

Project: Scouting through the Decades: A Century of Adventure
 Respondent: Ian Davidson
 Year of Birth: 1955
 Age: 70
 Connection to the project: Cub & Scout 1960s
 Date of Interview: 12 February 2025
 Interviewer: Gillian Alexander
 Recording Agreement: yes
 Information & Consent: yes
 Photographic Images: no
 Length of Interview: 42.41
 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)
0.00 – 2.05	<p>The Respondent was introduced and thanked for attending the interview.</p> <p>He was asked about his place of birth and where he grew up. He explained that he was born in Edinburgh but moved to Newcastle at around five years of age, he later returned to Edinburgh in approximately 1963, where his family settled in Silverknowes the following year. He noted that housing was still being built in the area at that time.</p> <p>Around this period, a neighbour whose son was a member of the local Cub Scouts asked if he would be interested in attending meetings, which marked the beginning of his involvement with the Troop. He recalled that there were two Cub packs at the time, one meeting on Mondays and the other on Wednesdays. He attended the 30th 'A' Midlothian pack, which met on Monday evenings.</p> <p>He was asked where the meetings took place, and he explained that they were held in the old Scout Hall on Main Street in Davidson's Mains, located opposite the chip shop, which he described as "very convenient." He was then asked what he recalled about the old Scout Hall.</p>	
	<p>"Well, it was an old cottage really, but inside, gosh, I mean in this day and age, it was a health and safety nightmare. It was rickety, there was an attic with rickety stairs and of course, stuff all over the place. It had a nice big hall; everything was made of wood and stone and things like that – it was brilliant fun, and they had a garden out the back, which backed onto the Green where sometimes they had bonfires in and things like that.</p>	2.05 – 2.41
2.43 – 4.11	<p>The Respondent was asked whether he recalled any other groups using the hall at that time, and he stated that it was used only by the Cubs and Scouts.</p> <p>He confirmed that he was a Cub Scout for approximately three years, from around 1964 to 1967, before progressing to the Scout Troop, which was also based in the same hall.</p> <p>The discussion then moved on to what he remembered typically taking place on a Cub or Scout meeting night.</p>	
	<p>"Well, we had, when you went in, we had, you know, a parade to start with, with the flag going up at the front of the hall. Everybody would have lined up in their</p>	4.11 – 5.01

	<p>Sixes and so forth round the edges of the hall; we did that. I think we did the Cub Motto or whatever it was at the time, I forget what it was now. And a typical evening, you had activities, you know, like learning for badges – so if you’re doing your First Aid badge or any of that sort of stuff, you’d spend some time on doing that. And then later on we’d have games, you know, like riotous things such as <i>British Bulldogs</i> and all that sort of stuff we used to do.”</p>	
5.02 – 7.16	<p>The conversation then turned to the leaders who ran the sessions. The Respondent stated that they were all referred to by names taken from <i>The Jungle Book</i>, with leaders adopting names such as ‘Shere Khan,’ ‘Akala,’ and ‘Baloo,’ which were used to address them during meetings. He did not believe he knew their real names. When asked whether the leaders were predominantly male, he said that he did not recall any female leaders in either the Cubs or the Scouts during that period.</p> <p>He went on to recall that, upon moving up to the Scout Troop, there was a noticeable mix of ages and observed a significant difference between the younger members, aged around ten or eleven, and those in their early teens, noting that the older Scouts seemed almost like adults at the time. He himself remained with the Scout Troop until approximately the age of twelve.</p> <p>The conversation then returned to typical meeting nights, and he was asked whether he recalled any traditions or ceremonies that took place while he was a member.</p>	
	<p>“I don’t especially remember each meeting; I mean, of course, the flag went up, and it came down at the end of the meeting. When you went up to the Scouts, they made a formal thing of that – transitioning, as it were. You had this big thick bit of rope that they spread out across the width of the hall, so people who had reached that age and were going up to the Scouts – you’re leaving the Cubs and going up to the Scouts – they had a little ceremony then and you sort of crossed over that rope to the other half of the hall and that’s you leaving the Cubs and going in to the Scouts. You didn’t go to the Cubs the next week; you went to the Scouts.</p> <p>Interviewer: Were all the Scouts there when you were in your ceremony? Were your Cubs there?</p> <p>Respondent: Cubs, I think, it was just the Cubs, yeah. Just at a regular Cub meeting.”</p>	7.16 – 8.02
