and District Commissioner. He was also the first Town Commissioner for Swansea and the first Deputy Camp Chief – a position in which he was succeeded by Frank Thomas. During the six years in which he served as District Commissioner, the number of Scouts and Leaders increased from 350 to over 1200 – a remarkable achievement. Clifford Davies was awarded the Silver Wolf in 1932. These years also saw the beginnings of other notable Scout careers. Alf Masen served throughout the '30s and '40s. He was Quartermaster in 1935, and thereafter ran the Scout Shop for a number of years, latterly becoming an Assistant District Commissioner. Also on the scene was Frank (Daddy) Boon, notable for his boots and short trousers, at this time a Leader with the 25th Swansea (St.Georges) Group, although his career belongs mainly to the 1940s.

In 1936 an important (or at least well documented) County Rally and pageant was held on the 11th July at Cae-Coed Field, Pentwyn Corner, Neath. Seven Local Associations (or Districts) took part; Swansea Valley, Neath, Swansea (still under the redoubtable Clifford Davies), Port Talbot, Mumbles, North Gower and Gower Peninsula. The events included bridge building (Mumbles Scouts), jungle games (Mumbles cubs), and 'Physical fitness through the ages'. This last seems to have been a massive affair, with Cubs as ancient Greeks, Scouts as Red Indians and Ancient Britons, and some helpful hints from 'Scouting Today'. The day culminated with a great effort from Swansea, in which the Cubs presented

the Mayor's Procession, and the Scouts 'men from Mars'. After that the tumbling, tilting 'uses of the Scout stave' (Scouts) and 'pyramids' (Rovers) must have come as something of a relief!

Numbers fluctuated a little at this time. In 1934 there were six Districts and sixty six Groups, as against seven Districts two years later. The total number of Scouts in West Glamorgan in 1934 was 2,577 (260 Group leaders and officers, 925 Wolf Cubs, 1095 Scouts, 150 Rovers, 128 District and County officers and 19 Commissioners). This was down from 2,739 in the previous year, which took the officers by surprise as the number of Groups was still increasing. It was noted that 52 Scouts held the First Class award.

The 1940s

Few records survive from the days of the Second World War, relating to the County as a whole, although there are suggestions from the Groups and Districts that the movement was adversely affected by a shortage of leaders. There was a Rover Crew at R.A.F. St Athan which provided a lot of help with training, but the active role which Scouts had played in Civil Defence in the First World War was not repeated. They 'helped out' with things like fundraising and paper collection, but there was less call for amateur involvement in such activities as fire watching, rescue and ambulance work.

After the war, in 1946, the old training campsite had to be vacated. It had been held only on an understanding, not on a lease, and the land was required for building development. Partly as a consequence, in 1948 a twenty one year lease on the Silver Cross site was purchased by the Welsh Scout Council. It was refurbished by local Scouters and Rovers, and was to be run by the South Wales Training Team until 1971. The 1949 census (the first after the war) showed 64 Groups in the County, with a total membership of 2,745. This was the first year of Senior Scouting, but there were only 185 Senior Scouts – as against 222 Leaders and 153 Local Association Officers!

The only 'character' noted from the period is a Mr. Albert Short, Scoutmaster of the 8th Swansea (Mount Zion) troop, who was apparently famous for wearing Sam Brown belt with his shorts!

The 1950s

Again the records are to be found mostly at a more local level, but this was a period of confidence in spite of the problems posed for many leaders by the demands of National Service. The census figures show a modest expansion from 2544 in 1950 to 2800 in 1955, but there was a dramatic decline in the number of Local Association Officers, from 134 in 1950 to 5 in 1953 which must be explained by changes in the methods of counting. No LA complained of being suddenly bereft of secretaries or treasurers!

In 1956 a Rover/Ranger Conference was held at Brangwyn Hall, Swansea, attended by Lady Baden Powell, the World Chief Guide, which heralded a period of improved collaboration between the two movements, and in 1958 a large

conference of Patrol Leaders and Senior Scouts, aimed at easing the transition from Troop to Senior Troop, which was causing problems in some places. In 1954, when there had been 876 Scouts under 15 in the County, there were only 59 over 15, and the main 'leakage point' was at what should have been the transition.

In 1959 a unique, and short lived, experiment was tried with the County organisation, when Swansea was elevated to the status of sub-county, containing five districts. This did not lead to the expected improvements in communication, and was discontinued in 1971.

The 1960s

By this time conferences had become a regular feature of scouting in the County, Section Leaders, Patrol Leaders and Local Association officers all meeting from time to time. This proved a more satisfactory method of improving communications than administrative re-organisation.

The Swansea sub-county Annual Report for 1964-5 shows that in the latter year there were no fewer than 42 Groups in the sub-county, divided between the 5 Districts, North District being the largest with 11. There were also 2 District Rover Crews. In that year also no fewer than 18 Queen's Scout awards were earned, the 11th Swansea clocking up 4, and several other groups 2 each.[for details, see Appendix]

The decade also saw the building of the Scout and Guide Headquarters at Bryn Road. Sir Charles Maclean, the Chief Scout, cut the first turf in 1966, and Lady Olave Baden Powell opened the completed building on the 18th July 1968. In June 1969 there was a massive rally at the Pontardulais Showground, when 1200 West Glamorgan Cubs and Scouts welcomed the Chief Scout, the Chief Commissioner for Wales (Christopher Cory), the Commissioner for South Wales (Gerald Bellingham), and their own County Commissioner (John Aeron Thomas). The events included the building of a large catapult by the Pennard Scouts, a demonstration of knotting by Pontardulais, and (apparently) a Hot Dog Snack by Llwhchr! Scout David Thomas received the Chief Scouts Award from the Chief himself, and Mr. Aeron Thomas the Silver Wolf

The 1970s

This decade is chiefly remembered for the Swansea Gang Shows at the Grand Theatre. These were combined Scout and Guide productions. Rehearsals were conducted by John Childers, Hywel Weaver and Margaret Grey, and all the costumes were made by the parents. The youngsters were brilliant; the audiences loved them, and the shows provided colourful highlights for the many Cubs, Brownies, Scouts and Guides who took part.

The Chief Scout was a regular visitor to West Glamorgan rallies during this period, and in 1978 the Queen came to one such at Margam Park. In the same year a new Group headquarters was opened at Mansel Road, Gowerton, by Christopher Cory and Mrs Kwantes, the Chief Commissioners for Scouts and

Guides respectively. In 1972 the County President – the veteran Col. F. S. Morgan – initiated a new challenge competition which was an immediate success, and 1977 was ‘a year of public service’. This involved a Scout report which gained ministerial recognition and praise in London, and (more locally) a very thorough litter sweep on Swansea beach. More prosaically, piped water was installed at Silver Cross in 1971.

