



Sailing at Nottingham

NZ SEA SCOUTS JOIN 100TH COMMEMORATION

BY RON BIRD

A contingent of seven Sea Scouts and their leaders from New Zealand played a substantial role in ceremonies commemorating 100 years of the movement at St Andrews, Scotland in August.

The events were largely arranged by, Sylvia and Ron Bird, two Deep Sea Scouts from New Zealand, following discussions at a Eurosea9 Sea Scout Leaders conference in Ireland last year. The conference resulted in over 150 members of the world Scout movement, and their guests, gathering at St Andrews over the weekend of August 15 and 16.

Apart from the honour and prestige associated with the event, the occasion marked a special connection New Zealand has with Warrington Baden-Powell, the founder of the Sea Scout movement.

After embarking on a seagoing career, Warrington came ashore when the father of the family, Rev Professor Baden-Powell died. He retrained himself and became a lawyer specialising in maritime law. Unknown to the family however, Warrington had become secretly engaged to Cicely "Hilda" Farmer, a woman from Auckland, New Zealand who also had a close link to his homeland. Cicely was born in One Tree Hill, Auckland in 1870. She was presented at court as a debutant in 1893 and returned to New Zealand to live until she married Warrington in England in 1913.

The first Sea Scout activity took place August 7 to 21, 1909 and was held on board the training ship *Mercury*, moored at Bucklers Hard in the River Hamble in the south of England. Those participating were selected from many who applied by entering

a competition for the 96 places available. They were joined by two others, one of whom was John Kipling, the son of the author Rudyard Kipling. The venue was made available by Lord Montagu and the ship, by CB Fry the famous cricketer of the period. Both were friends of the then Major General Robert Baden-Powell as he was at the time.

During the world wars Sea Scouts played an important role as coast watchers, an early version of coast guards. Some of those that went to sea joined the Deep Sea Scout branch formed later in 1928. This branch was established for those who travelled the world in either merchant or naval vessels.

In New Zealand Sea Scouts were officially started in July 1912 when Colonel Cossgrove placed an advert in the Dominion Scout magazine inviting Scout officers residing in ports to apply for the registration of Sea Scout groups. He compiled a leaflet to promote the new branch. Captain Marceil RNR of Christchurch, who was employed by the Marine Department, was appointed Chief Sea Scout for the Dominion of New Zealand.

In a further move Captain Wilcox, who was assistant superintendent of marine at Lyttelton, was appointed Sea Scout secretary and Colonel Cossgrove placed on record the sympathy of the Marine Department to the new branch. From the outset it was stated that Sea Scouts are a section of the Scout movement and not a separate organisation although they wear a different uniform to land Scouts, reflecting their nautical interest. This includes the seaman's cap with a cap ribbon bearing the words Dominion Sea Scouts, navy blue shirt, shorts and socks and a black scarf.



L TO R: Blair Stanley, Brandon Stanley, Jodi Thorpe, Sylvia Bird, Peter McGowan, Hamish Thorp (kneeling) and Ron Bird



The little Kiwi just about says it all

The new section very quickly started with the Trafalgar Sea Scout Troop being unofficially formed in Lyttelton as early as 1911. In Auckland the Navy League took up Sea Scouting for boys while the Waikato, Wairoa, Gisborne groups were also formed. Napier was the first official group to be registered and was named Endeavour.

In 1945 the first standard cutter, a boat to be used for Sea Scout training, was designed and built and New Zealand is only one of two countries with such a craft, the other being Holland. In June 2008 a set of plans were sent to Portugal where they are going to build four wooden ones, another set has been sent to a Sea Scout group in the UK to enable them to build one. Others cutters are already located in Fiji, Cook Islands, Tuvalu, Kiribati and Samoa.

Now there are in excess of 250 cutters in use by Sea Scouts, Sea Cadets and Young Mariners. The latest are built in fibreglass with some wooden ones being refurbished or rebuilt currently.

The anniversary celebrations were held at the National Water Sports Centre at Holme Pierrepont near Nottingham. Some 2315 Sea Scouts from 73 Sea Scout Groups from the UK, Scotland, Ireland, USA, New Zealand and Australia participated. The timing of the event coincided with the first known Sea Scout activity held in August 1909 and featured a large tent city on a council owned reserve.

An international administration, instructors and management team ensured that the event went off without a hitch and was supported by Royal Navy staff together with their display vehicle. A large electronic score board was used to record and advise participants of activities, weather forecasts etc.

It was an excellent event and featured many water based activities of which some were quite challenging, even to experienced Sea Scouts. Events included white water rafting, canoeing, dragon boat racing, sailing in some 95 assorted dinghies, high performance sailing craft, power boating, using five metre rigid inflatable craft and rowing skiffs. Many land based activities, including a large mud slide, were available during the day and the evening entertainment included a steel band which are popular with young people in UK at the present.

At St Andrews, the day started early at the 8th Fife Scout headquarters. Located right on the cliff top, adjacent to the Cathedral ruins, the site commands a great view out to sea. On this day however, an unplanned visitor appeared in the form of the Dutch sail training ship, *Neiuw Amsterdam* that anchored in the bay. Similar in size and rig to our Spirit of New Zealand, she was a most welcome guest. The organisers had tried to arrange for the Scout Discovery Sailing Project vessel to call as part of her circumnavigation of England and Scotland, but due to her tight schedule this was not possible.

The formal commemorative ceremonies began with morning worship in Holy Trinity Church where the minister Cameron Harrison began by welcoming the distinguished guests. Roy Masini, the London based Sea Scout historian, gave a brief introduction to Warrington Baden-Powell, his career at sea and his involvement in the formation of the Sea Scout branch.

The service had a suitable nautical theme and three readings illustrating how boats and the sea were part of Christ's ministry were given by three Sea Scouts, one each from New Zealand, St Andrews, and Ireland.

The celebrations then moved to the 8th Fife St Andrews Scout Hall where everyone enjoyed a buffet lunch. A video message from Michael Baden Powell, grandson of the founder Robert Baden-Powell and who now lives in Australia, was played on a large screen. Here one of the organisers, Ron Bird of New Zealand, acted as master of ceremonies for the presentations. Lt Commander David Griffiths RN, staff officer (Sea Scouts), then presented Hamish Thorpe, formerly of 1st Onerahi now Shackleton Sea Scouts from Whangarei, with his Chief Scout's award. Peter McGowan, the New Zealand Sea Scout contingent leader, presented a model of a New Zealand waka to Jean Martin, district commander for North East Fife.

After lunch, a short wreath laying ceremony took place at Warrington Baden Powell's grave where a special wreath was also laid for his wife, Cecilia, who died in 1955 and was laid to rest in the same plot. Her family originated from Brownhills Farm, St Andrews, which can be clearly seen from the grave site. A Maori waiata was sung by the New Zealand contingent as her wreath was placed.

FOOTNOTE

A decision was made at last years Eurosea9 Sea Scout Leaders conference to raise funds during 2009/2010 to place a bust of Warrington at Gilwell Park near London - the home of Scouting. The responsibility for this fell on New Zealand to arrange quotes and gain approvals from Gilwell Park management and Baden-Powell family members. These have now been obtained and suitable photographs of Warrington (some previously unseen) have been supplied for artwork to be drawn up.

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