

Project: Scouting through the Decades: A Century of Adventure Respondent: Eleanor Lennen Year of Birth: 1968 Connection to the project: Beaver Leader 2000s/2010s Date of Interview: 11 February 2025 Interviewer: Caroline Richardson Recording Agreement: yes Information & Consent: yes Photographic Images: no Length of Interview: 34.50 Location of Interview: Davidson's Mains Scout Hall Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics)	
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Summary Time (from: mins/secs)	Time Coded Summary/ Transcript	Transcribed Extract (from- to: mins/secs)
0.00 – 0.51	The Interviewer welcomes the Respondent to the project and begins by asking about where she was born and raised. She responds that she was born in Edinburgh and, after travelling for some time, eventually returned to settle in Silverknowes/Davidson's Mains as an adult. The Interviewer then proceeds to ask how she became involved with the 30th Craigmmond Scout Group.	
	<p>“So, I saw a poster, I think it was up, I don't know if it was in Tesco or somewhere, saying Beavers are going to close and we need a new leader. So, I phoned up a lady called Lisa Coburn, who ran the unit at the time, and said ‘oh, I'll do It’. I think she's a bit surprised because I think they thought they were going to close. So, I met with her, and another lady called Sue Russell - their children were both in Beavers at the time, I think possibly the older ones have been moving on to Cubs and maybe even Scouts, and so I think we met over a glass of wine and I just, we just had a chat, and I said OK I'll, I'll do that.”</p>	0.52 – 1.26
1.27 – 3.46	<p>She then explained that Beavers' meetings were held on Mondays and mentioned that she needed to find someone to help her run the sessions. She reached out to a friend named Katy, whom she had met through their children, who attended the same school.</p> <p>Katy agreed to get involved, and over time, they took on the responsibility of running the Beavers group together, with the understanding that her son would be able to join. This arrangement began around 2009, and she served as a Beaver leader for approximately four years.</p> <p>The Interviewer then asked if she could recall the names of any other Beaver Leaders from that period. She named Katy Bunn, Sue Russell, Lisa Coburn, Jill (whose surname she couldn't remember), and a helper named Debbie. She also mentioned Harriot Barton, who initially volunteered through the Duke of Edinburgh scheme and later as a Scout Young Leader. She described Harriot as an excellent help with the Beavers.</p> <p>The conversation then shifted to discussing why the Beavers were at risk of closing at that time.</p>	
	<p>“Basically, people wanted to move on or step down. So, I just thought that was a bit of a shame, and I thought, well, somebody's got to do it – so why not me.”</p>	3.46 – 3.55

4.12 – 5.01	<p>The Respondent was asked whether her motivation for joining the Beavers was primarily to secure a place for her son or if she had a genuine interest in the group. She responded that it was a combination of both. She explained that she likely would have been better suited to the Brownies, but her daughter was too young to join their group at the time.</p> <p>Wanting to engage in a community activity, she thought it would be a good idea to get involved with the Beavers.</p> <p>She also mentioned that although she didn't know many people at first, her current book group includes several members she met through her involvement with the 30th Craigmound Scout Group.</p> <p>The Respondent was then asked if she could recall any of the activities that typically took place during a Beaver evening.</p>	
	<p>"We came in and did a register, I think just to check everybody was here, there was always some games to run off their energy. What we used to do was we used to have planning nights, where we'd plan out the term and so then it might be seasonal, so obviously if it was near Halloween, we might have a Halloween party, we've done things like Mother's Day or whatever it was.</p> <p>We would then have some kind of activity – we'd invite people in to tell us about things – one I remember – I don't know if you know Miss Nikki at Waterfront Dance Studio? Don't know if you've got girls? But anyway, so Miss Nikki came along to do a dance night, like a ballet night for the boys, and they did a sort of pirate thing, and it was great, they actually really enjoyed it. So, we'd have some kind of activity.</p> <p>I'm trying to remember if we did anything formal? I don't think we did flag things, because the wee ones were a bit wee at that point. What did we do at the end? We had a Beaver of the Week. I'm sure we had a little Beaver toy, and then somebody got awarded Beaver of the Week, I think - that's kind of hazy, but it's coming back to me - I think there was something.</p> <p>So, it was usually structured, and again, Katie and I were teachers, so it was quite hard not to be structured [laughs] Yeah, so there was a kind of routine so that the boys knew were what they were doing."</p>	5.02 – 6.33
6.34 – 6.49	<p>The Interviewer inquired whether the Beavers had activities like uniform inspections or if the sessions were more relaxed.</p> <p>The Respondent replied that they didn't typically have formal inspections, but they might check how well the Beavers had arranged their neckerchiefs and take the opportunity to teach them how to wear them properly. She also provided a brief explanation of the Investiture Ceremony.</p>	
	<p>"We used to have Investitures, and that's when you got your necker given to you, and you had the woggle thing. I'm to think – did we have a particular colour? I think we introduced sets – would it be sets?</p> <p>Interviewer: Yes.</p> <p>Respondent: As I don't know if they still do that now? I think we got little badges so that they we be in the foxes or the badgers or whatever it would be."</p>	6.50 – 7.13
7.19 – 8.26	<p>She was then asked how the Beavers addressed their leaders. She responded that they used informal first names.</p> <p>She also mentioned that, regarding behaviour, they had established a Code of Conduct. This was introduced after some children exhibited rude, unsafe, and unruly behaviour, which prompted the leaders to email parents to address</p>	