It was also at this time that Mrs Betty Sivertsen was Mayoress of Swansea (1976). Mrs Sivertsen had been an Assistant Cub Scout leader with the 5th Mumbles, and later CSL and Assistant County Commissioner (Cub Scouts). As Mayoress she organised many events to which Cubs and Scouts were invited, and received the Silver Acorn in the year of her mayoralty.

Since 1980

Over the last twenty five years the number of Scouts in West Glamorgan has fluctuated, but the general trend has been downwards. In 1985 there were 75 Groups, in 2006, 39. Beaver Scouts numbered 126 in 1985 (when they were a new section), and after peaking at 689 ten years later, have now dropped back to 338. Cub Scouts and Scouts have both more than halved, the former from 1373 to 519, and the latter from 801 to 299. Venture and Explorer Scout numbers have fluctuated even more than the others, peaking in 1989 at 156, and collapsing to 40 ten years later. Here there has been a partial recovery, and the 2006 number was 67. Similar fluctuations have occurred in the past, and the main problem now, as always, is the recruitment and retention of Leaders. In spite of what is sometimes said, young people’s attitudes do not change dramatically, but whereas in 1985 there were 388 Leaders, in 2006 there were 250 – and that represented a recovery from the low point of 2003, when there were just 203.

This problem has led to a certain amount of rationalisation. The fewer groups are also somewhat larger, reducing the need for Leaders (although not by much!) Also, as late as 2000 there were 7 Districts in the County, but as a result of various mergers, there are now only 4. Swansea Central and Swansea North amalgamated to form Swansea District, while Port Talbot and Neath came together to form Afan Nedd District. The 2006 census showed 7 active groups in Swansea District, 10 in Swansea Gower, 11 in Cwm Newydd and 14 in Afan Nedd.

This time has also seen the recognition of some long and exceptional service. Charles Harding started as a scout with the 8th Swansea (Zion/Alexander) in 1936, becoming Troop Leader and King’s Scout. Thereafter he became District Cub Scout Leader, District Scout Leader, Assistant Rover Scout Leader. More recently he was CSL of the 3rd Swansea (Rhyddings Park) and Assistant County Commissioner (Cub Scouts). Since 1968 he has been warden of the Bryn Road Headquarters, and he received the Silver Wolf in 1989.

Bill (Ian) Greatrix began his Scouting as a Rover with the 44th Swansea (St Pauls Sketty) in 1957, becoming ARSL in 1964. After the Rover Section was abolished in 1967 he became Group Scout Leader in 1972, and two years later transferred as Scout Leader to the 47th Swansea (Killay) Group. Since 1977 he

has been Assistant County (Area) Commissioner for Scouts, and received a bar to his Silver Acorn in 2004. Among his other achievements have been the successful introduction of Scout car racing and rifle shooting. The 47th Swansea have been National Scout Shooting Champions on many occasions.

Ann Gratrix began as a Ranger Guide helper with the 32nd Swansea in 1961, becoming Assistant Cub Scout Leader with the same group in 1974, and ADC (Cubs) for Swansea Central District later in the same year. She was later Assistant County Commissioner, a position which she held until 2000, when she became District Commissioner of the new Cwm Newydd District. She has been a Leader Trainer since 1992, and received the Silver Wolf in 2004.

Dr. Elwyn Davies, similarly a long term servant of Scouting in West Glamorgan, also received a well merited Silver Wolf in 2004 at the hands of the Deputy Chief Commissioner for Wales, Alan Clewett. The presentation was made at the 5th Mumbles headquarters. For many years Elwyn was Assistant Group Scout Leader with the 5th Mumbles, and his lengthy Scouting career included being Secretary of Glamorgan West County/Area Scout Council between 1971 and 2003, and Registrar of the County/Area Training Team from 1981 to 2003. He retired in 2003, following a serious spinal operation and is presently a Skills Instructor (and your chronicler).

DISTRICTS

Mumbles

The Mumbles was a Scout District from 1922 to 1967, when it was redesignated as Swansea Gower. The Groups there retain the original name, and there are presently three; the 1st (Oystermouth), 5th (Newton) and the 6th (West Cross). There have also at different times been a 2nd, 3rd (Oystermouth), 4th, and 7th, all now closed. Past District Commissioners (all with strong local backgrounds) have included Harry Gratrix, Jeff Evans, Don Frame, Allan Clewett (later County Commissioner and awarded the Silver Wolf in 1994)) and Keith Davies (presently District Chairman). The present incumbent is Allen Aldred.

The 1st Mumbles was registered as an Open troop in May 1919, but not very much is known about it until the 1930s, when camps are recorded at Hele, near Ilfracome (1934), Saundersfoot (1936) and Manordeilo (1939). The 1st combined with the 3rd Mumbles to send a contingent of six (whose names are recorded) to the 1937 World Jamboree in Holland. The Troop seems to have struggled during the Second World war, probably due to a shortage of leaders, although First Class hike logbooks survive for Patrol Leaders Hinder and Long (1941) and Alec Yeldman (1943). A joint camp was held with the 3rd and the 6th Mumbles at Glanrhyd, Manordeilo in 1943, which Harold Smith (later County Commissioner) attended as a Patrol Leader. It is also known that the Troop 'helped with the war effort' but not known in what way. The difficulties continued after the war, largely because of the demands of National Service, but the 1950 and 60s saw a strong recovery. The troop grew in numbers from 15 in 1952 to 30 in 1964. The strength of the Senior Scout Troop (founded in 1949) fluctuated, and it was from time to time meeting jointly with the 6th Mumbles. Nevertheless the commitment of those

who stayed on as seniors was strong, and many went on to become leaders. Alan Clewett was one such; being leader from the early 1960s until 1978, when he became District Commissioner. Assistant Scout leaders at this time included Robert Thomas and Peter Shapton – the latter known for his expertise in water activities. In the early 1970s the troop was the proud possessor of six canoes, but these had to be ‘mothballed’ in 1979 because Peter Shapton had departed and none of the current Leaders possessed a ‘Boat Certificate’ authorising him to supervise their use.