8.03 – 8.42	<p>The Respondent was asked whether he recalled anything about inspections or being placed in particular groups during meetings. He indicated that he had a vague recollection of this but was unable to remember any specific details.</p> <p>The interview then moved on to discussing badges and whether he recalled working towards achieving them.</p>	
	<p>“Yeah, yeah. I mean if you’re going for a badge, you know like the First Aid badge which I’ve got here, then part of the evening was working towards your badge, so like learning to put a sling on or whatever it happened to be – unroll a bandage and that sort of stuff so part of the evening was always spent doing that sort of thing before you got on to the fun bit.</p> <p>Interviewer: You’ve brought in a lovely selection of badges. Do you remember working towards any particular badge, and did you have a choice in what badge you did?”</p>	8.43 – 9.16

9.17 – 11.00	<p>The Respondent did not recall specific details but had brought with him an official Scout Badge record card, which listed several badges. He noted, however, that in terms of proficiency badges, only the First Aid badge was recorded. He recalled that such badges would typically be worked on during group meetings. He was then asked whether he remembered feeling proud when he achieved a badge. He responded that there was a competitive element within the group, and that some boys were keen to obtain as many badges as possible.</p> <p>The conversation then moved on to whether he remembered anything about his sixer or patrol. The Interviewer noted that the belt the Respondent had brought with him bore the name “Falcons.”</p>	
	<p>“Yeah, in the Scouts – they seemed to be named after birds, so I was in the Falcons, think I was also in the Seagulls for some time, I think I also might have been in the Woodpigeons – Woodpigs as they were called, of course – so they seemed to be named after birds. And in the Cubs, I think they were colours, I think I was in the Tawny patrol or something like that.</p>	11.01 – 11.29
11.30 – 11.54	<p>The Interviewer then asked whether there was any rivalry between the different groups in Scouts or Cubs, and whether the boys felt a sense of pride in their own Six or Patrol.</p>	
	<p>“You know, kids being kids – you know you liked to be in the best one, don’t you – some of the patrols were stronger than others, so they had good people in them who always did well or always won or something like that and others, you know, less good that you didn’t want to be in [laughs]</p> <p>Interviewer: Did you get the opportunity to be a Second or Patrol Leader?</p> <p>Respondent: In the Cubs, I was a Sixer – a Second then a Sixer in the patrol. In the Scouts, I think I was a Second, I don’t remember, but don’t think I was ever a Patrol Leader – I may be wrong.”</p>	11.53 – 12.34
12.35 – 14.12	<p>He was then asked whether young people felt proud to have been given positions within the patrol. He responded that they did, as these roles also meant they were more involved in conversations with the Scout Leaders. He likened the positions to a form of “middle management,” in that they were able to receive and share information with the Troop about activities and related matters.</p> <p>He was asked whether Patrol Leaders had any say in how the Troop was run, and he stated that he could not specifically recall, but believed that they likely did, particularly within the Scouts.</p> <p>The conversation then moved on to the games played at Cub and Scout meetings, and whether any stood out in his memory as being particularly popular.</p>	
	<p>“I’d mentioned British Bulldogs because that was the type of thing that people played all the time, and that could be a bit lively. There was a game that involved throwing beanbags about – I don’t know what it was called now, but you know, of course, beanbags hurt, and they got thrown quite hard, so the kids liked to sling these things with as much effort as possible [laughs]</p> <p>Interviewer: Was there quite a lot of room in the old Scout Hall to maybe play ball games or games as a group?</p> <p>Respondent: Not as much room then as in this hall – it was smaller. There was a game we played – we had these logs, and they were round the edge of the hall, of course, and you had to go round the hall on the logs on the floor, all that sort of stuff, things like that.”</p>	14.14 – 15.10
15.11 – 15.21	<p>The Interviewer asked whether he felt that health and safety and risk-taking were given less consideration at the time than they are today, in response to which he</p>	

	went on to discuss the old Scout Hall as it was during his involvement with the 30 th .	
