

Dave L.Gardner

Memories of 12th World Jamboree

"For Friendship"

31st July 1967 – 9th August 1967

It was in the spring of 1966 that my name was put forward by Peter Morton, my then Senior Scout Master at 1st Thurstaston, as the prospective West Wirral representative at the forthcoming 12th World Jamboree.

I was, among others invited to an interview by a panel of commissioners at the then Hilbre Scout headquarter in Lake Place, Hoylake.

A week later, while at school, I was given a letter by maths teacher and West Wirral District Commissioner, Eric Tate, congratulating me on my selection, "No one could have been more surprised than me" !

An inaugural meeting of contingent members was held shortly afterwards at the Christleton scout headquarter just outside Chester, when we were introduced to the contingent leader Brian Kershaw (later Cheshire Hike Organiser) and assistant leader, Alan Chamberlain (2nd Greasby).

Practice camps and patrol selection took place at Queen Charlotte's Wood, near Frodsham.

In 1967, the Scout Association introduced the "Advanced Party Report", which modernised scouting, meaning that shorts were out and a new uniform was introduced. Contingent members were kitted out as the new uniforms became available, in order to promote the new scouting. We were now Venture Scouts.

On one occasion we were the colour party on Cheshire Scout Sunday, marching at the head of the parade, through Chester to the Cathedral in our new uniforms.

Eventually, the time for the Jamboree arrived and we congregated at the Queens Hotel in Chester prior to departing by train from Chester station.

After changing at Crewe, we travelled to London and then by underground to Baden Powell House. This was quite a feat with all our baggage and other equipment that we needed for the Jamboree.

At Baden Powell House, our documentation and equipment was checked (no passport or visa, we all travelled as a party), and we were "put up" for the night until departure.

We travelled to Gatwick by double decker buses in the early morning, and boarded a World Airways chartered Boeing 707 for Spokane, Washington, USA. This airport was fairly small, but was opened up especially for the arrival of 12,011 scouts.

Flying over the Polar route, we touched down at Edmonton in Canada, where the USA health team boarded the flight and checked our smallpox vaccination certificates. Anyone who didn't have one was dragged off and "jabbed".

Arriving at Spokane after an 8 hour flight we were loaded into coaches for the hour drive to the Jamboree site at Farragut State Park in the Rocky Mountains of Idaho. The equipment and baggage went in a tractor driven wagon.

The Jamboree site was vast and barren, and upon arrival we had absolutely no idea of time, but subsequently realised it was around 0600 in the morning. Many contingents had already arrived and were established or were putting up tents. We were allocated to our site in the Godollo sub-camp (all sub-camps were named after previous jamborees).

Tents and shelters were provided and we set about assembling and erecting. Soon we had set up camp, were making friends and learning a new American English. We later erected a gateway indicating where in England Cheshire was located and from where we came.

Once we had the dining areas set up, it was time for a cup of tea.

Our leaders were called to a welcome meeting and were given "Jamboree packs" for us, containing: identity card, 2 Jamboree badges, neckerchief, pin badge, sub-camp woggle, hat plume, sewing set and razor (clever move Gillette !!) and an adventure award card.

We next set about exploring the site, finding where the centre was and the locations of other sub-camps. Direction signs were everywhere, so this wasn't too difficult.

The opening ceremony took place on 31st July 1967 and was attended by World Chief Guide, Olave Baden-Powell, wife of Baden Powell and Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey (complete with his security!). We were treated to a display by Scott Carpenter, an earlier astronaut.

During the Jamboree we collected fresh food every day from a central food store and cooked on charcoal. Unused food was returned after each meal, hygiene was paramount.

Activities that were available included; swimming (with a buddy), boating, fishing, hiking, gold panning, visiting the Trading Post or Trade-O-Ree, taking part at the Skill-o-Rama (we did sword dancing), Friendship Wide Game, meal exchanges with foreign groups; all to name but a few.

On one occasion we were taken by coach to Coeur D'alene to see a rodeo and on another, the whole Jamboree was invited to a "Chuck Wagon Barbeque" (I had buffalo).

Regular camp fires took place in the evenings and we were even given containers to take home ashes and use them on fires back home to promote "friendship". The USA Postal Service, produced special postal cards and we were able to put these through a first day cover franking machine.

Towards the end of the Jamboree, I was selected to raise one of the 105 representative countries flags at the morning flag break – I got South Vietnam.

Eventually the Jamboree did come to an end with a closing ceremony, and we had to strike camp. We were transported back to Spokane for a flight to San Francisco, where we were given home hospitality.

As I got off the plane at San Francisco, greeted by the mayor, Scott McKenzie's record, "San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair)", was number one in the charts.

What a memory and if you ever get a chance to attend a Jamboree, then go, it is something you will never forget !