

Easter Camp - Blairmore
8th-13th April 1960

Those at Camp

Rhinoceros Patrol	P.L.	Ian Fraser
	Sec (acting)	Billy Phillips
		Michael Nisbet
		D. Hamilton
		Hamish Rankin (Senior Scout Weekend) ¹
Bear Patrol	T.L.	Jim Blair
	P.L.	Tommy Dow
	Sec	Ronald Lind
		Michael Hodge (HOJI)
		Alan Conway
		John Moore
Scouters ²	S.M.	R.K. Miller (Acting)
	A.S.M.	J.D. McFarlane
	V.J.A.S.M.	Kenneth W. Johnson (Q.M.)
	V.J.A.S.M.	John H. Nisbet

Note: Alistair Cram and Albert Runcie passed through the camp on 9th April 1960 on their way home from one of the hikes for their Hiker's Badge³.

Camp Weather:-

“Oh, it rained on Monday,
And it rained on Tuesday,
And it rained on Wednesday too,
All, it rained on Thursday,
And it rained on Friday,
And it rained all Saturday through,
Along came Sunday,
And we thought: ‘here’s one day,
That it certainly won’t RAIN’,
But it Poured on Sunday,
And along came Monday,
And it started all over again!
Oh, it rained on Monday,
And it rained on Tuesday,
And it rained on Wednesday too,
Oh, it rained on Thursday,
And it rained on Friday,
And it read all Saturday through,
Along came Sunday,
And we thought: ‘Here’s one day,
That it certainly WON’T RAIN’,
But it*etc. etc. ad infinitum.*”

N.B. It is more literally true to substitute “all” for “on” (in the above).

Editorial comments for introduction

1. Hamish Rankin had resigned as a PL on the 1st April 1960 to join a new Senior Scout Patrol, and the log report indicates that three of that patrol were seen at Ardentinny on a backpacking hike. However, it is not clear what role (if any) Hamish had on that hike. Certainly, a Senior Scout Weekend was organized, and it is possible that Hamish might have attended some of Easter Camp, then joined up with the other Senior Scouts at Ardentinny.
2. A photograph of A.S.M. Sandy Whiteford was included in the Troop Log entry describing the Easter Camp of 1960. However, there is no evidence of Sandy being present at the Easter Camp of 1960. It is possible that the photograph was misplaced and should have been included with the account covering the 1959 Easter camp.
3. The Hiker's Badge was a Senior Scout Proficiency Badge which was set at a higher standard than the 1st Class hike. Scouts had to be aged 15 or over before they could attempt it. It is believed that two hikes had to be completed – a 20 mile hike and a 30 mile hike. The principle was much the same as for the 1st Class Hike. Scouts hiked as pairs in uniform and were unsupervised. They also had a number of projects to complete en route, and were responsible for finding their own campsites and cooking their meals over wood fires. A full log book had to be written afterwards which was assessed by the District Examiner who set the route and the projects.

Friday 8th April 1960

10:15 HRS. We assembled at Gourock pier and removed the gear from the Left Luggage Office without handing over the official tickets. In the middle of embarking the gear, the irate custodian of the above L.L.O. puffed up the pier in the rain shouting, “Rem fings is stole!” upon which the S.M. eventually produced the tickets from his sporran. The L.L.O custodian then returned, rather “drookit” to his L.L.O.



After this diversion, we embarked on M.V. “Maid of Ashton”⁴ for Blairmore and hence by lorry⁵ to the campsite. No rain! - YET.

PLs⁶ were then eaten, while the S.M. and Scouters had orange and scrounge (O. v S.)⁷ for P.L. [packed lunch].



J. Nisbet, K. Johnson and I. McFarlane
Arrival at campsite



J. Nisbet, K. Johnson and I. McFarlane
Arrival at campsite

The rest of the afternoon was taken up with pitching camp, erecting kitchen shelters, collecting firewood etc.⁸

After tea, gadgets⁹ etc were built. In place of cocoa, we had one of Bob's famous dumplings (a $2^5/16$ pounder, by definition¹⁰). After this, since it was raining, we retired early to our carts¹¹ (or pits, or to the land of Nod, or something).

