

Shannon Cup Competition



The Shannon Cup Patrol (with the cup)
Jim Barr, David White, Alex Aitkenhead, Robin Crawford, Robert Morrison, John Martin.

Saturday 29th May 1965

The Shannon Patrol met outside Finnart hall this afternoon at 1 PM. It consisted of:-

<i>T.L and P.L.</i>	<i>Robert Crawford</i>	<i>(Fox)</i>	<i>(Robin)</i>
<i>Second</i>	<i>Alex Aitkenhead</i>	<i>(Seagull)</i>	<i>(Mowgli)</i>
<i>1st Scout</i>	<i>Robert Morrison</i>	<i>(Kingfisher)</i>	
<i>2nd Scout</i>	<i>David White</i>	<i>(Falcon)</i>	
<i>3rd Scout</i>	<i>Jim Barr</i>	<i>(Curlew)</i>	
<i>4th Scout</i>	<i>John Martin</i>	<i>(Curlew)</i>	

We were transported to Everton¹ by the cars of Al² and Oz³, arriving about 2 PM. At 2:50, the patrol leaders were called into the presence of the examiner, Mr Alexander⁴, and were told the programme for Saturday. At 3PM, the patrols formed a horseshoe (12 patrols in all after some late arrivals) and we picked sites. We were very fortunate in getting second choice. We were able to pick a good site reasonably close to the parade ground from which the bell⁵ was easily heard and

from our proximity to the water tap⁶ gave us more time for washing dishes and dixies to brilliant brightness.

After pitching the tent, I⁷ led the whole patrol up the back of Everton to collect wood and luckily we were able to bring down enough to do us the whole weekend. After tea, consisting of sausages, beans, tomato soup and instant whip with rhubarb, we were summoned to the parade ground by the examiner's infernal bell, which he always rang while we were in the middle of some delicate operation. On arriving at the parade ground, we were immediately plunged into the first of the weekend's tests. We were given three knots, which we were to identify. One was a reef knot, one a thief knot and one a Granny knot. The 70th and one other patrol were the only ones to do this test correctly. We were then told that a pack of cards were scattered throughout the campsite. The patrols were to spread out and search the site. One pip was awarded for an ace two pips for a two, three pips for a three, and so on up to 13 pips for a king. The Seagull Patrol (this is the name we chose because their flag was the cleanest), found 18 pips, but many patrols did not get any. The maximum number was 38 found by the 1st Gourock. The cards were mostly hidden around tents and kitchens.

The patrols then formed a semicircle while Mr Alexander briefly showed us 24 objects. This done, he proceeded to name the objects one by one and told us to put the colour of the objects down on a piece of paper. We managed to do this to our own satisfaction but the results were not announced.

The next stunt was given out immediately. The patrol leaders were told to hide their patrols as near to a staff⁸, stuck into the ground at any position one wished, as possible. Points were taken off for any members of the patrol seen by the examiner, while he stood upright against the staff. The average distance between the nearest Scout to the staff and the Scout farthest from the staff was then measured and more points were awarded the lower the average. I hid the patrol under an overhang and put the staff on top of the overhang with the result that our average distance was the shortest.

This completed, we were given a message to decode while one of our number (John Martin from our patrol) was removed. In the middle of decoding the message, the code of which we were unable to break, the bell rang and on arrival at the parade ground we found John lying on the ground with a notice, 'ON FIRE', pinned to his collar. We wrapped him in kilts etc and rolled him around on the ground while treating for shock. We then immobilized as much of him as possible and transported him by makeshift stretcher to the examiner.

We rounded off the day with campfire at which each patrol had to produce one sketch, one mime, one choral item and two solos. Our patrol accomplished this fairly well and, after campfire, retired to pit. Lights out were at 11 PM but, although we were quiet by then, many other patrols seemed still to be active, for which, I believe, they lost points. During the day, at teatime especially, we were able to make quite a few gadgets, which stood us in good stead on Sunday.

