

THE PASTRY SHOP HIGH STREET (Circa early 1970s)

After having to vacate the Hairst Street site, the Group was able to move to an empty shop on the north side of High Street which was acquired by the GSL Alex Harvie (see appendices below) and used as a den where the Venture scouts held their meetings. This den was also used by the Troop.

The Rovers, although by this time had officially ceased to be, still kept together and using the den as a base for their activities. (Note how the paintwork is in the Group's colours.)

High Street circa1970



Photo courtesy Derek Cowie

Alex Harvie GSL asked Brian Cowie if he would decorate the interior, which he did admirably. Photos of his work can be seen in the appendices. Many a project was carried out in the den. A reflection on this den was that to enter you had to go through the small personal door on the wooden gate (this can be seen in the photo above) before opening the main door to the den. Gordon Kerr remembers this den as having 3 rooms downstairs and 1 main room upstairs where meetings were predominately held. He also remembers redecorating the den with emulsion paint everywhere. As he recalls, activities were planned there such as joint meetings with the rangers, quiz nights and first aid refreshers etc. Snooker and billiards were played on a small table in the meeting room.

THE MAIN ROOM



The rest of the main room showing the notice board and the door through to the kitchen. The badge of the door is the Scout Friendship Badge & the knocker on the door was that presented to our Troop by the Jojens boys.

Photo courtesy Derek Cowie

One of the stories from this den is the time that a new member was preparing to go on a midnight hike and was leaving from the den. Just to make sure he was suitably prepared for his journey, someone, who shall remain anonymous, added some rocks to his rucksack to help him on his way.

The den was very popular with many of the boys meeting there outside formal meetings. A statement from one of the Scouts notes that "the den was used for all scout activities and knot practice". The den was demolished making way for the supermarket.

