

1970's commentary - 12th Portobello (RHS) Scout Group

The extent of this history is limited to 1978, as we learned that the RHS suffix was removed in July 1978 – *Scouts Scotland's* Alan Willoughby advising that he had checked the district records at Fordell Firs.



The primary source for the decade commentaries until 1964 was *Schola Regia*, until the production of the *Twelfth magazine* commenced, which then proved a good source of information. The incidence of entries in *Schola Regia* through the decade decreased progressively, probably due to the dislocation between the composition of the Group and school, while the *Twelfth* entries continued at the previous high standard, and certainly provide the better information about the 12th Group in the 1970's. Extracts from the *Twelfth* are included at the end of this article.

The 1970 Camp was held at Kenervie farm, Loch Ken, with Alastair Allanach managing the event in Gordon McConnachie's absence, assisted by Andrew Rodger, Graham Henderson and Douglas Kent (and others), while the **1971** camp returned to Penpont after a five-year absence. Much was made of the Scouts fund-raising efforts involving a fete, sponsored walk and jumble sale. Lauder cottage refurbishment continued apace, as did visits from all parts of the group. **1972** reports included comments about the shortage of scouters, with a consequential reduction in activities. A successful camp was however held at Loch Tummel, scouts and sea scouts camping together. The cubs had another successful three-day camp at the Ae Valley Youth Centre – see the photo above left. Away from scouting activities, the Cubs also had a successful football team, winning the district 7 a side competition, and doing well in the eleven a side event. See the team photo above right.



1973 commenced with the announcement that the troop had won the County Flag for only the second time in its existence, the previous occasion being in 1941. The patrol comprised Colin Watson, Malcolm McLean, Donald Johnstone, Douglas Henderson, Alan Wardrop and Scott Murray. Three fiberglass canoes were constructed, bringing the troop's total to twelve. The annual camp was held at Earlstoun Loch, near St Johns Town of Dalry, Kirkcudbrightshire. Johnny 'J P' Small, who was

involved with the group for over forty years, latterly as GSM, announced his retiral, and a leaving ceremony was planned. The July edition of *Schola Regia* showed the intention to create a Venture Scout unit. Activities would be based around the requirements of the Venture Award, the Duke of Edinburgh award and eventually the Queen's Scout award. The main contact for those interested was named as Colin Watson of form 4A3. The article concluded with Alan Buchan advising that the ethnomusicology of the cliff-perching tribes of Arizona would play no part in the unit's activities.



On June 6th 1973, an event was held to celebrate Johnnie Small's 40th anniversary in the Group, but also his retiral as GSM – the photo above right shows J Radin (parent's Committee), Peter Blythe (the new GSM), JPS and his sister Evelyn.

In **1974**, the Cubs report advised that they had returned for a third time to the Youth Centre at Ae Valley in Dumfriesshire. The three-day trip included Forestry trips, and canoeing on Loch Mabon. A one-day trip was also planned to Lauder cottage, but sadly 1974 also saw the end of the cottage (Drummonds Hall), the owners putting it up for sale. Fortunately, a connection with the 'FP Club' provided accommodation in a cottage in Kelso. The annual camp was co-hosted with Heriots at St Fillans.

1975 saw a father's and Son's camp (see photo above, also repeated in 1977), and the Annual camp was at Loch Lomond, where the photo above left shows Jim Dallas and assorted sea scouts launching Mirror dingy *Winnie the Pooh*. The Venture scouts reported the retiral of Alan Buchan.

1976 – the annual camp returned to Earlston Loch, while in 1977 photos of the camp at Loch Tummel indicate an all-sea scout event. Twenty-eight scouts attended, and vessels including mirror and graduate dinghies were available. The Scouts won the area flag competition, and four of the group achieved the Chief Scout Award. A lockup was purchased in Bath Street (back to our roots) – suitable for a dormobile and the mass of scouting equipment. July **1978** marked the end of the RHS link in the Group name, and presumably also a continuing diminution of RHS members of the group. The annual camp was at Loch Lomond.