	“That hall would have been condemned, it was really...kids would not be allowed in it from what my memory of the place would be, I’m sure it wasn’t as bad as that, but it just seemed like a really ramshackle place with bits of wood, and God knows what all over the place.”	15.22 – 15.39
15.40 – 15.48	The Respondent was asked if the evenings always took place in the hall or if they ever went out into the wider community to do games or patrol work.	
	<p>“We went up to Corstorphine Woods, and we went down to the beach at Silverknowes, so we’d go down and have a bonfire and a Sausage Sizzle and stuff like that. Everyone would bring their own stuff – a potato to shove in the embers of the fire, so we went down to Silverknowes Beach quite a few times. We’d often go up to Corstorphine Woods, and you know, ran about up there, yeah.</p> <p>And we did a Church Parade at Easter, I think it was, and I saw one of the pictures out there that looked exactly like that at the old Scout Hall – we’d perform up there then march along Main Street up to the Church and then have the Church service, I think it was at Easter but I may be wrong, it could have been at some other time of the year.</p> <p>Interviewer: Was that Davidson’s Mains Parish Church?</p> <p>Respondent: Yes.”</p>	15.49 – 16.42
16.43 - 1808	<p>The conversation continued, and he was asked whether the service took place on a Sunday, to which he thought that it did. He was then asked whether such services were well attended by members of the local community, and he responded that they were, noting that church services were generally better attended at that time than they are today.</p> <p>He recalled walking along Main Street and seeing people standing on the pavements watching the Scouts march, and suggested that, in addition to the regular congregation, some members of the public may have attended the service because the Scouts were taking part.</p> <p>The Interviewer then asked whether, at that time, there was a formal link with the parish church or a religious element within the Troop, to which he said that he did not think so, as there was never a religious aspect to the regular evening meetings. He believed that the church parades took place solely as part of local Easter celebrations.</p> <p>The conversation then moved on to other forms of community engagement, and he was asked whether he could recall events such as the Gala Day parade or Remembrance Sunday.</p>	
	<p>“Remembrance Sunday – no, and there wasn’t a war memorial in Davidson’s Mains at that time, that was quite a recent thing – when I say recent, I mean it might have gone up in the eighties or the nineties, but there was not a war memorial in D. Mains at that time, surprisingly.</p> <p>The Gala – yes, but that was not done in conjunction with the Scouts because I was at D. Mains Primary, we used to go to the Gala from school, and they had the Gala...was it the Gala King and Queen?</p> <p>Interviewer: Yes.</p> <p>Respondent: They had that, and that was always from people chosen from the senior year at D. Mains.</p>	18.09 – 18.59

	<p>Interviewer: So, you don't remember at all going along with the Scout Group?</p> <p>Respondent: No, I don't remember that we always used to go to the Gala, but I don't ever remember going along as part of the Scouts."</p>	
18.59 – 21.31	<p>The Interviewer asked whether the majority of the Troop attended Davidson's Mains Primary School, or whether boys also came from other schools in the local area. He responded that he believed young people attended from other parts of the locality, including Cramond, Barnton, and possibly Clermiston, and did not think the Troop was made up exclusively of children from Davidson's Mains.</p> <p>He was then asked whether he attended meetings with a group of friends. He explained that, where he lived, there were three or four boys who were also in Cubs and Scouts, and they would all walk to the meetings together.</p> <p>The conversation then moved on to other activities that may have taken place outside the Scout Hall, excluding camps, such as hikes, football matches, or District events. He stated that he could not recall these taking place.</p> <p>The discussion then turned to leaders and whether he remembered any in particular. No names came to mind, although he thought that he might recognise individuals if shown photographs. He recalled an older man—although he acknowledged the man may only have been in his thirties but appeared older to him at the time—who wore the older-style leader's uniform, including shorts, but he was unable to remember his name.</p> <p>He was then asked what he could recall about the uniforms he wore as a Cub or Scout.</p>	