In 1973 the Troop camped abroad with the 5th Sketty Guides – this bold experiment being due to the fact that the Guider of the 5th was the wife of the current Scout Leader. The late 1970s were difficult. The old Scout hut was demolished in 1975, and the Troop moved into temporary accommodation at the Old People’s Welfare Home behind the British Legion in Mumbles. After returning to a rebuilt Headquarters it was so short of money that it had to ‘make do’ for several years with old equipment.. The departure of Alan Clewett and Peter Shapton left the Troop in such low water that it was forced to close briefly in 1979. However, by the end of that year John Price (of a distinguished Scouting family) had moved from Waunarlwydd to take over the Troop, and ably assisted by Johnny Robertson, and later by Andrew Lloyd, swiftly restored its fortunes. Two Chief Scout’s Awards were achieved in 1979, and seven in 1981. At the end of 1983 business commitments forced John Price to give up, but his former assistant Andrew Lloyd was able to take over, and assisted by Johnny Robertson, and later Andrew Falvey continued the tradition which John Price had established. In 1990 the Group took over the exclusive management of Sutton Hall (the Group Headquarters) which had previously been shared with the Guides. The Hall was refurbished in 2004, thanks to a grant from Barclays Bank. Twenty Chief Scouts Awards have been gained since 1986, and several of the present Leaders hold long service awards. The movement of Leaders since 1980, and present team, are listed in the appendix.

The 2nd Mumbles appears to have come into existence in 1924, following the establishment of the Mumbles Local Association (District) in May 1922. At first the 2nd met along with the 1st in the Scout Hut at the Grove, but little is known about it beyond the fact that the Leader and Assistant Leader were Ernest and Trevor Jones. A First Class Hike report by Patrol Leader R.Withell dated 13th-16th September 1924 is just about the only record of its activities. By the end of that year the Troop seems to have merged with the 1st, retaining only its distinctive green scarf. However the Cub Pack continued, and the Troop seems to have reformed in 1926. In 1928 it was listed in the census return as the 2nd Mumbles (Baptist Church) Troop. The Leaders at that time were Trevor James and F. Wilcox, with the Cub Leaders given as Eleanor James and Muriel Hodgetts. The meeting place was the Baptist Church Lecture hall in Langland Road. The Troop was still in existence in 1933, when it was listed in a conference programme, but had finally expired by 1940.

The 3rd Mumbles was sponsored by All Saints Church, Oystermouth, and was registered as a Cub Pack in November 1925. It appears to have been an offshoot of the Sunday School, and the meeting place was given as ‘the Scout Shed’. A troop was registered two years later under the leadership of Major H. Leslie

Hyett and Herbert Chown. At that time there were 18 scouts, but by the census of 1928 there were 34 Scouts and 22 Wolf Cubs. Don Bates, who was a Scout in the troop at the time, recalls that it met for a time at the new church hall, and later moved to the Grove. Don was Troop Leader, and later Scoutmaster when Major Hyett became GSM in 1932. He continued in that role until he left the District in 1937. Bill Barrington, another Scout at that time, remembers receiving his Fist Class award in 1935 (on his 14th birthday), and the King's Scout Award a year later. When Don Bates left the Troop became Sea Scouts and adopted a maroon neckerchief. A combined 1st and 3rd Mumbles contingent (of which Bill Barrington was a member) attended the World Jamboree in 1937. The names of most of the Leaders from this period are known, and at least two of the Lady Cubmasters married Scoutmasters, which seems to have been a common feature of the time! Mr. Barrington took over the Pack from Mrs Bates in 1939. The 3rd Mumbles survived the war, and changed from a sponsored to an open group in 1956, when Harold Smith was Scoutmaster. However, when Harold moved on in 1958 no one could be found to take over from him, and the Troop closed. The Pack continued for a few more years, but also closed in the early 1960s, bringing to an end the story of what had once been a strong and flourishing Group.

The 4th Mumbles was registered in September 1928 as an open Wolf Cub Pack, with no Scout Troop. Apart from the fact that the Pack met at the Mission Church, Castle Road, Norton, there is little record of this pack, although it seems to have continued until the end of the Second World War. During the war, no doubt because of restrictions on evening meetings, all the Mumbles packs met together on Saturday afternoons. After the war a new 4th Mumbles Group was formed (but never apparently registered) sponsored by the Methodist Church and meeting at the Victoria Hall. There was both a Troop and a Pack, and both flourished in the 1950s, when the names of most of the leaders are known. The troop won the Pressdee Camping Trophy in 1959, and was famous for its Gang Shows at the Victoria Hall. The Group closed in the 1960s.

The 5th Mumbles was a direct product of the war. It was started as a Cub Pack by Monica Hinds and Betty Silvertsen, on the 29th April 1942 at the request of the vicar, and met at St Peters Church Newton, because wartime restrictions made it difficult for boys from Newton to join any of the packs in the Mumbles proper. At that time there were five Sixes, and they squeezed into the old School House at the top of Nottage Road. After the war the Pack started to meet in St Peters Church hall, and used the field at the back (now the site of the vicarage) for open air activities. There was a constant turn over of leaders, but it continued to flourish. A Scout Troop was established in 1945, and although the names of the Leaders are known, almost the only evidence for its existence seems to be a photograph taken in 1947 in the grounds of Newton School. It lasted for only a few years. The Cub Pack throughout the 1950s and 1960s fed mainly into the 1st Mumbles Troop, until the 5th Mumbles Troop was reformed in 1968. A number of well known characters went from the 5th Pack to the 1st Troop at this time, including Roger Blythe and Alan Clewett. The reformed Troop was largely a spin off from the 1st. The names of most of the Leaders and Assistants since 1968 are known, including many who are still active in scouting – Bruce Bowbanks (ADC Scouts) and Kevin Williams (now GSL) in particular. Kevin was awarded

the Medal of Merit in 2004. Mrs Joan Bowbanks was the first Lady Troop Scouter in the District. In the early 1970s a second Pack was formed, but this was forced to close in 1982 owing to a shortage of leaders. The 1970s were a flourishing period for the Group. In that year it was able to lease a piece of ground from Welsh Water and build its own Headquarters, which was opened in great style on the 12th June 1975 by Mrs Betty Sivertsen who at the time was both Assistant County Commissioner (Cubs) and Deputy Mayoress of Swansea. The event was also attended by Colonel J. Vaughn Williams, Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of West Glamorgan. In 1979 Mrs Barbara Davies became GSL, and continued in post until January 2004. She was awarded a bar to the Silver Acorn in 2005, and is now Group Chairman. The Group had Cub and Scout flags dedicated in 1978, followed by a Welsh Dragon and a Beaver pennant in July 1996. A sad distinction was achieved in September 1980 when young scout, Francis Kettley, was awarded the Meritorious Conduct Medal for his bravery during a terminal illness. Francis died not long after.