	<p>concerns and emphasise that such conduct was unacceptable, especially considering the volunteers' role.</p> <p>In response, the Beavers themselves collaborated to create a Code of Conduct outlining expected behaviour. They all agreed upon it and signed it.</p> <p>The Interviewer then asked how the meetings were planned and whether the leaders took turns in running the sessions.</p>	
	<p>"Yeah, when we sat and planned on a different night, we would work out 'right - I'll do that one if you do that one' and 'let's see if we can get so and so in to talk about whatever it is'. Or we would do maybe a night in the park in the dark, and we'll get somebody else to lead that, or sometimes the Scout leaders would come along, and occasionally there would be joint ventures with the Cubs or the Scouts. Yeah."</p>	8.29 – 8.52
8.53 – 9.43	<p>The Respondent was then asked if there was only one Beaver meeting per week at that time. She confirmed that there was, with about twenty Beavers attending. She mentioned that it was quite challenging to find enough leaders for a single group, so she was surprised and pleased to see that the current group now had sessions on two nights.</p> <p>She was also asked whether the group was boys only at that time. She replied that it was, and she remarked that it seemed somewhat unfair now, as girls could attend Beavers while boys couldn't join Brownies. The Interviewer then inquired about any joint activities or collaborations with the Cubs or Scouts.</p>	
	<p>"We'd have a big trip to Fordell Firs, and the Beavers would be a day visit, and I think the Cubs – did they camp? I think they probably did, and obviously, the Scouts camped in the big smelly tents.</p> <p>Interviewer: The Beavers weren't staying overnight at that point.</p> <p>Respondent: No, I don't know if it was maybe caution on my part or Katy's part, we just felt that anecdotally from our own children they wouldn't particularly like to sleepover in their friend's house. It was a massive responsibility to take a group with six year olds to stay overnight somewhere. And then all the issues, I just look at it from a teaching point of view of I would never take primary twos to a school camp with things like pullups and on medication, and it was just a big ask, so no. It was an all-day thing; we'd take them out for the day, and then their parents would pick them up in the early evening and then go home."</p>	9.45 – 10.42
10.43 – 12.32	<p>She was asked whether the different sections worked well together. The Respondent explained that they did, noting that the Cubs were primarily run by local mothers.</p> <p>When asked if the group at that time was predominantly led by female leaders, she clarified that only the Scouts had male leaders, with Dylan being heavily involved during that period.</p> <p>She also spoke about Dylan, Ed Mackay, and his twin sons, who gave an excellent presentation about their journey to achieve the Chief Scout Award, including all the travels and experiences they undertook.</p> <p>She was then asked whether she had moved up to Cubs when her son did. She explained that she chose to remain at Beavers, thinking her son might have found it somewhat 'cringey' if she had become a Cub leader. Ultimately, he stayed with the group until he reached Scouts.</p> <p>The conversation then shifted to whether she recalled anything about the Beavers working towards badges and any tasks she had to undertake to support this.</p>	

