

The Histories

Of

1st Green & Sea Point Scout Group

1st Camps Bay Scout Group

and

1st Camps Bay/Sea Point Scout Group

1st FIRST GREEN AND SEA POINT SCOUT – 1909 -1999

Late in 1907, a series of articles on outdoor adventure and service to the community began to appear in a boys' magazine published in Britain. It would have been enough that these articles were written by General Robert Baden-Powell, a hero of the war in South Africa that had ended only five years before -- but what interest they held! Enthused by the ideas put forward by "B-P", groups of boys began to join together and take part in this great new activity called "Scouting".

As soon as the magazines began to arrive in South Africa, boys here, too, read them. In Sea Point, teenagers Norman Hill and E Douglas Clark gathered a few of their friends to go out to do the things B-P had suggested, for example signalling, doing good turns, stalking and camping. Quick off the mark as they were, however, they weren't the first in South Africa -- this honour belongs to the teenagers that started what became 1st Observatory, 1st Claremont, and some other troops. We don't know exactly when this took place, but we had been active for several months before our February 1909 official registration by the newly-constituted South African headquarters as the "1st Sea Point Division".

B-P had advised "Find a gentleman you like, and say: Sir, we must have a Scoutmaster -- will you be our Scoutmaster?" The gentleman they chose was H Chamberlain, and under his leadership nine boys attended the first troop camp, held in the "wilds" of Batchelor's Cove, Clifton. At the end of 1909, Edgar Tidman, known as "Toc-N", joined the troop. His association with the troop, and with the district, lasted for 40 years, through spells of Scoutmaster and various roles in the district, until the end of World War II, shortly after which he returned to England. He was made a life member of the group in 1925.



Toc-N Tidman

The troop grew rapidly. The first King's Scouts were Clark and J C Jones. The clothing became uniform, and sky blue and khaki

were adopted as the colours of the scarf. We had been meeting in a variety of venues, outgrowing each in turn.

Between 1916 and 1939 we met in the old stone-floored Sea Point fire station in Hall Road, but at the same time (meetings were held on several days each week) we held outdoor meetings at the Fresnaye Estate -- at least until 1923, when this area was developed.



Scouts 1914 at Fresnaye

Other than the kind of activities we would today associate with Scouting, other activities in those early decades included signalling (under the tuition of Toc-N, the troop for many years regularly won the signalling competitions), rifle shooting (the troop built its own rifle range "near the golf links on the Fresnaye Estate" -- having later to build another at the disused brickworks at the top of St John's Road), and boxing. Tastes changed over the years, and no doubt activities also reflected the interests of the adult leaders. Shooting, for one, disappeared from the

programme, being replaced by wrestling and chess, among other things.

In 1912 we amalgamated with the almost-as-old 1st Green Point. Under Scoutmaster S R Haybittel, the troop reached its highest numbers in April 1918, with 115 Scouts on the roll. We had our own bugle and drum band. We won the King's Flag, presented to the troop in South Africa which had the largest number of King's Scouts -- we had no less than 39 of them! During the war we did a lot of related work such as orderly duties. In the great influenza epidemic at the end of 1918, amongst other tasks we staffed the Three Anchor Bay Post Office and took responsibility for delivering letters through the suburb (two deliveries every day).

Four former members of the group were killed during the war, one of them Lieutenant E Douglas Clark (Cheshire Regiment), of wounds received while in action against the Turks in Iraq.



Early Cubs

In 1916 Baden-Powell published "The Wolf Cub's Handbook", and we established our Cub pack (inaugural meeting 20 September 1917). One of the first Assistant Cubmasters, Val Dukes, soon succeeded to the Cubmastership, a rank she held for 24 years



Val Dukes in 1939

We started a Rover crew in 1919. Ten of our members attended the first ever world jamboree, in London in 1920 (cost, including the ship to England and back, 60 Pounds Sterling per person). At that jamboree, B-P was acclaimed "Chief Scout of the World".

By 1920 there were four other Scout groups in Green and Sea Point and one in Camps Bay. All of these started life affiliated to some or other church, although most of them broke this link in later years. The district and the division (Cape Western) realised the need for competition between the packs and troops, and the division's Edwards Shield and

the district's Jumbo Trophy, Toc-N Trophy and Rawson Cup (for first aid) were all started between 1919 and 1921. In 1920 we won the Gordon's Shield, a feat we never again achieved.