Editorial notes for 29th May 1965

1. Everton Scout campsite is situated in the hills behind Inverkip and was originally leased to the Scouts by Ardgowan Estates in the 1920s. It was eventually purchased by the local Scout District.

2. ASM Alastair Cram
3. ASM Albert Runcie.
4. It is not known who Mr. Alexander was. The examiner was usually a Scout Master from a different Scout District, such as Port Glasgow.
5. It is believed that a bell might have been hung on the wall of the Everton Scout hut. The original hut was a wooden, rustic looking hut perched on top of a hillock. Both the hut and the hillock were removed when the current building was constructed elsewhere on the parade ground.
6. The position of the water tap was probably close to the stream that ran down the front perimeter of the campsite.
7. Troop Leader Robin Crawford
8. Scout staffs were made from ash wood about 5 to 6 feet long and had markings a foot apart. At the top of the staff, the last foot had markings representing inches. It is believed that 6 of the 12 inches making up a foot were marked, but this needs to be confirmed.

Sunday 30th May 1965

We were given instructions that points would be deducted from any patrol with a member up before 7 AM, so, at 7 AM precisely, the Seagull patrol arose. At 8 a.m., our breakfast of porridge, bacon and rolls was cooked and eaten and jelly prepared for lunch. We spent the next hour feverishly preparing for inspection, which was programmed for 9 AM. We swept the kitchen out with a home-made broom, washed and dried all dishes and dixies, pulled out the groundsheet, brailled up¹ the tent, washed ourselves and changed into F.S.U. (Full Scout Uniform) from the knees up. David White then illustrated our log² which had been written up the night before by Robert Morrison. We also laid out clean shoes, which we had brought for the purpose, at the bottom of the groundsheet. This saved valuable time, which would have had to have been spent cleaning our muddy boots³. Actually our hurry was unnecessary because, although at 9 AM we were called down to the parade ground, we were not inspected until 9.40 and had plenty of time to put the finishing touches to the tent and kitchen. We were told of the first stunt of the day while on the parade ground, and it was a tricky one – the building of a coracle - not a raft but a true coracle, for the completion of which we were given all day. Once it was ready, we were to tell the examiner who would come to the swimming pool to watch the launching.

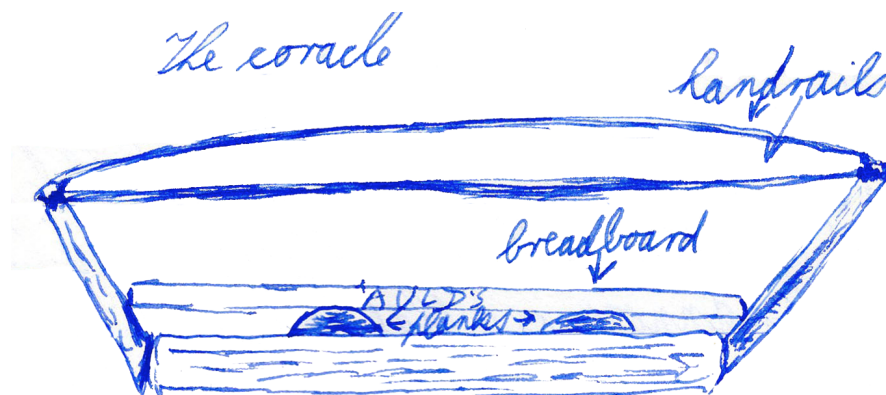
Soon after we were inspected, we were called for a Scouts Own⁴ in the little wooden erection used as a church at Everton⁵. Mr Alexander, the examiner, took the service.