NB. Official camp Summer-Time was pronounced at 21.25 G.M.T., which became 22.25 C.T. (Camp Time).¹²

Editorial comments for 9th April 1960

4. *The Maid of Ashton was built at Yarrows Shipbuilders and brought into service in 1953. She was operated by the Caledonian Steam Packet Company as a Passenger Ferry capable of carrying 624 passengers and sailed from Gourock Pier to Craigendoran, Kilcreggan, Kilmun, Blairmore and Hunter's Quay. She was removed from service in 1971 when the emphasis switched from passenger ferries to car ferries. The Maid of Ashton was the first passenger ferry on the Clyde to have radar and had the distinction of having Princess Margaret as a passenger in 1957.*

5. *The pier masters at some of the Clyde piers had a lorry that could be hired to carry goods and equipment from the pier to a given destination. It seems likely that the lorry concerned here was one such vehicle. Alternatively, coal lorries were commonly available on hire for transporting goods.*

6. *PL here stands for Packed Lunch rather than Patrol Leader!*

7. *The meaning is unclear, but one interpretation is that the Scouters scrounged their Packed Lunches off the Scouts.*

8. *At Summer and Easter Camps, the 70th Patrols were self sufficient in terms of camping and cooking. Each patrol cooked all its meals over wood fires and had its own kitchen shelter. At Blairmore, the previous year, trench fires or pit fires seem to have been used and were located in the open, rather than under the shelter. This reduced the risk of setting the shelter on fire but made cooking problematic if it was raining. It is assumed that the same fire policy was followed during the Easter Camp of 1960.*

9. *Gadgets were constructed from bits of wood tied together by twine or sizar and were mostly designed for use in the kitchen shelter; for example, plate racks, mug trees, dressers, basin racks, table and chairs, larder etc etc. Ian Blake had set a particular emphasis on creating useful gadgets in camp when he was Scout Master.*

10. *There might have been some significance to this exact weight, but it has been lost on the mists of time. Note that the weight quoted corresponds to 2 lbs and 5 ozs.*

11. *'Carts' was clearly a term used to indicate sleeping bags or beds. It is not known how this term originated, or for how long it was in vogue. The term 'Pit' was more common.*

12. *It is possible that this may have been based on Royal precedence. King Edward VII and George V ran the clocks at Sandringham half an hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time time.*



Clean plate on show at Scouters Kitchen Shelter
J.H. Nisbet, K.W. Johnson, I. McFarlane



Bear Patrol
A. Conway, J. Moore, M. Hodge, R. Lind



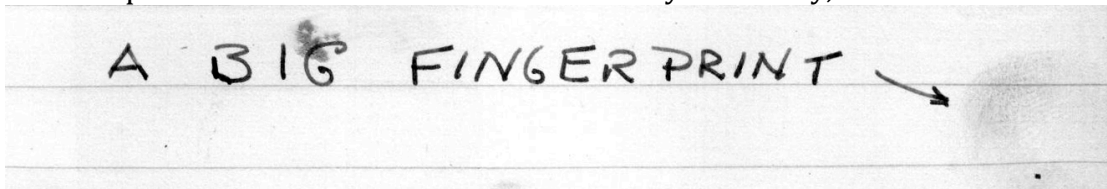
Rhinoceros Patrol
M. Nisbet, B. Phillips⁶¹ (chopping), D. Hamilton



Flagbreak
I. McF, JHN, KWJ, MN, DH, MH, JM, WP, AC

Saturday 9th of April 1960

Weather: After raining solidly during the night, i.e. from 7:30 PM, last night, it cleared up about 11 o'clock and hereafter was dry but windy,

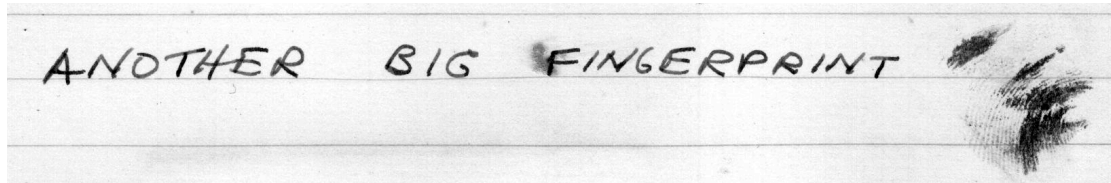


We rose at 07.00 hours, had breakfast and kit tidied for inspection¹³ at 10:30 hours. At inspection, Jobs of work and S.T.As¹⁴ were issued as follows:-