	<p>“I remember having to do an all-day Saturday course in here and I can't remember a great deal of what it was I had to do and I think there might have been online stuff that I had to complete on notebooks, but that's kind of vague, I've probably blanked that out. We always in our planning used to aim to do a few badges per term and again, we weren't really strict. It wasn't like, oh, it's school, you've got to pass the test, and then we would do that as part of our activities. I can't remember off the top of my head what they were, but we always made sure that they did two or three badges and then obviously they have the choice if they want to do something else. But the stage, nobody was desperate to do 'blah'. So, we did it as a group, and then as I said, I would go down to Tom Woof's house and say right, we need about 16 of these and we just used to keep little notes, obviously, if the children are off through illness or whatever, they didn't get the badge because they weren't there. So we always made sure there was a bit of a focus as well as just having fun and games.”</p>	12.33 – 13.36
13.37 – 14.17	<p>The Interviewer asked if the programme and badges were varied, to which she said, it was usually rolling over a couple of years to make sure the boys didn't repeat badges. She was then asked if she could share a memorable trip or outdoor activity she had with the Beavers.</p>	
	<p>“Probably the one that sticks out the most would be the ones to Fordell Firs because, maybe it's to do with the rose-coloured glasses, it was a sunny day, and it was fantastic, and it was a big site and it was exciting, and there was really great activities. I think I remember the children could climb on crates and then eventually go up high on a rope – it was all very much 'wow this is really exciting!' We just gave them quite a lot of freedom and there was trees to climb, and everyone came together later on to have a campfire and singing some songs and that was exciting. Then we'd say cheerio to the Beavers, and then Katie and I would often stay, particularly when our boys were in the Cubs as well. We would then stay and just help with the Cubs at night and make sure they were all fine in their tents and whatever. So yeah, it was exciting and there was beautiful weather.”</p>	14.18 – 15.06
15.07 – 18.57	<p>The Respondent then shared a story about her son returning from a Cub camp, noting that he had worn the same clothes all weekend and that his bag smelled of wet tent. On the journey home, the group had stopped at McDonald's, and after eating ten McNuggets, he had been sick, highlighting the two sides of camping. When asked whether the Beavers interacted much with the Cubs and Scouts during camp, she admitted she couldn't recall clearly. She thought that the older groups, like the Scouts, likely engaged in more age-appropriate activities away from the Beavers.</p> <p>Regarding travel arrangements for camp, she explained that it was usually the parents who organised transportation. She recalled that on some occasions, when attending the Gang Show, she helped transport some of the Beavers in her car, as it was sometimes difficult to find suitable drop-off points for parents.</p> <p>The Interviewer then asked if the Beavers enjoyed attending the Gang Show. She responded that they were excited about going into town, visiting the theatre, and having the ice cream that was ordered at the interval. However, she noted that the show was often too long for their attention spans, and many of the jokes and skits went over their heads. She recalled that her son, as a Cub, auditioned and was selected to be in the Gang Show, along with another boy from the group who later withdrew due to sporting commitments. She said her son found the experience interesting, though he wasn't particularly a singer or dancer.</p> <p>Finally, she was asked if she remembered taking part in any community events while she was a leader with the Beavers.</p>	

	<p>“Oh yeah, we would obviously go to the Remembrance, that was the big thing. We would go up and meet up by the park and the whole lot of the 30th Craigmound would meet, and then we walked down with, I still think there would have been veterans by that point.</p> <p>We would do the March down to the memorial and then there would be a rotating group of ministers that would do the short service, so we did that. We obviously helped out a lot at the Gala Day, so we'd be in the procession starting at the Green and then we'd make the kind of like ‘the passage of honour’ or whatever for the Gala Queen and everything to walk down, and then obviously we all, as leaders, we all did the duties - so the Scouts always did the tea and coffee tent. One very, very miserable, horrendous weather year, me and Graham Sanderson, I don't know if you know, Tracy and Graham Sanderson were very heavily involved as well, so they've moved away now - they live in Morningside or somewhere. So Graham and I were on the pony rides, and it was an absolute washout. We're so soaking. But yeah, we've done a lot. I used to love doing the teas and coffees, it was full on busy. So that was another one. I'm trying to think, should we get involved in anything else? Not that I can remember, but we probably did.”</p>	18.58 – 20.17
20.18 – 21.37	<p>The conversation then shifted to the other leaders with whom the Respondent remains in contact, some of whom are members of a book group she attends. She mentioned that she is friends with several of the other leaders.</p> <p>The Interviewer then asked if she could recall any of the games the Beavers played during her time there, and whether she had any favourites.</p>	
	<p>“There was all sorts of dodgeball, I think that was probably a big one, they used to love that, and the walls used to get absolutely battered, and what else that they used to play? Various types of Tig. There was probably other ones they wanted to play, but I mean, the halls quite small and they were quite lively. Hmm, we did sort of teams, I think they used to enjoy where there could be a winner and anything fast and furious, yeah, I think they preferred action rather than kind of sitting around.”</p>	21.38 – 22.15
22.16 – 28.05	<p>The Respondent was then asked whether she knew if many of the Beavers attended as part of friendship groups. She explained that, in those days, children could only join Beavers if their names were on a waiting list, which they could be put on at age five. She noted that those who were "in the know," often with older siblings, were more likely to secure a place. She felt that, at the time, it was more about parents wanting to get their children into Beavers rather than the children actively choosing to join. Many of the boys attended with friends, as most had been in the same classes at Davidson's Mains Primary School, and obtaining a place on the waiting list required some insider knowledge.</p> <p>The conversation then moved to whether she could recall any specific projects or events that had an impact on the local community. She couldn't remember any particular initiatives but did mention that the Group's 90th anniversary was a significant occasion.</p> <p>Returning to camping experiences, she was asked if she remembered the type of accommodation used when attending camp. Since Beavers at that time did not stay overnight, she couldn't speak from personal experience. However, she recalled that her son, when he was a Cub, stayed in a tent during camp. She was asked if her son enjoyed camps, and she responded that he thought it was ‘okay’ —noting he wasn't particularly outdoorsy.</p> <p>The Interviewer then inquired whether her daughter ever attended Beavers. She explained that, at that time, spaces were not open to girls, so her daughter joined Brownies instead. She added that the only girls in the troop at that time were two young female leaders, Harriot Barton and Hannah Leslie.</p>	