The 5th has been a scouting success story. In the 1990s the Group participated enthusiastically in the Scout Christmas Post, and was able to use the proceeds to carry out a major revamp of its headquarters – where Cubs, Scouts, Guides and Brownies now all meet. Beavers started in 1987, and new Leaders have been regularly available. The Group Executive Committee has been a model of support, and the Secretary and Treasurer both received Long Service decorations (20 years) in 2005. Dr. Elwyn Davies was Assistant Group Scout Leader, and after long association with the group is now a Skills Instructor (Scouts). The sixtieth anniversary of the formation of the Group was celebrated in May 2002, when survivors of all the stages of the Group's development were able to gather – and celebrate! There were further celebrations at the AGM on 11th May 2006, when the Lord Lieutenant of West Glamorgan, Commodore Robert Hastie, presented Robert Hixon with his Queen's Scout award. This was the first in the Group's history, and went appropriately to one who had been Beaver, Cub and Scout in the same group, and is now an Assistant Leader. To gild his lily, Robert also gained the Gold Award of the Duke of Edinburgh's Scheme.

The 6th Mumbles was originally formed as the 1st Blackpill in 1912, and was one of the founder groups in the Swansea Local Association, formed in that year. Very little is known, or remembered, about it before the Second World War, from which it may be deduced that it was neither large nor flourishing. At some point during the war it changed its designation to 6th Mumbles, and the choice (or allocation) of that number suggests that this happened between the registration of the 5th in April 1942 and the appearance of the 6th in a joint camp at Glanrhyd Manordeilo in 1943. The only record of activity before that date is a First Class hike log by Graham Govier dated 3rd August 1941. The Troop and Pack originally met at the old Vivian Hall in Blackpill, until moving in 1961 to West Cross, where it has remained and flourished ever since. Before 1961 the 6th was sponsored by Clyne Church, and the priests in charge took an active role in the running of the Group, but with the move in that year it severed its connection with the church and became an Open Group. There have been a number of well known figures among the 6th leadership – Graham Govier (SM for several years after the war), Harold Smith (later County Commissioner), Jack Brennan (who

carried out the move) and Stuart Price. The new hall at West Cross was also dedicated to two former members who lost their lives during the war, Geoff Burgess and Harry Diggory.

Between 1963 and 1967 there was a close association between the 6th and the 1st Mumbles and a number of joint camps took place, at Newcastle Emlyn, Marsden (near Hereford), and (in 1967) on a site which is now flooded by the Llynne Brianne dam. A number of 'characters' remain in mind from that period – Ted 'Wedge' Grinter, (who dug the deepest 'bog' pits) his son David, 'Col' Collis, Barry 'Bargie' Jenkins, and Jimmy Porter. The original Blackpill Cub Pack had been a casualty of the war, and was restarted (as 6th Mumbles) at Vivian Hall in 1945. The names of all the early leaders are known – and again a number of them married within the movement. One, Mrs Val Williams, was Harry Diggory's sister and was closely associated with the new Burgess Diggory Hall. By July 1987 there were two Cub Packs (known as the Ospreys and the Herons), and they held a joint camp with the Scouts at Clyne Farm. This was the Cubs first time under canvas, and was judged a huge success. The following year both Packs visited Windsor Safari Park; but unfortunately owing to a shortage of leaders were forced to merge in the same year. This has in no way curbed their spirit of adventure. In 1991 they attended the Anniversary Cuboree in Margam Park, and the County Cub Scout Camp in 1993. The first Father and Son camp (an idea borrowed from the Scouts) was held in 1992 and was greatly enjoyed (especially by the fathers). The Scout Leaders came along and ran the camp fire, and the whole event was such a success that it has been repeated every year since.

The list of their activities is endless. A fund raising BBQ every year in Parc-le-Breos – in 1996 a visit to Legoland – in 1998 a promotional Tea Party with the Guides and Brownies at West Cross – and in 2004 the three Mumbles Packs got together to run a special Christmas post. It is hoped that this venture will continue. The 6th have attended every Welsh Cub Fun Day at Builth Wells – even in the rain. Mrs Val Dilley, ACSL until 1984, CSL 1984-94, and GSL 1994-2003, was awarded the Silver Acorn in 2004.

The 7th Mumbles is no more than a shadow. It existed for a few years in the late 1950s and early 1960s, meeting the Scout Shed at the Grove. Its members were drawn from the Nazareth House Orphanage on Clyne Common, and it was unusual in that it was a Troop without a Cub Pack. Little is remembered about it beyond the name of the Troop Leader – a gentle soul called Peter. It was the brainchild of a Mr. Murphy, and when he had to give up the leadership, it disappeared, leaving very little behind.

There was also a flourishing Mumbles Rover Crew in the 1920s and 1930s. This was an organisation for the over 18s (sometimes a long way over), and was dedicated to public service. The idea was based upon Baden Powell's highly romanticised view of medieval chivalry, and had a strong appeal at that time. Rover Crews struggled during and after the war, and were discontinued following the Advance Party report in 1967.

Over forty countries were represented at the World Rover Moot at Kanderstag in 1931. The Welsh contingent numbered 30, of whom 8 came from the Mumbles Crew, including several well known later as Leaders in local scouting.

Neath

Scouting came early to Neath, when the first Troop was formed at Easter 1909. Among those early Scouts were many who later performed sterling service for the movement, notably John S. Mills (District Commissioner 1935-41), and E. Johns (District Rover Scout Leader). Not very much is known about those early days, but by 1927 there were (or had been) six groups in the district. On the 23rd June in that year a Grand Fete and Bazaar was staged by the Local Association, and in that took part representatives of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd (Church) and 5th Neath, and the 1st Briton Ferry groups. There must at some point have been a 4th Neath, but it had presumably ceased to exist by that time. It was, apparently, a 'grand day'. The first and second parts consisted of displays by the Cubs, including an investiture, singing, skipping, exercise, the Grand Howl and (more imaginatively) the landing of Captain Cook in New Zealand. The third part comprised Scout displays – a patrol camp, physical training, and something mysteriously called 'The Diamond Thief'. The day concluded with a camp fire and community singing. Theodore Gibbins and C.D. Godfrey – respectively LA President and District Commissioner – presided.