High Street looking West in 2021



Photo courtesy Iain (Fred) Wilson

High Street looking East in 2021



Photo courtesy Iain (Fred) Wilson

Map of old Renfrew showing Pastry Shop

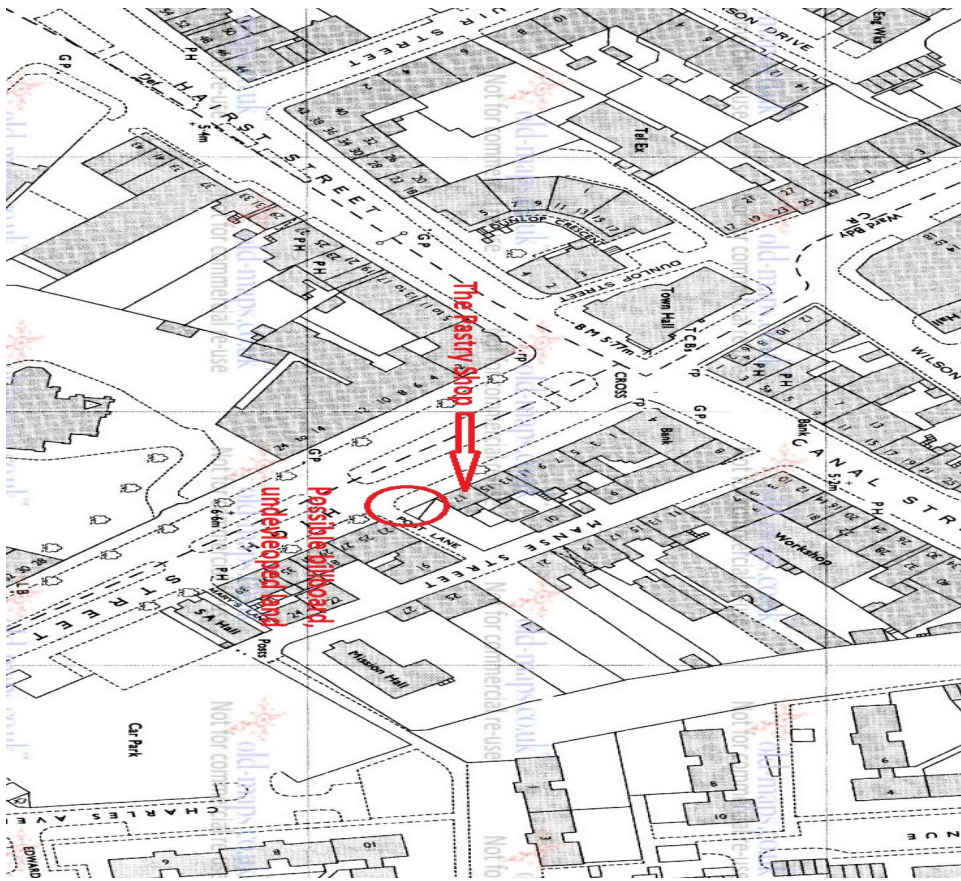


Photo courtesy of John Lyall

POLICE STATION INCHINNAN ROAD

The Group was able to make use of the Police Station next to the Renfrew Swimming Pool on the north side of Inchinnan Road. Here is a note from Fred Wilson about the move and his interpretation of a typical Venture Scout meeting.

At the time it was a bit strange, the old Den closed very quickly and there was a period of 4 to 6 weeks before the Venture Scout Unit was told about using the Police Station as a den. You can imagine some of the comments and how it would affect our street cred going in and out of the Police Station regularly!

Well the Friday night came and a few of us (Alan Picken and Alan Mitchell come to mind) met before going in (there is safety in numbers!). We went through the main entrance swing doors then to the right to present ourselves at the desk and asked where to go. We were told to go upstairs and take the first door on the left. Across the landing was an entrance to the courtroom. I only stuck my head through the doors a couple of times and got the feeling this was not the place for me.

Rooms used by Group at rear of Police Station in 2021
(This building is vacant, having been replaced by a new one at Station Road)



Photo courtesy Iain (Fred) Wilson

We met on a Friday night between 7.30 and 8.00pm in a large room which held a long boardroom type table with chairs and extras stacked at the almost full height windows. Was this the Police Committee room? The walls were painted an apple green colour and there was a wall fitted out with cupboards where much of the stuff from the old den was stored.

Most Friday nights, after overcoming our street cred, we would meet, when the first item on the agenda was what are we doing tonight? This would lead to an "educated" discussion, then a "democratic" agreement thereafter of what we would do. I will not shame (sorry) name the proposers of these suggestions - a meeting with the Ranger Guides, Glasgow Airport, a joint meeting with another VS unit, a joint meeting with the Ranger Guide unit. The meeting continued with the treasurer, Derek Cowie requesting subs, causing us all to groan. Some paid up without issue, some would try the time worn excuses whilst others could put peeling an orange in their pocket to shame by sifting out the right amount without looking. Of course at the end of the night that went out the window when putting in their order for the chippy! This was followed by the time worn ritual of counting and recording of the subs supervised by the treasurer's able assistant Gordon Kerr, and the auditor. This was the ideal time for Kenny Parker to exit as he had a 5.00am start at the golf club to get the greens in order for a big competition.

As the Venture Scout Chairman I would then move on to the other business such as do we have a football match on this Sunday?; who are we playing; where and at what time?; finally, can we get a full team? After this relevant discussion the business went on to note it had been quite a while since we ran a disco. Our social secretary David Murray was asked to explain. Discos were popular, but they were few and far between.

The unit's conscience, Donald McLeod, reminded us that at Christmas we needed enough members to cover two shifts at the Church of Scotland care home on Great Western Road. This was really great fun and there was no shortage of volunteers.

Geoff (Graham Budd) was getting slightly bored with the proceedings but had respectfully kept quiet. He started to share his packet of fruit gums with the two Alans. This could be noted by the circular movement of their jaws! Discussion would then move on to what you were doing at the weekend (that was code for Saturday night). Alex Harvie Jnr. asked to be counted out as he had a big hockey game tomorrow and needed a rest after it. He wanted to be fit for the match on Sunday when he could maintain his position as top goal scorer. Unfortunately this led to the usual suspects' noses being out of place. Stevie Hart moved the discussion on by indicating it had been a while since he had been at Duck Bay Marina. The two Alans said they would like to go with him. Willie Totten said he was going up to the Queen Margaret Union with Bunny (Iain Buntain), Davie and Alan McCormack as there was a new band coming to play. Others had affairs of the heart to take forward.

