

Project: Scouting through the Decades: A Century of Adventure Respondent: Aileen Thomson Year of Birth: 1955 Age: 70 Connection to the project: District Commissioner (now known as District Team Leader) Date of Interview: 1 March 2025 Interviewer: Ben Scholes Recording Agreement: yes Information & Consent: yes Photographic Images: no Length of Interview: 19 minutes 46 seconds Location of Interview: Davidson's Mains Scout Hall Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics)		
Summary Time (from: mins/secs)	Time Coded Summary/ Transcript	Transcribed Extract (from-to: mins/secs)
0.33	Where were you born, and where did you grow up?	
	“Well, I was born in Glasgow until I was nine, and then I went to England, to Hexham in Northumberland and stayed there until I'd done my degree and came back to Scotland.”	0.33 – 0.42
0.46	Can you let me know what way you're involved with the 30th Craigmmond Scout Group and the years that this took place?	
	<p>“I was District Commissioner of Pentland and Almond Valley when they decided to dissolve Pentland and Almond Valley, so the two groups at this end of it, Kirkliston and Queensferry, then became attached to Inverleith.</p> <p>I took over after Diane Ross retired, so I had a very small district of five and then ended up with a district of eight.</p> <p>I've been in that role for three years, I think, when the Region decided to merge Inverleith and Haymarket into Craigmmond.</p> <p>The 30th had been part of Inverleith and then, obviously, with the merger, stayed in Craigmmond.</p> <p>I did that role for three years, and then I gave up. I agreed to do it to get the two districts merged, but I said I wasn't prepared to take it further because there were fifteen groups in the District – it was a massive job. “</p>	0.46 – 1.59
2.00	What was your role as District Commissioner/ District Team Leader?	
	<p>“ You are responsible for everything that goes on in the District. All the groups have Group Team Leaders. So, as District Team Leader, you are the line manager of the Group Team Leaders. And therefore, they're responsible, so you're responsible to ensure that there's proper training going on, there's proper safety going on...risk assessments and a decent program. And with it being a merger of two district districts, I had the problem, added problem, or added role of having to make sure these two groups and two districts merged and that all the groups got to know each other and did things. So, we had quite a lot of joint events to begin with.”</p>	2.00 – 3.11

3.11	Did you organise District Camps and similar events?	
	“I would be responsible for it. I didn't necessarily organise them because I would have a team to do that. I was obviously responsible for it and tended to be on the team but didn't necessarily take the lead. So yes.”	3.11 – 3.30
3.31 – 4.18	The Interviewer asked about how many troops were in Craigmmond District when it merged, and a brief discussion was given.	
4.20	Our Troop was originally known as the 30 th Midlothian, then the 30 th Inverleith and now the 30 th Craigmmond. Do you know why the Troop's name changed over the years?	
	“The 30th was part of Midlothian, as you've rightly said; don't ask me why, I have no idea. It's easier to draw it, but that won't come up on the tape. So Edinburgh city - the city of Edinburgh have their own ones, and all the groups round about, so it must be from about the Gorebridge/Bonnyrigg, that sort of area; all the ones round the outside were Midlothian. So, you were the furthest one - you were the furthest into the city, but you still fell into it. That's why you've got a hut. Because when Midlothian gave up, the groups that had been Midlothian and were going into Edinburgh were given money from the Midlothian District and/or the Councils to get the run.”	4.20 – 5.31
5.34	Can you tell us about some of the big events that took place at a District level?	
	“We did District Cub Camps, which was for all of the district Cubs, obviously at Bonally usually. We took part in the Area Centenary Camps - Millennium camp, which was run by Area out at Dalmeny Estate. So, at that point, Inverleith were still Inverleith, just, and they had a big contingent there. Because it was so big, it was hard to get a site to do things, so we had this, what we called - its working name was the Really Big Camp, we had it all planned, all organised, and we stuck by the name RBC because people liked it, so we carried on. Once the team had organised it and we were started to promote it, we had everyone signed up at Fordell, the only site big enough to take the whole District, and unfortunately, COVID came, and we didn't get to run it. It was to be the biggest camp ever held at Fordell, because we had over a thousand people signed up for it, and Fordell had ever only ever taken 750/800 people, so they were going to squeeze us in. Everything was planned; it was due for the first May holiday, and it just didn't happen. There is some talk to resurrect it at the moment, but I don't know whether it'll happen or not.”	5.44 – 7.25