In the late 1950s a District Headquarters was built at Cadoxton, after a big fund raising effort, and was opened in December 1960 by Sir Cenydd Traherne, the Lord Lieutenant of Glamorgan. It was extended in 1966 to include the camping and training ground, and has since been extensively used, not only by local Scouts but also by those from other parts of the UK – and beyond. By 1995 it was clear that the old Store and Toilet hut was inadequate, and an application to the National Lottery Charities Board produced a grant of £59,521 under its 'Youth Issues' programme. This enabled a splendid new amenities block to be built, which was opened on the 17th May 1997 by Councillor D.M. John (Mayor of Neath and Port Talbot).

With the advent of Venture Scouting in the late 1970s a District Unit was formed under the name of 'Minus Four', and in September 1979 Paul Fetherstone (the present District Commissioner) became the first member to gain the Queen's Scout Award. At the same time, in February 1979 and April 1980 two very successful Scout and Guide Gang Shows were staged at the Gwyn Hall in Neath – of which many happy memories still survive!

Many outstanding personalities have served scouting in Neath. As we have seen John Stuart Mill was one of the very first scouts. He was subsequently ASM (1910-12), SM (1912-47), ADC, DC (1935-41), GSL and ACC. He was awarded the Silver Wolf in 1957 and appointed MBE in 1960. Sydney Cooper became ASM of the 9th Neath (Skewen) in 1931, and subsequently SM, DSM, GSM, ADC and County International Adviser. Since 1977 he has been County Adviser for Special Needs. He was awarded the Silver Wolf in 1974 and the Chief Scouts Fifty Year Long Service decoration in 1981. He was appointed MBE in 1976. John Leitz was invested as a Scout in the 1st Neath in 1936, becoming Patrol

Leader and Troop Leader. Subsequently he was ASM (1941-47), SM (1947-54), SSM, DSM, ADC, DC (1955-63) and ACC (1964-71). He gained his Scout Wood Badge in 1951 and the Rover variety in 1955. He was awarded a bar to his Silver Acorn in 1984. Ron Boulden began his Scouting with the 1st Conway, far away in the North, before moving to the 3rd Neath where he became SL. Later he was SL of the 14th Neath (Cimla), ADC and ACC. As County Secretary he was responsible for introducing the successful Christmas Card Post. He was awarded the Silver Wolf in 1996. Ann Harries started her scouting as a member of the Executive Committee of the 12th Neath (Resolven) in 1969. She became ACSL of the 5th (Bryncoch) in 1972, and CSL of the 9th in 1974. Subsequently she was DCSL for Neath and ACC (Cubs) for West Glamorgan before becoming DC from 1989 to 1997. She was then Area Commissioner from 1997 until her retirement in 2005. She was awarded the Silver Wolf in 2002.

[In 2001 the Neath and Port Talbot Districts merged to become Afan Nedd District]

Port Talbot

Scouting goes back to the very beginning in Port Talbot. Two Troops are reputed to have been established before the end of 1908 by Fred James and W. Vincent, although Mr. Vincent was not warranted until 1911 and Fred James died in 1912 without, apparently, receiving a warrant at all. Fred won a competition in *The Scout* magazine in 1909 to go on a promotional visit to Germany which was led by Archibald Kyle, the Managing Secretary of the Boy Scouts, a trip for which his scrap book still survives. Mr. Vincent's troop became the 1st Aberavon (St.Mary's). It was formed for the boys from the Mansel Works, and met at first at his home in St.Mary's Place, before moving to the National School. This Troop attended the first Jamboree at Windsor Park in July 1911. Mr. Vincent stood down in 1916 and the leadership was taken over by W. Wilkin. The Troop suffered several casualties during the First World War, but by the time that Mr. Wilkin took it over it had acquired a Patron in the person of Capt.A.M. Talbot-Fletcher of Margam Park fame. Fred James's troop became the 1st Port Talbot (Mayor's Own), but he seems to have given up the active leadership very early, probably on the ground of his deteriorating health. It is thought that his successor, W.G. Cosgrove, went with Baden Powell to Argentina in 1909, but whether this was before or after receiving his warrant is not clear. He took the Troop to the New Forest Camp and to the Ystradgynlais Rally in 1910. A third Troop was started at St Peters in 1911, and counted a war hero among its members. This was Rupert Price Hallows, who was probably its first Scoutmaster and who won both the MC and the VC, the latter posthumously, in 1915. Two stained glass windows were subsequently dedicated to his memory, one of which is now in the new Neath Port Talbot Hospital and the other in St Peters Church. The St Peters Troop merged with the 1st Port Talbot in 1916.

The Port Talbot and District Scout Association had originally been formed in 1909, but it was not officially registered until April 1916, at which time W. Miles was the Chairman, and there were five groups in the District.

The 1st Port Talbot attended the London Jamboree of 1920, where they distinguished themselves by coming second in an obstacle race against international competition. They also won the Llewellyn Cup every year from 1920 to 1926. In August 1924 some members attended the Imperial Jamboree at Wembley and were presented to the Prince of Wales. Sea Scouts from the 1st were also the only Welsh Scouts to get to sleep on board H.M.S. Northampton in the Thames. At about this time also one of the Troop's Kings Scouts, Cecil Smith, was the first Scout in Wales to receive the Cornwall Badge. Another first was achieved soon after, when the troop was the first to conduct an investiture in Welsh. The Crowned bard presented the badges in honour of the occasion. In 1927 the SM (Wyndham Wilkin) attended a special commemorative camp on Brownsea Island, and in 1928 Alun Williams (an ASM) was awarded the Silver Cross for rescuing a man from Port Talbot docks. In 1930 the old headquarters at the top of Conduit Street had to be abandoned on account of bridge works, and was relocated at the old YMCA opposite the railway Station. In July 1929 a contingent attended the 'coming of age' Jamboree at Arrow Park, Birkenhead, and also an all-Wales camp at Margam Park.

The origins of the 2nd Port Talbot (Holy Trinity) are obscure, but in 1932 it is known that the leaders were W. Bennett, Reg Greenfield and Mervin Price. At that date there was also another troop at Abercregan, but nothing is known of it apart from the name of the leader – a certain Wally Thomas. It appears that this Troop later merged with the 3rd, having camped with them at Margam and Home Farm.

The 3rd (Sandfields) was started at an unknown date by a Mr. T.G. Phillips, using a large shed at the rear of his house (13 Rhanallt Street) as a meeting place. By 1935 he had handed over the leadership to Wilf Inskip, continuing himself as ASM. All the boys were drawn from the Margam area. In 1937/8 a new headquarters was built on land behind Landore Avenue which had been specially cleared by the Scouts. In 1937 both the Scouters were awarded the bronze medal of the association for rescuing youths from drowning – surely a unique double. The medals were presented by Lord Trethewen in the St Theodore's Mission Hall on the 2nd August. The Ellis Brigham VSU was subsequently part of this group.

