

Arnold (Steve) Stephens

Memories of Irby and 1st Thurstaston Scout Group

I lived at 59 Mill Hill Road – the first two story house on the left when travelling towards Greasby. My father was very well known in the village and area as he was the last Signalman at Thurstaston Station and following his retirement, he used to manage the tennis courts and bowling green across the road from the Methodist Church on Mill Hill Road, which was the place where the cubs and scouts met in those days. He was also a horticulturist and chimney sweep for the village and a member of the Wirral Players Theatrical group that used to perform at the village hall both plays and pantomimes. He started a Scout troop in Thurstaston in the early part of the 20th Century and I think it used to meet in the then school house which stands on Station Road immediately to the south of Dawpool Farm house. That farm was my maternal grandfather's and my uncle Charles Howell farmed it until his death in the 1970s when it was sold and converted into town houses and apartments. I have in my possession a postcard photograph and entrance ticket for the 2nd Scout Jamboree at Arrow Park that my father used to attend. I don't know what other records exist of the first scout troop that met at Thurstaston but it was in the very earliest days of scouting so maybe it was not officially recognized. Again, I do have in my parents' effects some photos of that group.

The scout troop used to go for a week's camp each year and I remember going to Wales a couple of times and I think we also went to Herefordshire once. Modern day authorities would be mortified as to our mode of transport as we went in the back of a furniture van with all our camping gear. Later, as Senior Scouts, we had gravitated to motor bikes and cars. I also have some photos from Dave Kendrick (fellow scout) of one of our climbing expeditions to Snowdon.

I had just been a Senior Scout for a couple of months when Reg Dubells, who was leading that group, died suddenly from an asthma attack. Reg was one of the most influential people in my life up to that time and his death was a body blow to those of us who had the privilege to know him. He had only been married a year or so at the time of his death and a retired army officer took his place so we all went on a bit of a learning curve whilst he settled in.

About 1960 (I was 15 years old at that time) I had my first trip abroad with a group of Senior Scouts from the West Wirral area – mainly from Meols and West Kirby including Richard Twemlow. We went to Ulm in Switzerland and flew there in a British Airways Viscount turbo prop – my first flight – and met up with Swiss Scouts once we arrived in the town. We had been in prior contact with them and they were arranging a camping site for us. We got one hell of a camping site! They owned a full blown Swiss Chalet and other than a two day foray to another Canton our tents stayed rolled up for the visit.

I attended the Queens' Scout Parade at Windsor Castle in 1963. I actually camped at Gilwell the night before the parade – my only visit to Gilwell.

I do remember Peter Constantine and his family as we both attended the Methodist Church in those days and were also in the Methodist Youth Club.

I joined the Cheshire Constabulary in 1961 as a Police Cadet and was stationed at the then Wirral Divisional HQ at Bromborough and used to drive to and from there on my BSA 250cc motor cycle. Later in my police career I returned to the Wirral as a detective stationed first at Bebington and then at Well Lane in Rock Ferry when the Birkenhead Borough Police were amalgamated with Cheshire in 1967. At that time I was working alongside Ralph Abbott who was a long time Birkenhead Police officer who lived in Coombe Road.

Through most of those years I played Rugby, first for Calday Grammar School, then Old Caldians (now Caldys Rugby Football Club), Cheshire Police and finally Hampshire Police when I transferred there in the 1970's.

I became a Private Detective about 1977 whilst living in Surrey and worked internationally as a patent and copyright infringement and major fraud investigator for the ensuing years before moving to America on remarriage in 1983 and handing in my PI licence in 1986 when I embarked on my real estate career. I closed my Investment real estate company at the end of 2010 and spent 2011 relaxing, travelling and trying to divest myself of my former office building.

I never lost my scouting and I served on the Two Rivers Boy Scout Council in northeast Illinois for a few years.

I will send any relevant photographs when I find them.

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