The evening concluded with the question "where are we going to eat the chippy tonight? (1) Back to Derek's; (2) Bessie and Jim's; (3) Fred's where we can watch the late night horror movie with Pop (Fred's dad)?"

The den in the Police Station was somewhere we not only shared fun times, but a place of safety to grow up and really it was a stepping stone to lifelong friendships through Trinity Venture Scouts.

Unfortunately access to this den was restricted and only Friday night meetings were held here, but the memories of these meetings still linger on.

Police Station in 2021

(This building is vacant, having been replaced by a new one at Station Road)



Photo courtesy Iain (Fred) Wilson

As you'll have read, the Group has had a few dens and I am sure each will hold memories for some of the members of the 51st Renfrewshire, 2nd Renfrew (Trinity) Scout Group and long may these memories continue and be passed to future generations.

As I hope I have shown, going back from the then den during the 2nd World War and the Rovers doing military service, to the last Den in the Police Station, the dens were places of fun, friendship and service. Although my memory only goes back to the early 1950s, and details of Dens around 1940s, it may be possible to research if the group had dens before this time.

The earlier information was all about Group Dens, but the Patrols also had dens.

~~ Patrol Dens ~~

Each year on the last few weeks before summer break and camp, the troop would meet in the Blythswood Estate off Inchinnan Road, opposite to what is now Kirklandneuk.

This location was wooded with mature and sapling trees together with shrubs and small bushes of all sorts including brambles. In the woods just off the main drive to the mansion was a clearing and from here were a number of tracks leading through the undergrowth to smaller areas and clearings which the patrols used as dens for the period.

When the troop was told that they would be meeting at Blythswood, all members knew that they would take a mug (tin) and be allowed to wear sheath knives to these meetings. Shorts were worn rather than the kilt. On gathering at the normal time for parade and flag break in the main clearing, the patrols were told to go to their dens with the instruction that on hearing the sound of three blows on the whistle they had to return to the main area immediately.

The patrols made their way through the bushes, each to their own den, which was isolated from other patrols, where inspection would be carried out.

Each week a woodcraft activity would be completed by the troop in preparation for the camp. These activities included following a trail laid out by the Leaders using scout craft signs, tree identification, hand axe and felling axe training and instruction on how to make such camp items such as plate stands, mug racks and shoe racks.

The nights always finished singing songs round the campfire and cocoa drink which had been prepared in a large dixie over the fire, finally flag down.

However, it wasn't all easy - the patrols also had a project to carry out. The first week was to clear their den which had become overgrown from the previous year. Each patrol was given a bush saw and hand axe and it was up to the Patrol Leader to arrange his patrol to clear their den. This was done with vigour, pulling logs from the bushes to sit on but the overhead canopy was left to protect the den from any rain which may fall. The Patrol using their knives would cut out a section of turf and carefully lay this aside. This bit of ground was then prepared as a fire pit. In one task, the patrol was given 3 matches and a sheet of newspaper and told to light the fire in their den which the leaders would inspect in 10 minutes.

Projects also included cooking potatoes in the embers of the patrol fire, making twists which meant getting a green stick stripping the bark with your knife and using a mixture of flour and water with a touch of salt to make a dough which was spiralled round the stick then "cooked" over the patrol fire and eaten with the cocoa at the campfire. The projects were inspected at the camp fire and points awarded for the patrol competition.

Another project was that each patrol given an orange and 2 eggs and told to bring to the campfire cooked eggs. The oranges were supposed to be cut in half and the flesh scooped out and shared amongst the patrol. The eggs had to be broken into the orange skins and cooked in the embers.

On the final parade the patrol task was to clear the sites, scatter the embers of the fires and replace the turf which had been cut on the first parade. Nature was then allowed to take over until the following year. The troop knew that the next parade night would be used to get the equipment ready for the summer camp where the skills picked up at Blythswood could be used.