Given no more time for coracle building, after changing back into normal camp dress, we were again summoned to the parade ground for the second of the day's series of stunts. We were told to build a flagpole three staffs⁶ high, using Scout lashings⁷ and to erect it stably with guys. We accomplished this fairly satisfactorily, sheer lashing the staffs together, and were the only patrol with a hoist for the flag. The examiner then announced that he hadn't seen many gadgets⁸ at inspection and that he wanted four per patrol on the parade ground in 20 minutes. This entailed some hard work, but we managed to produce a dixie rack, a plate rack, a shoe rack and a basin stand. Meanwhile, we managed to get some work done on the coracle and also started cooking lunch so that we would have lunchtime free from the interruption of the examiner's bell for coracle building. We were all called to attend the launching of the first one or two coracles, which were all miserable failures. The 1st Gourock's⁹ looked as if it was going to be successful, although it was not a true coracle, merely an upturned table, but as soon as their sailor

stepped in, water started flowing in over the sides and, despite his frantic efforts to bale it dry, it slowly disappeared from view and sank gracefully, to the amusement of all, except the 1st Gourrock.

For the next stunt, we were told to build a sundial. We pointed a staff north, set it to an angle in the ground for our latitude and marked off times round it on the ground. Unfortunately, we put the 6 A.M. and the 6 P.M. on wrong sides, but, after the examiner had been round, we realized our mistake, changed the lettering to what it should have been and called him back to point out the correction of the mistake. By this time, we had reached lunchtime, and, as our lunch, mince, potatoes and jelly with peaches was ready, we were able to get off to a good start.

Lunch finished, we proceeded with the building of our coracle. We built it by laying a large log to act as a keel and nailing smaller logs onto each end. We then put handrails between the smaller logs, nailed a breadboard between them and fitted stabilisers, a plank sawn in two between the breadboard and the keel. It is illustrated opposite. We then filled it with capes¹⁰, but when, later in the day, we launched it, it sank when David White, our sailor, stepped aboard. However, when the Scouters arrived (Al¹¹, Oz¹² and Skipper¹³) to collect us and watch the presentation, they gave us permission to use the groundsheet and with this over the bottom of the craft and up the sides, it was very easy for David to make the stipulated two crossings completely dry. Actually, it was so seaworthy that both Skipper and Oz, at the one time, were able to make two complete circuits of the pool¹⁴ dry.




After lunch, and before the launching of our coracle, were another series of stunts. We were given six envelopes with Mr Alexander's name and address on each in a different hand and from the envelopes we were to state the sex, the age and the occupation of the writer. This was largely a case where guesswork took over, but we were not told the results, so we do not know whether our guesses were accurate or not.

The P.L. was then called away from the patrols to do senior work with the aid of one member from the patrol, leaving the second in charge of the rest of the patrol. We, the patrol leaders, had each to make a strip map of the perimeter of the site with all compass bearings at corners noted down. We then had to put a piece of paper below the map, put a pin in at the first point, turn our strip map until it pointed in the direction of the first compass bearing, put the pin in at the second

point, turn the strip map in the direction of the second bearing, put the pin in at the third point and so on until on the piece of paper below the map we had a circle of pinpricks which we had to connect up. This, of course, gave the map of the perimeter of Everton. In practice, the pinpricks never do join, but the map, with the most nearly joining wins. The scale we used was 50 paces to the inch.

While I was accomplishing this task, the patrol, led by Mowgli¹⁵, had to write their

names woodcraft style i.e.  boil water in a paper bag, identify some knots, and have one of their number walk a certain distance in exactly 1 minute. They were successful in everything except the walk in one minute, at which they came second. After this, came the successful second launching of the coracle already mentioned.

Time was now finished and the Shannon Cup Competition 1965 was drawing to a close. All that remained was to fell the tent, clear up the kitchen site, wash and change into F.S.U.¹⁶ This done, we took all our kit down to the parade ground and shortly afterwards Mr Alexander rang his bell and the patrols formed up in horseshoe formation to hear the result. We were delighted to hear him announce that 70th Renfrewshire had come in first with 5th Renfrewshire¹⁷ as runners-up. This is the first time we have won the Shannon Cup since 1956.