- (A) Bridge¹⁵ building over burn – Ian and Bob¹⁶
- (B) (i) Erection of flagpole¹⁷ – NIS¹⁸
- (ii) Approach roads to bridge – NIS¹⁸

Since the Rinse¹⁹ Patrol gained most marks at inspection, they were appointed duty patrol for the day and given the choice of the above and chose (A). Jasper (the official name for the lats²⁰ – so called because they were initially used by one, Jasper, who is a dog belonging to PL T. Dow²¹) was (a)²² dug by Bob and Ian¹⁶.

The bridge-building party spent most of the day making official measurements with lengths of string after which they got down to building their bridge. At the same time, the flagpole was brought down from the wood and erected. Following this, the approach road to the north side of the bridge was completed. In the afternoon, Tweet, Jim and Tom arrived²³.



The S.M. and A.S.M. McFarlane took time off from bridge building to have an official wash /bathe in Loch Long. No one else precipitated²⁴ – no wonder since there was a howling gale and the water was freezing (not what they said)²⁵.

After tea, we made an ascent of Kilmun Hill²⁶ by the light of the silvery moon, *per ardua ad astra*.²⁷ Wiffil²⁸ stayed behind to make the cocoa since he did not think he was the right shape for hill-climbing²⁹. On arriving at the top, we had a total collapse. After a rest, we headed down the hill in the direction of Kilcreggan. We descended by a fire lane until we reached the Forestry Commission Road. Singing heartily, we made our way along the road until we were above Strone, cut over the golf course and finished up in the middle of Strone village.

HOJI³⁰ remarked to the SM that he would create a public diversion if anyone saw him in his official camp uniform.³¹ Lemonade was purchased in a hotel at Strone pier and consumed on the way back to camp where cocoa was served by Wiffil. And so to bed.

Editorial comments for 9th April 1960

13. Inspection was carried out every morning in camp to ensure that camping standards were maintained. Both the tent and the kitchen shelter were inspected. It is possible that the patrol had to stand to attention when the inspection was taking place.

14. It is not known what S.T.A. stood for. Presumably it referred to the Scouter(s) in charge of the job of work

15. Clearly, the building of the bridge and the approach roads were the main pioneering projects of the camp.

16. ASM Ian McFarlane and SM Bob Miller in charge.

17. As a matter of principle, the main flagpole had to be as large as possible which usually involved finding a suitably sized tree in the vicinity. It's not known whether a tree was chosen that had been blown over, or whether a tree was chopped down.

18. Nis or Niz was the nickname for V.J.A.S.M. John Nisbet who was supervising the jobs identified. John was aged about 17 at the time and was still too young to take out a warrant as ASM, hence the title Very Junior Assistant Scout Master (V.J.A.S.M.). John resigned as PL and Troop Leader in September 1959 to join the Scouter team.

19. There was no Rinse patrol in camp and so it is assume that this was meant to be the Rhino patrol led by Ian Fraser.

20. Latrines or bog pit.

21. The latrines or Bog Bit were called 'Jasper' for several subsequent years during the 1960s.

22. The significance of '(a)' is not known.

23. Hamish Rankin (Tweet), Jim Blair and Tom Dow.
24. Not sure whether the spelling was deliberate or whether it was meant to be 'participated'.
25. Bob Miller and Ian McFarlane made a point of swimming in Scottish lochs at various camps, so much so that other leaders felt the need to maintain the tradition if Ian and Bob were not present (as at a later Easter Camp at Portavaddie).
26. It is assumed that this involved walking to the triangulation pillar at 1264 feet, rather than the spot height marked at 1472 feet. The label for Kilmun Hill is actually placed on the map half way between these points.
27. Latin for "through adversity to the stars" (the official motto of the RAF).
28. Billy Phillips. 'Wiffil' derives from William Phillips. Billy was either 12 or 13 in April 1960.
29. Billy was slightly 'rotund' at that stage in his life, so he was presumably referring to that, rather than his general physical fitness.
30. Hoji or Hooji was the nickname for Michael Hodge. He was aged about 12 or 13 at the time of Easter Camp 1960.
31. Unfortunately, it was not stated what that involved.