Glendee Road

There has been some conjecture over a den in Glendee Road. Although some group members remember being told of it, there does not seem to be any tangible evidence of its existence. Two time periods are coming to the fore, one being around the 1940s period whilst the other time period mentioned is around 1980s. The conclusion was reached that the 1945 recollections were that of Geordie Paton's farm which bounded upon Glendee Road. The other memories may be that at some period between dens, the group used one of the lockups at the southern end of Glendee Road bordering on to the KGV playing fields for storage. If anyone has further evidence please contact the present leaders to allow the records to be amended for the 125 year celebration in 2046.

Brown Institute

The Venture Scouts used 2 rooms in the Brown Institute for a short time. Albeit meetings were held here, the rooms were never considered as a den.

Gordon Kerr, a member of the Venture Scout Unit at that time looks back on the small room with the billiard table. He notes the room was so small the cues kept hitting the walls! This is confirmed by another Venture Scout, Alex Harvie (Jnr), who mentions that when playing billiards it was very challenging game when required to do cannons.

~ APPENDICES ~

Charles McQueen & Jim Hair at the boundary wall of former Geordie Paton's farm



Photo courtesy Iain (Fred) Wilson

2021



Photo courtesy Iain (Fred) Wilson

The above wall was built from the bricks reclaimed after the dairy on the farm was demolished. Charles McQueen helped prepare the bricks for the building of the wall.

Photo highlighting Dr Brodie's Surgery

This is another photo taken at the installation of the Cenotaph in 1922 - note the Parish Church spire in the background

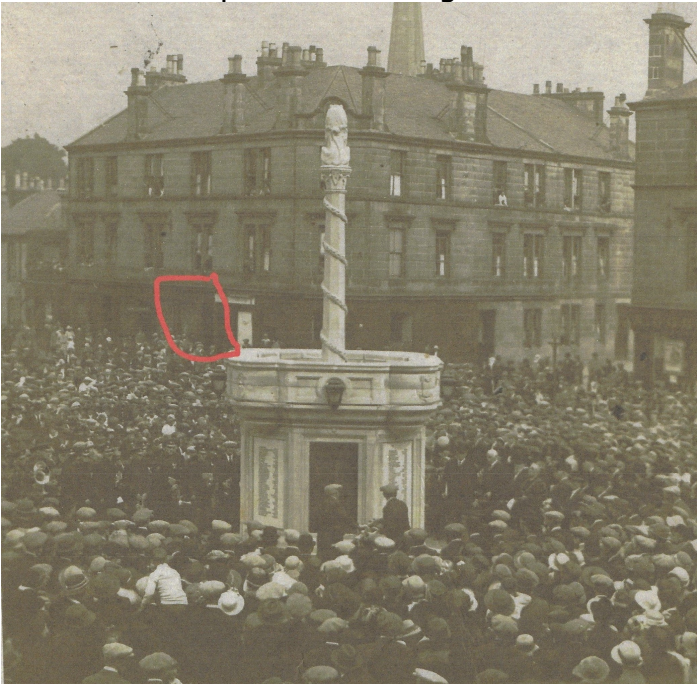


Photo courtesy John Lyall

Pastry Shop High Street

A note from Alex Harvie GSL on acquiring the Pastry Shop (High Street Den) for use by the Group.

THE DEN

Last year we were very fortunate in securing what would formerly be known to most of you as the Pastry Shop in High Street as a temporary Head Quarters. The intention at first was to do very little in the way of renovation but thanks to the unbridled enthusiasm of Brian Cowie (if you see him coming get out of his way, he's probably wanting something else for the Den) aided by the older members of the group the place has been transformed. The cub pack helped in their own way by tastefully decorating one of the walls. The decor is unusual to say the least and our thanks go to Ernie Spiers and Jim Winters for all their help. This article will have to be brief since I see Brian in the offing, I think he wants a tyre or something for round the dart board

A. Harvie, G. S. L.

Photo courtesy of Grant Wilson