There have also been the 4th (Wesley), 5th (S .Theodore's), 6th (Bryn), 7th (Cwmavon), 8th (St Catherine's Bagman), 9th (Groeswen) and 10th (St. Mary's), but very little is known about them in spite of the fact that the 5th is still in existence.

The 11th (St Pauls) was probably started in the 1920s, but appears for the first time in 1930 when Frank Gosney was the SM. They met in St Dyfrig's Hall in Marsh Street. In 1938 the troop was given a 27 foot Montague Whaler, which they kept on the River Afan. As a result the troop became Sea Scouts! The whaler was lost to enemy action in 1940, but the conversion remained. The Troop busied itself during the war, acting as messengers for the Fire Service, the ARP and the police, but at the end of the war they lost the use of St Dyfrig's Hall, moving temporarily to the District Headquarters in Oakwood Street. In 1949 they were renumbered at the 1st Port Talbot Sea Scouts, and John Gosney took over

as SM. In 1951 a site was obtained on Llewellyn's Quay, and the old District headquarters was dismantled and moved lock stock and barrel, becoming the new headquarters for the recently designated Port Talbot Sea Scouts. There was then a urgent need to get back on the water, and Mr. F.W. Cartwright, the Chief Executive of the Steel Company of Wales agreed to provide a sailing boat in kit form, if the Scouts would buy another – and assemble them both! This was done; other boats were also made and (thanks to the good offices of Alan Hooker), permission was obtained to use the Works Reservoir, where the boats were kept in shed. In 1955 permission was obtained to use the Dock water at Llewellyn's Quay only at a small annual rent and a substantial (£50,000) insurance indemnity. At the same time a steel lifeboat was given to the Troop, and in 1958 Owen Powell took over as Scout Leader. In 1960 a disastrous fire destroyed both headquarters and the boats, and although the rebuilding of the headquarters on the same site was immediately undertaken, the Troop never really recovered. In 1964 Peter Evans and B.Norton became SL and GSL respectively, but by 1969 falling numbers forced the Group to close. Fortunately the lapse was only temporary, as the Group was subsequently reformed, and still exists.

The District Executive Committee achieved the remarkable feat of working unchanged throughout the war, and the Scout Leaders achieved none of the heroics of their earlier counterparts. There were about eleven Groups in the District at that time, and the names of many of the leaders are known. By 1949 the DEC had changed its wartime composition, and at that time was meeting in the Port Talbot Steel Company's General Offices, near the railway station.

Senior Scouts came into existence in 1949, and by 1950 the Sea Scout Troop had a senior Patrol, while the Cwmavon Group ran to a whole separate Troop. At the same time a new Troop was briefly established at St Josephs, but it has left little trace in the records. Individual Troops regularly attended the Welsh Jamborees in 1953 ,1957 and 1961, and this was a flourishing time for the local training team as large numbers of leaders completed courses under the watchful eyes of Gerald Bellingham (County Commissioner) and John Leitz (Trainer). In 1956 the District LA was re-registered at Headquarters, and at that time the Groups recorded were the 1st Sea Scouts, the 2nd, the 3rd (Sandfields), the 5th (St Theodore's), the 6th (Abercregan), the 7th (Cwmavon), the 8th (Baglan), the 9th (Groeswen), the 10th (St.Mary's) and the 11th (St Pauls). The old 1st, having given up the designation of 'Mayor's own' in response to complaints, had by this time gone out of existence, and several others had changed their designations. In 1956 also the ADC Cubs (Mrs. Lavery) received the Silver Acorn and on the same occasion Philip Jones of the 8th was presented with his Queen's Scout Badge. More unusually William Mizzen and John Angel of the 7th were awarded certificates of merit for having rescued a sheep which had fallen into a well at Cwmavon. 1957 saw two further Queen's Scout awards (to Geoffrey Gravelle and John Iles), and the following year the whole management of the District was restructured with the appointment of several new ADCs. The proceeds of the Gang Show in that year (£50) were donated to the St Theodore's church building fund to assist with the building of a new church (Holy Trinity) on the Sandfields Estate. There were four Queen's Scout awards (Anthony Pryce-Jones, Robert Galliver, Roger Bennett and Edward Lewis – all of the 10th), and an extension to the 3rd's group headquarters was opened.

In 2001 Neath and Port Talbot Districts were merged to form Afan Nedd District, and three of the old port Talbot groups are still running.

Swansea

Information here is very incomplete. There are, or have been, over thirty groups in Swansea at different times, but the available evidence relates to only four of them – the 20th, 24th, 31st and 32nd.

The 20th is the oldest currently active Group in West Glamorgan. It was founded in 1915 by Frank Powell, and met originally in the Libanus School Room in Morriston. After the Second World War a new headquarters was established in Bath Road, when Griff James became first Cub Scout Leader and then Scout Leader. He subsequently took over as Group Scout Leader, and when he retired on reaching the age of sixty five, Hywel Weaver took over that position – which he still retains. In 1961 the Group was able to open a new headquarters in Solva Road, Clase. The group presently has three Sections, and returned 31 members and 5 leaders at the 2006 census.

The 24th (Wesley) was established in 1918 on the joint initiative of the Wesley Chapel and the Fresh Air Fund. A meeting was held at Caswell Bay in May of that year, when a certain T.J. Hurn of the Chapel announced 'We must have a Scout Troop'. Shortly after the Chapel Sunday School Committee appointed a Chairman and a Scout Master, and the 24th was in being.

The Troop was obviously established on a grand scale. There were eight Patrols, including a rather curious looking Senior Patrol, which may have been a disguised Rover Crew since it seems to have been led by the Rover Mate, David Thomas. There were also specialist instructors in music, seamanship, carpentry, photography, signalling and swimming – a range of activities which few can have equalled. A contingent from the troop attended the World Jamboree at Olympia in August 1920, and represented Wales in a 'World Championship of Technical Scouting', against entries from 25 other countries. 'Boss' Goldsworthy (the SM), who was an engineer by profession, devised a simulated colliery explosion, complete with pithead apparatus, a matter in which he had considerable experience. Roused by their 'alarm bugle', the Scouts from the nearby campsite rushed to the rescue. A 36 foot derrick was erected, artificial smoke billowed, and the intrepid scouts got the miners out one by one. The display lasted 15 minutes, and drew loud and long applause from the onlookers. No one else could match such a demonstration – and Wales were the winners! When they returned to Swansea news of their feat had preceded them, and they received a civic reception at the High Street station, with thousands of spectators. Led by a band generously provided by another Troop (Bonymaen) they marched through cheering crowds to their headquarters at the Chapel, where there were many speeches and a 'victory supper'. The main legacy of this momentous occasion was a new flag – and the motto 'It shall be done'.