Our joint second longest-serving Scoutmaster of all time, Cyril Versfeld, took the reins in 1922, moving on in 1930, whereafter he devoted considerable energy to finding us a property of our own, and raising funds. Of many noteworthy events of the period, the annual hike camps deserve special mention. These invariably lasted three weeks during the summer holidays. We pulled our trek carts with us, all the way from Sea Point to Somerset West, Stellenbosch and Groot Drakenstein (to quote a typical itinerary).



Cyril Versfeld in 1929

In 1936(?) Patrol Leader Maurice Geyer was presented with the

Gilt Cross for Gallantry for saving someone from drowning. In the following year, Rover Dick Stranger became the first person in South Africa to be awarded the Cornwell Scout Badge for exceptional bravery, for bearing his multiple handicaps and still doing his best to be of service. In 1945 the unusual circumstance occurred of the Medal of Merit being awarded to a troop rather than to an individual -- we received it for giving the alarm and saving furniture from a blazing house. And in 1946 Rover Harvey Ward won the Silver Cross for Gallantry, also for saving someone from drowning.

Our other joint second longest-serving Scoutmaster, Arthur Gardiner, led us from 1935 until 1945, less two years when he was on active war service. Numbers in the troop throughout the prewar and World War II period never dropped below 30. Work started on our own hall, corner of Dover and High Level Roads, and the official opening took place 3 June 1939. The plot, purchased about ten years before, had cost 360 Pounds, and the hall cost 910 Pounds to build.



Arthur Gardiner in 1939

Five former Scouts were killed in World War II. The DSO (Distinguished Service Order) was in 1942 awarded to Lieutenant Gordon Burn-Wood, South African Navy, one of our King's Scouts.

In 1947 the cubs replaced their floppy hats with caps. In 1949 Bob-a-job was instituted.

Scouting slumped after the war. Our Rover crew closed in 1947. There was even talk of closing down the group. A new Scoutmaster in 1949, and another new and even more energetic one in 1953 (Colin Inglis, who went on to become Chief Scout of South Africa) led to a revival. Around that time, too, the character of Sea Point began to change radically, with the first large blocks of flats taking the place of old houses in large grounds.

Our first Queen's Scout, in 1954, was Cedric Stembridge. In the same year Joan Jackson (later Joan Wilkins) began an association with the pack, which lasted 40 years, including being Cubmaster. In 1956 we again won the Gordon's Shield (team led by Peter Barnard), only to be disqualified on a technicality.

In 1959, Peter Barnard became Scoutmaster. He was to be our longest-serving Scoutmaster, resigning only in 1971 in order to become ADC and then, until 1984, District Commissioner. With the coming of the Republic, associations with the Queen fell away. Our first Springbok Scout, in 1962, was Evan Franklin. In 1964, Tim Gibbon became Group Committee Chairman, a position that he held for a record 17 years.



Peter Barnard in 1964

The end of the 1960s saw the group grow from strength to strength, and in 1971 it reached a pinnacle of excellence. For example, in 1971 our team of

Dimitri Kakiades, Mark Lindhorst, Leon Benzakein and Farrell Segall won the Divisional Senior Scout Rayner Trophy for the first and only time. Then we won the Tonkin Trophy, the trophy awarded to the group that scored the highest aggregate points in all the Western Cape Divisional competitions.



Scouts 1981 Signal Hill

We remained strong for the best part of the next 10 years. But into the 1990s the character of Green and Sea Point changed, and one group after another closed down, until there was only one other (7th Green and Sea Point).

In 1997, an experiment was tried of running the pack on the premises of the Sea Point Junior School and offering cubbing as one of the extramural activities of the school. Because the school was co-educational, the pack had to be as well – we thus became

one of the very first groups in the Cape Western to admit girls as cubs or scouts. This experiment was however not a success. We couldn't find leaders for the pack or troop, and in 1998 the decision was taken to amalgamate with 1st Camps Bay. The group was deregistered in 1999.

other than a proud tradition and the memory of the wonderful dedicated people who led the group, and built better citizens. Our property was sold in 2000, and townhouses now stand on the site where so many boys had over the decades so very much enjoyed their Scouting.

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Our hall in 2000

In practice we were able to contribute little to 1st Camps Bay

*Will be back at next SAT
GOOD HUNTING
John T. ...*