7:42 – 8.34	The Interviewer then asked if the Respondent was involved in the organising of any community action at a District level, to which she said no, as it was just too big to do that. However, many individual Scout Groups did so with District backing, such as beach and park cleans, park runs, groups joining together to fundraise (such as Haymarket and Corstorphine, who worked together at the annual Corstorphine Fair), community plant sales, etc.	
8.35	Did you ever attend any of the camps that the 30 th Craigalmond were on?	
	“No, I didn't attend for the whole weekend. I endeavoured to make a visit. I tried to visit every camp that a group was running, but couldn't do it always; didn't always make it, but I did try. So yes, I visited, but I never stayed, I mean, I would stay at the District ones.”	8.46 – 9.06
9.06 -9.26	The Respondent then talks about District training weekends where the District Training Team would run residential training events for the leaders, of which she was a part.	
9.45	What do you think are the biggest benefits for Scouts to attend District events?	
	“A – just the size of them, just to see what it's like to have all these masses of young people working together and organising. To get to know other groups, to see the other groups - you know, because I mean this is a big group, you're self-sufficient, but there is small groups in the District as well who maybe only have one of each section, they need a lot of support from the District, so a District camp at that point is really good for them. And you learn new things because you know your leaders only know a certain amount, so if you go to another site, they'll know different things, so you do learn different things. Also, it's the usual number - you can then take on activities – because you could get Longcriag to come up with kayaking and things as part of the camp, which, as a section or a small group, you couldn't do. Being a small group, it's not an issue here, it never has been, but there is groups that do need that support.”	9.54 – 10.55
11.05 - 12.14	The interview then moves on to talk about the National Scout Jamborees, to which usually someone from the 30 th Craigalmond attends. The Respondent talks about attending the Millennium Jamboree that took place in Cheltenham, where Scouting started. She was part of the water activities team at that event. The District section that attended that Jamboree felt a little left out as most Jamborees take place abroad, so to rectify this, the section had their training camps abroad instead.	

12.15 – 14.44	<p>The Respondent is then asked if she has ever been abroad on any District events, to which she says she hasn't as District Leader, but has been abroad with groups. The Interviewer asks her to share her most memorable experience, and the Respondent talks about going with the 21st South Queensferry group to Kenya. While there, they were involved in helping build a new church, visited schools and climbed Mount Kenya, where at the top she presented two Scouts with their Queen's Scout Award.</p> <p>Some discussion is then given about what the Queen's Scout Award (now the King's Scout Award) entails and how it is the top award you can get in Scouts and can be taken up until the age of 25. The conversation then moves on to how the group was able to fundraise for such an event.</p>	
14.48	<p>Do you think Scouting has benefited your life or your personal growth, or your skills?</p>	
	<p>"All of these things. Yeah. Massively.</p> <p>Girls couldn't be in Scouts when I was the appropriate age, so I became a Scout Leader when I was 23.</p> <p>A Venture Scout Leader – Venture Scouts did exist then - Venture Scout Leader when I was 23.</p> <p>I went to visit my cousin for dinner, and in those days, you had to have both a male and a female leader, and their female leader was about to leave. And I had been a Guider...helped with Guides while I was at Uni and he conned me to come and see what it was like...and the rest is history... I'm still here.</p> <p>And I met my husband through Scouting, and most of my friends, if not still involved in Scouting, have been involved in Scouting.</p> <p>It happened just after I came to Edinburgh.</p> <p>I came here, I'd been in Dundee, I came here for a job with work, and so it was a way of getting friends, meeting people."</p>	14.50 – 15.58
16.02	<p>What are your thoughts on current Scouting, and do you think you'd change it in any way from how it was in the past?</p>	
	<p>"We can't really compare, I mean, it's over 40 years ago when I joined Scouting. The world was a different place; you can't really compare it. I think what they are doing now we're maybe a bit over safety conscious. I don't think we should be unsafe but i think we maybe be tie people down too much and I think it puts some people off.</p> <p>The training is much bigger, heavier. I mean, we did train, don't get me wrong we did training then back in these days as well.</p> <p>But I think the training is a bigger commitment now. In the past again there's only one level that was compulsory that you had, now there's a lot more of it today. Although, it's gone back again - there's less modules that we have to take."</p>	16.12 – 17.02
17.02 – 17.20	<p>Some discussion is then given to the training modules that leaders are currently required to take.</p>	
17.25	<p>Did any of your family members attend Scouting or recommend Scouting to you?</p>	
	<p>"My cousin recommended Scouting - to get into it. Since then, then, as I said I met my husband there, we have come up through [Scouts] We have three daughters, and all of them have been Scout leaders in various sections all the way through and one of them still is and the other one would love to be but she hasn't got the time. So yeah."</p>	17.28 – 17.54

17.55	Do you have any other thoughts or memories you want to share about Scouting?	
	<p>“I think it's an amazing organisation for young people, I think it's wonderful, as any leader actually will tell you, to watch a young person come in at and, well, I suppose Squirrels...there wasn't even Beavers when I started Scouting! When they come in at Cubs and watch them grow up and change and become confident young people.</p> <p>And I think that what they learned lasts them for life, things that you learn in Scouts. I mean, as a leader, as a District Leader, often with the recruitment cap on, I mean, the number of people that come back and say I want to give back because of what I got out of Scouting as a young person, that to me is just sets the whole thing.</p> <p>And it's incredible what you learn and what you get out of it, and I would imagine 90% of young people don't even realise that this will benefit them in the future when it's done for them until they're an adult.</p> <p>I'm not degrading people of your age, it's just that's life, you don't realise what you've got until later.</p> <p>So yeah, I don't think you can fault it, I think, but there's always things that can be better, don't get me wrong, there is always things that can be improved.</p> <p>But I think you're hard pushed to get an organisation that can involve so readily many different orientations, the inclusivity is amazing.”</p>	17.59 – 19.34
19.35	The Respondent was then informed that this was the end of the interview and thanked for her time and for sharing her memories with the project	
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