Connections with the Chapel remained close, and the group hosted Local Association parade services on at least two occasions. On the 15th November 1925 300 scouts and cubs attended and Rover Scout Glyn Hughes played the

organ; while in July 1933 an attendance of over 400 filled the chapel and gallery. On that occasion an old Wesley Scout preached, (The Rev. W.B.J. Martin, a Congregationalist Minister) and King's Scouts James Dadds and Albert Murray read the lessons. The Group was large and flourishing, and on 16th January 1932 when the Prince of Wales visited Swansea we learn that no fewer than 110 Wesley Scouts and Cubs were present in the Drill Hall. Swimming was the troop's particular forte. They won the Local Association championship every year from 1930 to 1933, and after another victory in 1935 were allowed to keep the trophy. Some 60 members of the group belonged to the Swansea Swimming Club; many were awarded life saving medals, and some became national champions.

In 1936 the Boss decided to start a Sea Scout section on the novel principle of making it an 'elite unit' open only to those who held the King's Scout Badge. By 1938 it numbered over 30. The section had originally been given an 18 foot sailing dingy, but by 1938 it had two sailing boats and a boathouse on the River Tawe. In 1939 the Group celebrated its 21st birthday by holding its annual camp at Saunderfoot, a venue to which the Sea Scouts were able to sail. In the same year a choir was formed under ASM Len Richards, which went on to win the Chief Choral at the Scout Eisteddfod. The Cub Pack was always rather overshadowed by the Scout Troop, but it went back to 1919, and included some notable personalities among its leaders. However, the Second World War was to prove fatal to the 24th. Its senior members and leaders were depleted by the needs of the armed forces, and the Chapel was destroyed by German bombs in 1941. Although it was reported in April 1942 that the troop was 'holding together well' – thereafter it disappears from the records.

The 31st (Robin Hoods Own) was registered with the Swansea Association on the 9th February 1921, and with Headquarters in London before the 23rd. The Rev. Arthur Bromham was the founder and original leader, assisted by William Young, and the Wolf Cub Pack was led by Mrs Esther Saunders. At this stage there were 30 Scouts in the Troop, and 12 Cubs in the Pack. Both Sections originally met at the Southville Hall in Walters Road.

There was at first tremendous enthusiasm, within three months – on the 14th May – the new Group featured prominently in the Local Association's Jamboree, held at the Vetch Field. The boys, all clad in uniform blue shirts with green scarves, gave a display of physical training, which was a normal activity at that time. Before the end of the year Arthur Bromham had moved away to a cure in Leeds, and the Troop was taken over by Albert Woolley. Enthusiasm, however, for the time being remained undiminished. In July 1922 the Cubs competed with six other Packs for the trophy of a totem pole, and in May the Scouts were the first winners of the Sims shield, presented by George Simms of Birmingham for annual competition by the Scouts of the District. The Troop's first recorded camp was held at Parc-le-Breos in 1923, and in 1925 the Pack's Akela, Miss M.E. Davies, was appointed District Cubmaster, a position of some responsibility as the District had by then 516 Scouts and Cubs.

The group's activities were also noticed by the local press. An article in the *Sporting News* in 1926 recorded that four of the 31st Swansea Cubs had secured

their collectors badge A Whitsun camp took place at Bishopston in that year, and was followed by a longer summer camp at Reynoldston, suggesting that this was a flourishing time for the 31st. During that same year boys from the Troop also took part in an extraordinary rescue. The Swansea Town Commissioner was running a bridge building course at Clyne, when in the course of the afternoon they were appealed to by a rider whose horse had become stuck in a neighbouring ditch. Using their bridge building equipment, the Scouts effected a dramatic rescue! By this time the group had moved from Southville Hall and were operating out of the old Scout Shop in Mansel Street.

By this time, the figures suggest that enthusiasm was waning. When the District paraded at Mount Zion Chapel on 13th February 1927, the 31st had only 14 Scouts and 11 Cubs, with 4 leaders, 3 of them in the pack. Two years later the cubs were up to 16 (with two Leaders), but the Scouts were down to 10, with one Leader as before. This was contrary to the trend in the District as a whole because by 1931, the year in which the Town Commissioner, Cliff Davies, received the Silver Wolf, the total number had risen to 1500. In that same year the 31st took part in a Scout Pageant at Singleton Park, but the numbers in the Group at that time are unknown. Apparently the decline continued because only 6 Cubs and one Leader attended the District parade in 1933, although the fact that the Pack was able to run a (very unsuccessful) football team suggest a lack of enthusiasm for parades rather than a chronic shortage of numbers.

By 1934 the fortunes of the Group had revived. Mrs Adams and Miss Hare continued to run the Pack, but the Troop was revitalised by Clive Adams and a contingent from Treborth, and that had a positive effect upon the Pack as well. The increase in numbers was not dramatic (16 Cubs and 14 Scouts in 1935), but the sparkle had definitely returned. Clive Adams was also appointed District Scoutmaster, a new leader, Mrs Thomas was awarded the Wood Badge, and two further Leaders – Mr and Mrs Jeffries – were recruited, all in 1935. Regular camps are always a sign of a good Troop, and the 31st camped at Rhosilli, Mumbles and Caswell at about this time. Thanks to Mr Adams and his accordion, their campfires were also quite something, and even featured on the front page of *The Herald of Wales* on 9th July 1938. Just before the outbreak of the Second World War the Group moved from Mansel Street, and for the next ten years met at the Plasmarl School. This had the great advantage that during the blackout most of the boys had a much shorter distance to travel. Wartime restrictions also diverted camping from the coast to Monmouth, which proved to be an excellent centre for all sorts of activities, from visits to Tintern Abbey or Symonds Yat to cooking competitions and camp fires in fancy dress. Clive Adams continued in charge throughout the war, and by 1947 was presiding over an energetic fund raising campaign. In that same year he went with a party of King's Scouts to the World Jamboree at Moisson in France.

In 1948 the fundraising finally bore fruit when the Group acquired a plot of land at the far end of Emlyn Terrace, and was able to erect its own headquarters for the first time.