Sunday 10th of April 1960

Weather: Same as yesterday, lashing all night, clearing up about 11 o'clock, sunshine, very high velocity wind (c. Force 5) (at least, or more forbye).

Also on the site were a few members of the 7th Renfrewshire Troop³² including 'Rhum' Harens³³, our Cadet Scouter³⁴, for the last six weeks.

Inspection was at 10:15 hours. The wee men were then taken by surprise. It so happened that the SM was standing on the Forestry Road waving his towel and underpants furiously. He was trying to get through to the wee men by semaphore that help was urgently required for ASM McFarlane who was trapped under a large tree (stunt)³⁵. A Patrol eventually appeared and effected his rescue. Following this, the building of the bridge was resumed and by mid-afternoon the approach road on the south side of the bridge was completed. The bridge was officially opened by cutting a string tied across the north end of the bridge³⁶. The ceremony was recorded on photographic 120 and 127 film, the pictures including the Troop.³⁷

Tea followed, after which A.S.M. McFarlane, Senior Scout Hamish Rankin (and) P.L. Tommy Dow caught the 7.30 bus³⁸. At 8.15 p.m., we set off for a hike to Ardentenny and arrived there at 9.5 pm. We then opened up the shop³⁹ and paid it our annual visit and bought light refreshment. At Ardentenny, we met Ken Conway, Stuart Scott, and R. Muir who were hiking with the Bungalow.⁴⁰ On arriving back at camp at 10:15 PM, 'zactly. Since everyone was F.F.T.B.⁴¹ we went to bed without cocoa.



Cutting the string to open the bridge
J. Nisbet, K. Johnston, I McFarlane
M. Hodge, W. Phillips, J. Moore, D. Hamilton, A. Conway, M. Nisbet

Editorial comments for 10th April 1960

32. *The 7th Renfrewshire Scout Troop was formed around 1910 in the Wesleyan Methodist Church. The Group closed in 1977-78. See <http://www.greenockanddistrictscouts.org/non-active-scout-groups/7th-renfew-inverclyde/>*

33. *In the Troop log, for 11th March 1960 he was referred to as 'Plum Harkiss'. Therefore there is some doubt over his actual name.*

34. *As part of leader training, prospective Scouters (Cadet Scouters) were required to spend about 6 weeks with a Troop other than their own in order to see how another Troop was run, and to pick up new ideas. The Cadet Scouters appear to have been serving Patrol Leaders in their final year of Scouts.*

35. *In other words, this was a staged incident to see how the Scouts would react to an emergency situation.*

36. *A photograph was taken of the string as it was about to be cut - using a saw!*

37. *The photographs are included here and also on the web page focusing on the camp.*

38. *This was to get back to Dunoon to catch the ferry back to Gourock. Ian Mcfarlane had quite limited holidays and so he would have been returning for work. Presumably, Hamish and Tom also had other commitments.*

39. The Editor thinks that the shop was normally locked and unattended, and that one had to ring the bell for someone to come and open it – to be confirmed though.

40. The Bungalow was a hike tent that had been recently purchased and was made by Blacks. Ken Conway and Stuart Scott were members of the newly formed Senior Scout patrol and may have been hiking from Ardentinny to Carrick Castle. R. Muir may have been Ritchie Muir, who had been a Second in the Troop before resigning in April 1959. However, he may have rejoined the group to join the Senior Scout Patrol as one of the stated aims of the patrol was to attract back past members.

41. It is not known what F.F.T.B. stood for.



Major Camp STA: Bridge and Road Building
NB There are 87 cross pieces on the bridge
Probably Ronald Lind in background



'Eastern Approaches' from the north
MH, DH, KWJ and RL⁶² in background
On bridge: I.Fraser (+rucsac) and J. Nisbet



A. Conway, B. Phillips and J. Moore in foreground
J. Nisbet, R. Lind, M. Nisbet⁶³, D. Hamilton and I. McFarlane in background
M. Hodge showing a leg (hat also visible)

Monday 11th April 1960

Weather:- Showery in the morning, bright in the afternoon, warmer and less windy.

