

A Brief History of Copmanthorpe Scout Group

Beginnings

The Scout Group was formed in 1968 by Bill John and Peter Fry. Mr John's previous experience as District Commissioner in Wembley was invaluable, as was his drive, commitment and dedication, which he exercised in his pivotal role as Group Scout Leader for 10 years until his sudden death in 1978.

Our original Group neckerchief colour was to be white with a red cross to reflect historical village links with Knights Templar. However when it was found these colours were already used by another Scout Group in York, we settled on burgundy/maroon with white border.

Membership

Ted Walker fulfilled a significant long period of service when he took the role in 1993 as 'Acting' Group Scout Leader (GSL) because the Group was struggling, through insufficient leadership. Some 9 years later, his 'temporary' appointment finally came to an end, as he handed over to Rachel Furby.

Other leaders with particularly long years of service to Copmanthorpe Scout Group include Chris Gilham, John Holden, Anne Bee, Marilyn Shersby, Lesley Bewick, Bev Duffus, Ann Ambler and Nigel Whittington.

There has never been a shortage of demand from young people to join the Scout Group, although there have continually been challenges in securing sufficient leaders to meet the demand. The Scout Troop in particular was on the edge of closure a number of times, and indeed closed for circa 10 years from 1972, during which time some of the Scouts were accommodated at Bishopthorpe Scout Troop. However we eventually found some new leaders and for a brief spell, we even had 2 Scout Troops (1990-91).

Our Cub Scout Section has usually been our largest Section, and for some 15 years we had 2 Cub Scout Packs with up to 60 kids at a time. We also responded to the creation of Beaver Scouts nationally for a younger age group, with the opening of a Beaver Colony in 1988, followed by a second Colony a year later. The Colonies combined in 1998, again primarily through insufficient availability of leaders to retain 2 Colonies.

We currently have 1 Beaver Scout Colony, 1 Cub Scout Pack and 1 Scout Troop, which are all healthy and active with around 60 young people.

Location

The Group has held Section meetings in almost every public hall in the village. In our first 10 years activities were carried out in the WI Hall, Youth Club, Old School House and the Methodist Church.

For many of these years, the Executive Committee sought out potential options for securing a permanent facility for the Scout Group. Consideration included the railway yard, old school house and some building land in the village centre. The latter was somewhat controversial, with objections raised by residents as it was in a conservation area, and possibly the thought of many lively kids potentially disturbing their quiet. The option was eventually overtaken by the Co-operative Company choosing to build a shop on the site.

A successful breakthrough was had when the Recreation Centre Committee offered a space by the tennis club for erection of a scout hut. A further major step was the donation of a second hand wooden contractors hut. The Group assembled an enthusiastic team to collect the materials and re-build it on the Recreation Centre land. A number of skilled tradesmen including Ken Allen and Harold Wood helped with provision of power and water. The hut was operational from 1978. The "Green Scout Hut" served the Group well for some years, although over time it increasingly required substantial repairs.

A specific committee was formed in 1991 tasked with raising sufficient funds to build a new Copmanthorpe Scout HQ. Many thousands of hours of energy were expended by this devoted team of people over 6 years with numerous fund raising events. Denis Kidd amongst others was instrumental in securing grants to supplement that raised through events, which brought the campaign to the finish line, financially at least. However there were many further challenges to be overcome, not least resolving the legal framework. Eventually the new building was completed and proudly opened officially on 14 May 1998 by Alf Sturdy, Deputy County Commissioner.

Group Achievements

The Group has had many successes in events competing with other Scout Groups and other community organisations. Most noteworthy highlights are:

- A unique footballing double with both Eagles & Merlins Cub Scout packs winning their respective divisions in 1984, in an era when this was the largest competition on the York Scouting calendar.
- Christine Whitfield (BL) stimulated participation in the village carnival fancy dress parade, and after a few years of coming close, our Beaver Scout section eventually won in 1995 on a pirate theme. Other carnival themes we have competed in over the years included Spacemen, TV, Robots, George & the Dragon, Peace Protestors and Camp Fires.
- We have always been active in the annual Cub Scouts Swimming Gala, with many honours over the years, although the most spectacular was a clean sweep in 1998 when we won all 3 age groups as well as the overall trophy.

- When Nigel White joined as ACSL in 1999 he actively sought to increase links with other Cub Packs and participation in District activities as a further outlet for fun and challenge to kids. This has included many successes, particularly in sporting events over recent years such as Football, Cricket, Cross Country and Basketball.
- Scouting's international centenary celebrations in 2007 created some special opportunities for all sections in the Group to compete jointly. We won a team award for sporting achievements at the Tamasha centenary camp. We also won a special Community Challenge Award, when we carried out conservation work at Askham Bogs, built a garden for residents of Gardeners Close and carried out jobs for the community, reminiscent of "Bob a Job" (1949-1970) and "Scout Job Week" (1970-1999). The difference this time was teams operating under adult supervision to undertake pre-arranged tasks.
- The Lord Mayor of York and her Civic Party acknowledged our contribution to the community with a fascinating tour of the Mansion House in May 2007. After certificates were awarded we signed the visitors' book.

Personal Achievements

Two of our GSLs attained national honours with Bill John receiving an Order of Merit for outstanding service to Scouting and Ted Walker earning an MBE.

Many of our Beaver Scouts, Cub Scouts, Scouts and Young Leaders have earned individual award over the years. This was enhanced with the extension of Chief Scout Awards from Scouts to Cub Scout and Beaver sections in 2004. This is the highest award available in their respective age groups so the names of those who have earned this accolade are recorded on our Honours Boards in our Scout Hall.

In memory of Bill John a special award was introduced in 1979, to acknowledge the "Cub Scout of the Year". This was awarded for a number of years, and has now been resurrected in 2008.

Future

Over the past 40 years the Scout Group has supported over 700 young people, through the leadership of around 60 warranted adults and many further adults in Committee roles and as parent representatives. The Group is well established and recognised in the City of York. Demand for Scouting is growing again and our values continue to be relevant. We hope many more adults and young people will continue to support and benefit from Copmanthorpe Scout Group for several decades to come.

"Times Change, Our Values Don't"