

**WHAT  
HAPPENED TO  
THE DEN...?**

## **Introduction**

Lord Baden-Powell recognised that boys enjoyed being in gangs and in developing the Patrol system he wanted every individual to be responsible both in the den and in camp. (B-P's Outlook published 1941.) He postulated that giving this responsibility would develop the individual interest and civic capability of each member, while building a stronger "esprit de corps" for the group. He also states that boys are taught, beginning with the good turn to mother on the part of the Wolf Cub through preparedness of the Scout, up to the regular practice of public service and "looking wide" on the part of the Rover. He had a philosophy of trusting the boy and giving responsibility which would develop the individual's character, although he noted there may be failures along the way.

## **51st Renfrewshire, 2nd Renfrew (Trinity) Scout Group**

Although a Church affiliated group, Trinity Scouts also used a number of other premises where the members could meet, do badgework, carry out projects, and store items which could not be stored at the Church Halls.

The Church halls were used for most of the formal meetings; the drying and cleaning of camping equipment could and may have been done in the dens.

Patrols used the dens to meet, prepare for and arrange hikes, camps and weekends away. Many a Scout learned his Scout Laws and Promise from his PL at the den. The use of the den was not formal, with keys being given when requested. Dens were also a congregating place for the older Rovers, Venture Scouts and Leaders.

The dens were maintained and decorated by the Scouts who, passing on from Scouts to Rovers or Venture Scouts, learned to appreciate not only the den, but the projects being carried out by their peers. Leaders did not give instructions as to what had to be done to maintain the den, only advice. The boys (at this time girls were not allowed to become Scouts) would learn from the older ones how to look after the den, with the Rovers acknowledging that they had a responsibility for this.

The dens were always kept relatively clean and tidy ready for use by any member of the Group who may require it.

Unfortunately after the Police Station den, due to stricter incoming regulations on Health & Safety etc the local authority were no longer able to give the Group the use of any empty buildings/rooms without controls and fees, thus it was not viable for the Group to continue with dens.

As can be noted from the essays on the dens it would be breaking the law if the Scouts were left in a unit without supervision of an adult, whereas at that time this is seen as standard.

Although the dens were used and enjoyed by many, it must be remembered that not every boy enjoyed the den philosophy. As B-P said, every boy is different with an enormous variety of character. (B-P's Outlook.) Many a boy who did not enjoy the den have become prominent leaders within the community.

The dens would not have existed without the support of the Scout Leaders and to all of the Trinity Scouts Group Scout Leaders, we all thank you for this.

## ~~ Trinity Scout Dens ~~

### **GEORDIE PATON'S FARM, HAINING ROAD (Circa 1943)**

During the 2nd World War, the group had use of the barn in Haining Road.

This den is remembered by one of our members, Charles McQueen, who as a young boy used to play near it.

The farm had a row of stables to the back and at the end of the row was a bothy which the Rovers used as a den. At the rear of the entry door was a picture of Baden-Powell. It is recollected that this barn caught fire and the group had to move on.

Trinity Scout in garden Haining Road 1943 (was he going to the den?)



Photos courtesy David Stirling



## Site of Geordie Paton's Farm in 2021



Photo courtesy Iain (Fred) Wilson

## Haining Road at site of Geordie Paton's farm on the left (in 2021)



Photo courtesy Iain (Fred) Wilson



## **MEADOWSIDE STREET (Circa 1953)**

This was a room and kitchen ground floor flat in a building which was listed for demolition.

Charles McQueen, on becoming a member of the Rover Crew reminisces that this den started his interest in Rabbie Burns.

Charles tells the story of being a member of the Crew he attended a Burns Supper in the den. The fire was lit in the main room and lighting was provided by candles to create an atmospheric effect. Skipper Douglas Killin had connections with Jameson Clarke, an actor of some renown at that time. Well, Jamieson's rendition of Tam O'Shanter in the candlelit room in front of the blazing fire has stayed with Charles to this day.

Jack Docherty, Rover Leader, led the Burns proceedings whilst the Rovers prepared the haggis, turnip and mashed potatoes over stoves in the kitchen.