After inspection, we played pickapoo⁴² (ice hockey, only with two pucks tied together, each player hitting his own puck). While Jim and the S.M.⁴³ had a race up to a large rock on the hill to try and push it down⁴⁴, the rest of us played baseball. One or two or nine stones later, they arrived back at camp for lunch.

After lunch, an expedition to the lead mine up the valley was made⁴⁵. Everyone set off inside the mine, but rhinoceroses, tigers and water buffalo drove everyone out except the S.M. and the T.L.⁴³ who explored the mine thoroughly and took, one each, geological samples. The S.M. unluckily landed up with a bit of quartz - it was very dark inside. (The) T.L., however, got a good example of a lead oxide. At the junction of the tunnels, the T.L. discovered tiger tracks (wildcat or fox perhaps). When the S.M. and T.L. emerged, they said they had been to Australia and looked like it too. The S.M. managed to drag the T.L. into a bog, the S.M. landing face up and the T.L. face down.

The party having assembled again headed north over one or two or nine fields and eventually arrived at the beach near Gairletter Point⁴⁶. The rest of the afternoon was occupied in a beach comb back to camp.⁴⁷

An early tea followed. T.L. Blair and V.J.A.S.M. Nisbet made pancakes while the boys made apple fritters and chips. All the troop, except two, retired for the night without their cocoa and pancakes.

In the meantime, S.M. and T.L.⁴³ went to phone Jim's mum who was "thrilled to bits" to learn that Jim would not be home till tomorrow morning. On the way back from the phone call, they explored a haunted house.⁴⁸

[Note:- Today Q.M. V.J.A.S.M. K. W. Johnson ordered two stones (of) potatoes instead of half a stone. Do you think we can eat two stones (of) potatoes before Wednesday?]

And so to bed.

Editorial comments for 11th April 1960

42. Spelling may not be as shown. 'Kickapoo' is another possibility.

43. Troop Leader Jim Bair and Scout Master Bob Miller.

44. The purpose of this exercise was not revealed.

45. The exact location of the mine and its former purpose have still to be determined. However, it is likely to be the mine identified on the Secretscotland website which can be accessed at

<https://www.secretscotland.org.uk/index.php/Secrets/BlairmoreMine>

This indicates that the mine lies on the north bank of the Blairmore Burn, about half a mile above Blairmore Farm. It can be accessed by a horizontal tunnel (adit) that is about 100 feet long with a side branch leading off. It is believed locally that tin was mined here, but historical records identify it as a lead mine. There is also evidence of a narrow ditch and embankment running down the hill towards the road, as well as a small spoil heap. Four cottages used to be present near the mine. Two of these were renovated into one large cottage in the early 2000s. Oddly, the house still has two staircases. The other two cottages were also renovated and turned into a single property, and a large extension added at an unknown date. A date of 1876 is carved into a modern date stone set on one of the new buildings.

46. Gairletter Point is about 2 miles north of Blairmore village and 1 mile north of the junction leading up to the campsite.

47. Presumably the Scouts followed the beach south for the mile, then took the junction back up to the campsite.

48. Any building that was semi derelict and unoccupied was probably designated a haunted house – probably by Bob Miller.

Tuesday 12th April 1960

Weather:- -----

Oh, it rained on Tuesday.

Today was rather wet (see above). In fact, it lashed. After breakfast, we retired to our pits.⁴⁹ We stayed there until visited by Mr. and Mrs. K. Conway, George Conway and friend.⁵⁰ Dinner⁵¹ was served and the camp officially abandoned, the boys catching the 1.45 pm bus to Blairmore for the 2.35 pm boat to Gourrock. The Scouters went with them to the pier and then returned to their pits, after putting on a dumpling⁵² (a two and one or two or nine⁵³ sixteenths pounder. This'll shatter them!). Since the Primus⁵⁴ went out, the dumpling was not ready till 10 o'clock (it was originally put on at 4 o'clock). After it had been pronounced, V.J.A.S.M. K.W.J Q.M. announced "It's a bit BYDOJJI.⁵⁵" The S.M. and V.J.A.S.M. Nisbet concurred. After a singsong and a knot tying session⁵⁶, we retired for the night.