The Twelfth magazine 1970's entries

1970 and 1971 Editions

Three editions in 1971

1. The 'Changing of the Guard' – Gordon Symon in the Cubs, Sandy Johnstone in the Sea Scouts, and Alastair Allanach in the Scouts (although the latter was just for one year).
2. Goodbye presentation to Rob Lawrie
3. Drummond's hall update – sleeping now in the loft (trapdoors and li-lo's having been installed), and fire extinguishers in place
4. Sea Scout leader Graham Taylor reports the purchase of a third sailing dingy, accompanying Twelfth Knight and Lazarus
5. Regent Road gym and baths now unavailable (following the 1968 school decamp, but facilities have been made available at Barnton. The scouts remain at Royal High prep. School
6. An extreme shortage of leaders was reported in the December 1971 edition

1972 and 1973 Editions

1. Johnnie Small retires as GSM, to be replaced by Peter Blythe
2. The Scouts win the County Flag
3. Sea Scouts and Scouts summer camp at Loch Tummel
4. While canvas canoes are the norm, fibreglass construction is also proposed
5. The change of school to Barnton started to affect recruitment; the link with the school may cease soon
6. A 1969 Bedford van was purchased for £255, seats and windows being transplanted from the previous one
7. Following the observation that attendances were falling, the Sea Scouts and Scouts merged in late 1973

1974 and 1975 Editions

Four editions this time, two each year...

1. The end of Lauder cottage announced in 1974 after 12 glorious years
2. 1974 Summer Camp at St Fillans was co-hosted with Heriots, 1975 camp at Loch Lomond
3. The 'Open Troop' discussion continues...
4. Venture Scout Alan Buchan retires, to be replaced firstly by Donald Johnstone, then Douglas Henderson
5. Mirror dingy kit purchased, assembled and launched as 'Winnie-the-Pooh'. An inflatable rescue craft and outboard motor also purchased

1976 and 1977 Editions

Two editions in 1976, three in 1977.

1. Group takes title to a lock-up in Bath Street Lane, suitable for the dormobile and large items of equipment.
2. Pack numbers now up to 38, and events include an Ae Valley camp, and Father & Son weekend camp
3. The skiing week at Aviemore (when Lothian Region allowed in-term attendance), cost £26 all in!
4. Malcolm McLean reported on Venture Scout events including the annual dinner in the Woodside Hotel
5. Four more scouts were invested with the Chief Scout's Award. Russell Shepherd, Steven Bolland, Graham Spence and Donald Paul were at the time a mix of Heriots and Portobello, but had been RHS primary pupils.
6. Summer Camp was held at Loch Tummel
7. The cottage at Kelso nears completion – convenor is Graham Henderson
8. The Twelfth now includes illustrations and a crossword
9. Sailing continues to be available on Saturdays and Sundays at Fisherrow
10. The Scouts win the Edinburgh area Flag competition
11. Venture Scout numbers a problem, but a rock-climbing weekend on Arran took place, expert guidance from 'Sherpa' Lawrie.



1978 Edition

In these, the last three issues considered for this history, the usual high level of reportage continued.

1. A replacement for the dormobile (at circa £2,000) is urgently required, but group funds are £575
2. The Venture Scout role in the Glenshee Ski Rescue service was extensively reported
3. Jim Dallas took over the Scouts from Gordon McConnachie (GLMcC), who had recently departed for the New World. Note Gordon's fine artwork in the 1978 edition – shown on the right.
4. Cub Scout leaders change, with Graham Henderson, Alan Symon and Mike Warburton stepping back. Michael Halcrow reported good progress and success in a variety of District competitions.
5. On 17th February, 2022, Alan Willoughby reported to GLMcC "Went to Fordell today and checked record card of the 12th. They 'lost' the RHS suffix in July 1978". The June 1978 edition (no27) confirmed this.

Post 1978 Editions

The 'Twelfth' continued to be published on a regular basis, with the last edition dated Sep 1996, and continued its high-quality content, including input from and reference to RHS representatives. The last edition advised that Graham Torrance was Cub Leader, Kevin Drylie and Andrew Torrance were joint Scout Leaders, David Lumsden was Assistant Scout Leader, Eric Drylie was Beaver Scout Leader, and Graham Dodds was Venture Scout representative. The wide range of fundraising activities included Race Night, BBQ, Dance, ScoutPost and Jumble sale. Social events included participation in Michael Halcrow's (by then 5th Portobello) quiz, and a 65th anniversary event was planned. Scouting activities included skiing, sailing, several weekend camps, father and son camp, canoeing, pony-trekking and mountain biking.