My first recollection of the Group's den was shortly after my "Going Up" ceremony from the cubs into the scouts. At that time the group had two troops, one meeting on a Friday night in the church halls at Fauldshead Road and the other troop meeting in "The den" in Meadowside Street, on a Monday night. The Rovers also met in the den. For some reason there was a Group meeting with both troops to meet in the den.

On arriving early at the den I met another Scout from the Monday night Troop who was waiting there. An older Scout, probably a PL or Second, who had the keys arrived and let us in with the instructions to the Scout I had just met, that the fire had to be lit and that he would be back later. The lad from the Monday Troop showed me where the kindling was kept and told me to light the fire. Having set the paper, sticks and coals I lit the fire, but after a short while the fire was going out. My new friend instructed me to fan the fire with my Scout hat which at that time was the same style as the Canadian Mounted Police. After fanning the fire and trying to restart it, the fire would just not catch for some reason. The brim of my hat by that time was up and down like a switchback road. Remember that for inspection the brim had to be flat!

The den was starting to fill with other Scouts from both troops all complaining about the fire not being on. The older Scout arrived back demanding to know of my new friend why the fire had not been lit. I can remember his words to my friend "You probably told the cub to light the fire when you should have done it yourself". At inspection my PL asked me if I knew how to flatten the brim of the hat. He was not amused. To make matters worse, the Friday night Troop was inspected by the Leaders of the Monday Troop and vice versa. As they came to our Patrol and carried out the inspection I was asked if I was the cub who tried to light the fire and was told the other Scout should have done it, yet hey still took points off us for the state of my hat! The next year the two troops came together to meet in the church halls on a Friday night.

The building has been demolished leaving a green space ...

Meadowside Street in 2021



Photo Courtesy Iain (Fred) Wilson

## THE GATEHOUSE KINGS INCH (Circa1960)

Photo of Kings Inch showing Regal cinema and electric sub-station in centre with den beside it



Photo courtesy David Stirling

When I left the Troop, I joined the Rovers, but at that time we did not have a den, so the Rovers used the church vestry as a meeting place. The GSL, Dougie Killin, was under pressure (from us) to get a place where we could meet away from the Scouts who were too young, so the group acquired the Gatehouse at the old coal yard at Kings Inch - the yard was earmarked for closure.

The gatehouse was behind the billboards and you reached the door through a small gate at the end of the billboards. We were told we could have this as a den and we would be responsible for doing it up and the maintenance of the building. I do not know what rent or rates, if any, the Group was being charged by Renfrew Council. Some of the older members of the Crew had misgivings when entering the building and found the floor was completely rotten. The Rovers stripped the building literally to the four walls and set about the refurbishment. Charles McQueen (the Rover noted earlier), could drive one of his family business's 2 ton trucks and went to Babcock & Wilcox to collect wood which Skipper Killin (who was an electrician in Babcock & Wilcox) had arranged that the Group could get. Brian Bogie, one of the Rovers (on a side, his father produced the Gang Show for the Group) was an apprentice electrician, so he rewired the building under the supervision of Skipper using the other Rovers as labourers. The floor? It was re-laid using the wood from Babcock & Wilcox. The wall at the fireplace was painted blue the same colour as our neckie and steel shutters covered the outside of the windows. This den was used by the Rover Crew. At the time Stan Anderson was Rover Leader and Lamont Macdonald (I can't remember if it was lower or upper case D, but Lamont was fussy about this) was Assistant Rover Leader. Lamont had been assistant Scout Leader to Alaister Forsyth prior to this position, which he took to help Stan who had just returned to the district.



The Rover Crew on numerous occasions teamed up with the Parish Church Rangers (the equivalent of Rovers in Guiding) (I don't think Trinity Guides had a Ranger Section) to hold parties for children, and hand out parcels on Christmas day to older people who lived alone, identified by the church ministers.

We also joined with the Rangers to help out at the Church of Scotland old folks' home at Gt. Western Road to allow some of the staff to have Christmas day off. The parties for the kids were great with all sorts of food and games. We used to say it was not a good party unless at least two of the kids were sick. This was true although you did not think so if the children were sick in your car when running them to their homes after the party! The funds for the food parcels and gifts were raised through projects throughout the year by the Crew. We also used the Den for various meetings and had speakers and discussions.