	<p>She also mentioned that her daughter was jealous of her brothers' involvement in Beavers as Brownies but did not participate in camping at that time.</p> <p>She went on to say that girls were allowed to join Scouts by the time her son moved up, though he found the Girl Scouts somewhat 'irritating,' which she believed was more due to personality clashes rather than because they were female. Finally, she was asked about the increasing diversity within the Scout movement and how it was evolving to include more girls and different backgrounds.</p>	
	<p>"I have mixed feelings because I think it's really nice for boys to have their own space as much as girls get to have theirs, because the girls are kind of getting to have their cake and eat it too, so they can have the single sex Brownies and Guides Movement, and sometimes I think what have boys got that's for them?</p> <p>I also do see that the integration is, is really quite a positive thing too, that you bring them together and see we have actually got common interest and that you can then start challenging stereotypes and all kinds of issues that are going forward into teenage years with, you know, misogyny and sexism and everything else."</p>	28.06 – 28.40
28.41 – 30.50	<p>The Interviewer then asked if she had ever attended any jamborees or international camps. She replied that she hadn't had the opportunity to do so.</p> <p>They then discussed whether she felt her involvement with the group gave her a sense of accomplishment. She responded that, perhaps, if she hadn't volunteered, the Beavers might have had to close. She added that volunteering is fundamentally about what you can do for others, rather than for yourself. As a teacher working with children all day, she considered volunteering a bit of a 'busman's holiday,' but in hindsight, she believed it was the right thing to do. She was then asked if the group still faced difficulties recruiting leaders when she stepped down. She confirmed that it did; however, when she left, they managed to persuade an assistant leader to step up, and she became the Committee Secretary to continue helping out without committing to weekly meetings.</p> <p>Finally, she was asked whether being a Beaver Leader had impacted her personal life or growth. She said it didn't really, though upon reflection, she recognised that she had made many connections and friendships through her involvement with the group. The conversation then moved on to her thoughts on current Scouting and whether she would recommend it to others.</p>	
	<p>"I mean, I still follow them on Facebook, and it seems a much more 'Scouty' group and people that, I don't know what their personal circumstances are, but they're prepared to give up their whole weekends to take kids away. And that's like, I think that's a massive ask because I personally probably wouldn't have been prepared to do that because that's kind of my time. So, it seems to be, or it looks like it's really healthy. I'm amazed you've got squirrels. It looks like it's very strong and very healthy - and would I recommend it? Yeah, it's an alternative - it's not football, it's not dancing, it seems to be quite outdoorsy, and I don't know, wholesome perhaps, and I mean, I can't speak from experience of what the group's like now. I don't know if there's camaraderie, I don't know whether it's all a bit cliquy and if you're not in there... So maybe, I don't know. But it appears, it looks as though it's a really positive place to be."</p>	30.50 – 31.50
31.51 -34.50	<p>She was then asked if she had any final thoughts or memories to share. She responded that, during her time volunteering, she noticed that some parents did not fully appreciate that leaders were volunteers and often hesitated to offer help when asked, perhaps not realising that many leaders also worked. She expressed hope that there is now greater awareness and less criticism of those who dedicate their time to running the group.</p> <p>The conversation then shifted to observations about current volunteering trends. She remarked that today, there appears to be significantly more men involved in volunteering within the group compared to her day, when leadership was</p>	

predominantly female— except in the Scouts. She found this shift very noticeable and was curious about the reasons behind it.

Finally, she spoke about her role as a secretary, which she took on because no one else had volunteered for the position. She mentioned that she served in this capacity for approximately two years. The interview concluded with the Interviewer thanking her for her time and for sharing her memories and insights with the project.