The 'new building' was in fact two old builders huts from Penlan joined together. This was not palatial, but it was a proper home, and with a field at the rear and

ample storage space, it was a great success. Lionel Prosser painted it throughout with scenes from *The Jungle Book*, and gave it a real Scouting atmosphere. Soon after, in 1950, the Adamses moved away to Manchester, each having received the Medal of Merit for their work with the 31st. They left the Group in good heart. The census of 1949 does not record the number of Cubs, but there were 19 Scouts and 18 Senior Scouts – the new section just introduced at that time. For the next three and a half years Len Cooper was the Group Scoutmaster, and he was supported by a strong team. In 1952 the Troop's summer camp was memorable held at the extremely muddy Welsh Jamboree at Picton Castle in Pembrokeshire. By this time the Group was deriving maximum benefit from having its own headquarters within a close knit community like Plasmarl. There was no maintained Youth Club, no Boys Brigade, and no Army Cadets, so the Scouts had the field to themselves, and community relations were excellent. Every enterprising little boy wanted to be a Cub.

In 1955 Len Cooper stood down and Ron Vickery took over as Group Scoutmaster, having worked his way up through the sections. He was still in post when the Group celebrated its 50th birthday in 1971. Supporting him, the Scouter team remained stable for a number of years. Mrs Morrissey ran the pack for 13 ½ years; Terry Stephens and Don Morrissey both held Scouter warrants for 12 years. Numbers appear to have fluctuated somewhat unpredictably, but with such stable leadership that may have more to do with the system of recording than with the actual situation. The Group's favourite camping area continued to be Monmouth, although a number of different sites were tried. After 1964 this tradition was discontinued, and since then the Troop has camped at Tipperary and Arklow (Ireland), Kington (Herefordshire) and Ilfracombe (Devon). Combined camps at Silver Cross (with other Troops) became a feature of the late 1960s. Alan Nelson took over a somewhat flagging troop in 1963 and revived it for a number of years. Fund raising has been a feature of Group activity since the war, with whist drives, jumble sales and bingo evenings predominating. In 1956 the headquarter's floor was replaced as a result of such activities, and there were numerous other benefits after that. After 1969 continuity of leadership was a constant problem. In that year Gary Evans at the age of 19 was Acting Scoutmaster, in charge of a troop numbering about 20. Many notable figures in Swansea Scouting passed through the 31st during the 1960s, including Alan Nelson and Gary Evans, but after Don Morrissey left stable leadership was hard to find. The end of the Group was a sad one. In 1980 the cherished headquarters was burned down by vandals, and all its fitting destroyed. The 31st never recovered from the blow, and closed shortly after

During its existence the Group saw many achievements. 14 King's Scout and 4 Queen's Scout awards were gained by its members, several of whom went on to become Leaders, either with the Troop or elsewhere. Two Cornwall Scout Badges for exceptional courage and endurance were earned by Ron Vickery and Alan Nelson, both of whom eventually ran the Troop. Four Medals of Merit and two Long Service Decorations were also gained. Eight Leaders at different time held the Wood Badge. Above all, however, the Group was a prominent feature of its local community, and it may well have been changes in that community, as much as the efforts of the vandals, which meant that it eventually ceased to be viable.

The 32nd (Rhyddings Park) originated in a meeting held in the Chapel School Room in Brynmill on the 21st January 1926. The meeting was convened by A.T. Moulton and attended by twelve boys. It was decided to start a Scout Troop under the auspices of the Sunday School, and Mr. Moulton became the first Scout Master. He had two assistants, and the support of a committee. On the 11th March the boys were invested and warrants presented to the Leaders. At about the same time a Wolf Cub Pack was formed under the leadership of William Nelson. The names of all the original Cubs and Scouts are recorded, and many of them went on to hold warrants and other positions of responsibility, both within the Group and beyond. Clifford Jones, one of the original Cubs recently handed over as Group President to Donald Anderson, MP, another former Rhyddings scout.

By April 1926 a team of lay instructors had also been recruited, and the committee (what would later be known as a Group Executive Committee) was put on a regular basis. The first year was very active, culminating in a summer camp at Kennixstone Farm near Llangennith from the 31st July to the 7th August. By the following March, a year after its inauguration, the numbers in the Troop had risen to 29. By the end of 1928 the Pack and the Troop, which had hitherto operated separately, came together to form a Group, by which time also a Rover Crew had been formed.

In 1929 two Scouts from the Troop (Harrison Jones and Ron Eynon) attended the Arrowe Park Jamboree, and that tradition was maintained in Hungary in 1933 and Holland in 1937. It was in 1933 that the Group started to wear the Swansea Castle badge on their neckerchiefs in recognition of their representative function (it is still worn) and one of the Scouts who went to Holland (Norman Arnold) has given the Group his memorabilia, including a photograph, map and postage stamps.

At first all Sections of the Group met at the Rhyddings CM Church, but in 1930 the Rovers acquired a Den over a garage at the back of King Edward Road, and by 1940 all the Sections were meeting there. At the end of the war these facilities were thought to be inadequate, and in 1945 a Nissen Hut was acquired in Bryn Road. The search for a permanent Headquarters then commenced, but it was only after nearly twenty years of searching and fundraising, that the present Headquarters (also in Bryn Road) was acquired in 1964. Part of that building had belonged to the ATC, and as early as 1967 the Group Committee was looking for ways to expand and improve. However, in spite of nearly forty years of aspirations and fund raising, the Headquarters is still as it was – and the money raised has gone on repairs.

Like other Troops, during the war the 32nd struggled for leaders and for about two years was run by its Patrol Leaders without adult support – a great tribute to their training. After 1967 the Group consisted of Cubs, Scouts and Senior Scouts, but the latter, having in due course become Venture Scouts are now no more. However, at the other end of the age range a Beaver Colony has been added. In 2001 the Troop celebrated its 75th birthday, and it was on that occasions that Cliff Jones stood down as Group President. His successor Donald Anderson took over at the Anniversary Dinner, held at the Ramada Jarvis Hotel,

Llansamlet on the 2nd November. Since then Donald has retired as an MP, and become Lord Anderson of Swansea.

The present GSL is Hedley Jones who became a Scout with the Troop in 1962, and returned after a spell away, in 1978.

Footnote: West Glamorgan is presently (2007) undergoing further reorganisation under a new Area commissioner (Rob Lloyd), under which all the Districts will be combined and the campsites will become the responsibility of the Area Executive.

The 2006 census returns show a total of 1340 Scouts and 204 Leaders in the Area, divided between 39 active Groups. The biggest district is Afan Nedd, with 438 Scouts and 61 Leaders. Watch this space!

Authorship of this section on Glamorgan West is by Dr Elwyn Davies and Professor David Loades

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