It was about this time the Scout Association decided to reorganise and introduce Venture Scouts ... this meant doing away with Rovers. We did not agree with this and protested. Skipper Killen, as well as being GSL of Trinity was also District Commissioner for Renfrew District Scouts, received our displeasure on the disbanding of the Rovers, although much later we could see it had nothing to do with him.

The Den was demolished and finally the road to the car park behind where Aldi stands today was built.

## King's Inch 2021



Photo courtesy Iain (Fred) Wilson

## DR BRODIE'S SURGERY, HAIRST STREET (Circa late 1960s to early 1970s)

Hairst Street in 1922



The above is a photograph at the installation of the cenotaph in 1922. The road almost centre behind the cenotaph is Richard Street. All of the blocks have been demolished and rebuilt as shown in the 2021 photograph

The den was also used for football training for the older ones. In fact members of that team and other Venture Scouts still meet up as arranged by Iain (Fred) Wilson to reminisce and talk of old Scouting days.

GSL Alex Harvie had arranged that the football team after training could use the showers in the Renfrew Swimming Pool and many a time the team would go for a training run finishing at the Baths.

This den consisted of a large front room with a smaller room at the back. One of the Scouts at that time recalls the main room was decorated with the flag from one of the Danish visits and that cakes and buns from Cooke & Mckinnon bakers were eaten in the den.

The den was also used by the Scout Pipe Band for the teaching of the chanter and drums although some of the "drummers" state that they only used the drumsticks on an old wooden table and never saw a drum! Having said that, it worked, as we had a very good pipe band. Another story which has been told was of the Patrol who after winning the Millen Trophy in dropped off their gear in the den then went across to Izzi's cafe to celebrate with ice cream.



Below is a copy of a report from one of the meetings held in the dens. As is stated, the dens were busy places with the group members dropping in to formal and informal meetings. Any member passing a den and noticing someone was inside could drop in to meet friends or other members of the group.

FATHER'S NIGHT AT THE ROVER CREW

The following report on the joint fathers night in the den was submitted by Mr. R. Henderson. It is hoped that this is the first of many such joint events.

On the evening of Friday the 13th. December, 1968 (Unlucky for some) The fathers (dads) of the Rover Venture Scout Unit, were invited to a games evening at the Den.

It was a cold frosty night, but a warm welcome from the scouts on entering the Den made one forget the weather outside.

The snooker, whist, dominoes and darts were played in a friendly atmosphere. It did not matter who won or lost the game, such was the spirit of the people there. The Den was a busy place when it was a surgery, but not more so on the evening of the 13th December - with the comings and goings of people dropping in for a chat.

After the games had finished the fathers were treated to a supper (Mud) by the scouts - using nature's knife and fork. The plates were kindly supplied by the fish shop, with a choice of tea, coffee or mineral to help the supper on its way.

A very enjoyable evening was had by one and all. The fathers were invited to the airport, this was only accepted by one or two. It was suggested by one scout to have their photograph taken, so off we went to the machine. Front view only, side view and number were deliberately left out, as one view is enough for the rogues gallery. Thanking the Rover Venture Scouts for a most enjoyable evening. Looking forward to the future with further activities among the Rover Venture Scouts and their fathers.

R. HENDERSON.

The Venture Unit is full of willing people, those with the will to work; and those willing to let them.

Danish visitors in railway carriage; "Vaht station is this Sir": Scout Master peering through window: "I don't know, I think it must be Bovril".



## Scouts in Hairst St den consuming cakes



Photo courtesy of Iain (Bunny) Buntain

## Map of old Renfrew showing Dr Brodie`s Surgery



Photo courtesy of John Lyall

## Refurbished area in 2021



Photo courtesy Iain (Fred) Wilson

## Cenotaph looking to Parish Church Spire in 2021

Richard Street is opposite showing the spire of the Parish church. The den would appear to have been where the new building to the left stands.



Photo courtesy Iain (Fred) Wilson



Another view of site of Dr Brodie's Surgery Taken from Cenotaph in 2021



Photo courtesy Iain (Fred) Wilson