It has now been raining for at least 24 hours.

Editorial comments for 12th April 1960

49. In particularly bad weather, the Scouts were confined to their tents and amused themselves by playing cards, telling ghost stories etc.

50. Mr. and Mrs. Conway would have been visiting their middle son Alan who was in camp. George was the youngest son and was still in the Wolf Cub pack. IT was not revealed who the friend was.

51. In the 1950s and 1960s, dinner was the term used for lunch.

52. The second dumpling of the camp. Normally there was only one.

53. The term 'one or two or nine' was generally used during this period to indicate uncertainty over a measurement.

54. A primus in the 1950s ran on paraffin. Before lighting it, the burner head had to be pre heated with burning methylated spirits placed in a 'cup' just below the burner head. Normally the methylated spirits was allowed to burn until it was almost done. At that point the stove was pumped to build up pressure within the paraffin container, such that the paraffin was forced into the burner head. If the burner head was sufficiently hot, the liquid paraffin vaporized as it passed through the burner head and burned as a gas. If the burner head was not sufficiently hot, the paraffin ignited as a liquid and gave a good impression of a flamethrower. Primus stoves were very effective as long as they were shielded from the wind, but they were too temperamental to use inside a tent.

55. It is not at all clear what BYDOJJI signified!

56. It's not clear what this might have involved, unless Bob Miller was teaching the others less common knots.

Wednesday 13th of April 1960

Weather:-it has now been raining for 36 hours solid and continued to rain intermittently for during the morning.

The opening pronouncement of the day by the S.M. was, "I can't see the kitchen shelter!" It had been blown down during the night.

We (the Scouters) rose at 7:15 hours and, between the showers, cleared up the campsite, assisted by A.S.M. McFarlane who arrived at about 10.15. By one thirty p.m., the site was cleared up, but the lorry did not arrive as scheduled in time for us to catch the 2.35 pm boat. We walked into Blairmore and after receiving an apology⁵⁷ from Andrew McArthur, the Piermaster, returned to the campsite by lorry, and arrived back in Blairmore at about 4:25 PM. We sat in the shelter and "resonated".⁵⁸

Notes

1) This needs a little explanation. By sounding a vocal note at the resonant frequency of the shelter, resonations were set up. Tricks such as beating two similar frequencies were also perpetrated.

2) This log was written up (90%) by Nis between the hours of 4 PM Tuesday 12th and bedtime????⁵⁹ the same evening. It is hard to define bedtime since we were in our sleeping bags for most of the day and continuously after 4 PM.

Scribes

John H. Nisbet V.J.A.S.M.⁶⁰

Robert K. Miller SM (70th)

Editorial comments for 13th April 1960

57. Strong evidence that the lorry was hired from the piermaster, rather than a local coal firm.

58. See the notes following this sentence.

59. The questions mark signify that bedtime was ill defined for the reasons given

60. This title was probably unofficial and usually applied to older Scouts under the age of 18 who had resigned as PLs and joined the leader team. As a result, they were not yet old enough to take out an ASM's warrant.

61. In the log book, John Moore has been identified as the Scout chopping. However, it is more likely to be Billy Phillips.

62. In the log book, it is proposed that this might be Alan Conway, but it is far more likely that this is Ronald Lind

63. The log book states that this is Ronald Russell. However, Ronald was not listed as being on the camp and it is suggested that this might be Michael Nisbet.

Abbreviations

S.M. = Scout Master

A.S.M = Assistant Scout Master

V.J.A.S.M = Very Junior Assistant Scout Master⁶⁰

T.L. = Troop Leader

P.L. = Patrol Leader (or pack lunch)

Sec = Second

Q.M. = Quarter Master

L.L.O = Left Luggage Office

G.M.T = Greenwich Mean Time

C.T. = Camp Time

S.T.A. = Not known

FFTB = Not known

BYDOJJI = Not known



Editorial comment

This photograph of ASM Sandy Whiteford was inserted in the troop log as part of the report given on the Blairmore Easter Camp of 1960. However, there is no other evidence of Sandy attending this camp and it seems likely that the photograph was actually taken during the Blairmore Easter Camp of 1959.