After dismissal, the Cup was filled with lemonade from Everton store at the expense of the Scouters, and everyone in the patrol had a drink. We then had a game of football with the plebs¹⁸ of Everton before loading the gear into Bob's van¹⁹ and ourselves into the van and Al's car. We stopped in Inverkip for more celebrations on the way home.

Weather Note: Saturday was a beautiful sunny day and on Sunday we had no rain although there was a bit of cloud about.

Report written by Robert Crawford (Troop Leader and Patrol Leader of the Fox Patrol)

Later comment from SM RK Millar

"An excellent log with a wealth of information which should prove very useful to future teams."

Editorial notes for 30th May 1965

1. *Brailing up the tent involved releasing the bottom of the two side walls from the securing pegs and then carrying out one of two possible operations. The first method involved rolling up each side wall and its associated sacking, then securing it using the ties that were present for that purpose. This looked very neat and allowed the inside of the tent to get well aired. However, this required the side walls and attached sacking to be dry. If these were damp, it was better to attach the guys at the bottom of the side walls to the side guys such that the walls and sacking could hang freely. This did not look so neat, but it was far more effective in allowing the side walls and sacking to dry out while still airing the tent.*

2. *The log book of the camp as prepared by Robert Morrison and David White has survived and can be viewed on the website.*

3. *A cunning strategy that was probably adopted based on experiences at a previous Shannon Cup Competition.*

4. *A Scouts Own was a religious service or meeting that was directed specifically to the Scouts and was organized and delivered by the Scouts and Scouters themselves.*

5. *This still exists at the lip of the old quarry in the heart of the campsite (as of 2022). However, it is not known if it was exactly the same as it is now.*

6. Scout staffs were made from ash wood about 5 to 6 feet long and had markings a foot apart. At the top of the staff, the last foot had markings representing inches. It is believed that 6 of the 12 inches making up a foot were marked, but this needs to be confirmed.
7. Lashings are fundamental to the skills of pioneering and were a test that counted towards the 2nd Class Badge. A square lashing involves using a piece of rope to tie two non-parallel wooden spars together, starting and finishing with a clove hitch. A diagonal lashing serves the same purpose, but is used to tie two wooden spars that cross each other but are not touching. The lashing starts off with a timber hitch which serves to pull the spars into contact. A sheer lashing is used to tie two parallel poles together (as in a flagpole).
8. Camp Gadgets normally had to be made out of natural materials using wood and sizar rope. Elastic bands also come in useful but were probably not used during the 1960s
9. The 1st Gourock was also called the 6th Renfrewshire (Colonel Darroch's Own). During the 1960s, it was affiliated to Ashton Church. Later, it as affiliated to Old Gourock and Ashton Church following the amalgamation of the two congregations and the demolition of Ashton Church.
10. There was very little in way of specialist outdoor clothing during the 1960s. The most effective waterproof at the time was the bicycle cape – a form of poncho. The bicycle cape had advantages over oilskins. Neither garment could 'breathe' like modern Goretex, but one was far less likely to get soaked by one's own sweat wearing the looser cape. In addition, the bicycle cape could be draped over the top of a rucsack to protect it from the rain.
11. ASM Alastair Cram
12. ASM Albert Runcie
13. Scout Master Bob Miller
14. The pool was built during the 1930s and was still being used during the 1960s. Nowadays, it lies empty. Apparently, there are fears regarding insurance issues – a sign of current times.
15. Alex Aitkenhead, Second of the Seagull Patrol from June 1964
16. Full Scout Uniform.
17. The 5th Renfrewshire was the first Scout Troop to be formed in Greenock and started up in 1908. They were sometimes called the Dandy 5th. They
18. It is not clear who the 'plebs of Everton' were
19. The van probably belonged to Bob's father who was a flesher (butcher).

Additional Extract from the Greenock Telegraph