	<p>"Well, we had our green shirt, and I think we just wore shorts and we had a cap as well and a neckerchief - which I still do have somewhere, but I couldn't find it to bring it today – so that's what we wore for the Cubs – the green jersey that your badges and so on were sewn onto and a Cub cap and neckerchief.</p> <p>Interviewer: And did the caps stay on throughout the whole session?</p> <p>Respondent: No doubt flying all over the place [laughs]</p> <p>Interviewer: What about your Scout uniform? What are your memories of that?</p> <p>Respondent: Well, at that time, there was a transition between the old-style Baden Powell's Scout uniform and then introducing a new style Scout uniform, so it was a bit of a mix and match. So, when I went to the Scouts they were transitioning and you could order the new uniform through the Troop, so you had a new, instead of the old sort of khaki coloured shirt that you had, they had a green shirt and you had long trousers, which I think were grey instead of the shorts and you had a beret instead of the old style Yogi Bear cap – hat as it were. So, it was a bit of a mix and match going on until everybody transitioned to the new uniforms, which they were introducing.</p>	21.32 – 23.12
23.13 – 24.57	<p>The Interviewer then asked which uniform the Respondent preferred between the old and new styles. He stated that he had always wanted the old-style uniform, which was no longer available by the time he was involved in Scouts.</p> <p>He was then asked whether he recalled any Scouting equipment or accessories that he may have owned. He said that he had a sheath knife, which some Scouts wore on their belt, although he did not do so himself. He was unable to recall any other accessories that he took to meetings.</p>	

	<p>The conversation continued briefly regarding the fact that young people were permitted to bring knives to meetings at that time, a practice that would not take place in Scouting today. He explained that they were given training in the safe use of knives, as well as other tools, such as axes.</p> <p>The interview then moved on to discussing Scout camps, and he began to talk about his memories of these experiences.</p>	
	<p>“We did a camp with the Cubs, but we weren’t in tents, we were in some hall down in the Borders somewhere, I can’t remember where exactly, it was like an old stately home type thing, and so we went down there and they had rooms, so, we were down there for a weekend I presume, I can’t remember.</p> <p>Interviewer: Did it seem like that was the purpose that the Scout Group would come and use it?</p> <p>Respondent: Yes, it seemed like it – yes.</p> <p>Interviewer: Do you remember how you got there?</p> <p>Respondent: I think we had a bus that we went down in – that was for the Cubs, I think that’s what we did there.</p> <p>With the Scouts, we went camping and one time we went up to Dunkeld, and that was under canvas, so we were camping quite close to the shores of Loch Tay up there. So, they had like a furniture removal van that came, and all the tents and all the kit went into that, and some people went into the back of that van, which you wouldn’t be able to do now, but the rest went in a coach, I think and went up to Dunkeld.</p> <p>Interviewer: Would you supply everything that was there at that camp?</p> <p>Respondent: Yeah, they had to use 30’s old canvas tents with these big thick wooden poles, and you had to put everything – ropes, big ropes and wooden pegs and we had Primus stoves to cook on and all that sort of thing. There was no facilities there – it was just a complete setup of the whole camp.”</p>	24.58 – 26.34
26.35 – 27.40	<p>The Respondent was asked whether the Scouts put up their own tents or were supported to do so. He stated that they erected their own tents, with Scout Leaders on hand to assist if anyone was struggling. He was then asked whether they camped in patrols, which he believed they did.</p> <p>The conversation then moved on to camp cooking and whether the Scouts prepared their own food. He responded that they cooked their own meals in their tents and used fires for cooking, although they mostly relied on Primus stoves. He recalled finding these difficult to use, as they were hard to light, keep alight, and get hot enough to heat food properly.</p> <p>He was then asked whether he could recall any of the meals they ate.</p>	
	<p>“Pretty basic like boiled potatoes, corned beef, and you know, in the mornings you’d get porridge, from memory that sort of stuff, they’d make cocoa on them and things like that, yeah.”</p>	27.41 – 27.54
27.55 – 28.09	<p>The Interviewer asked how the Scouts managed washing and toileting at such a basic camp. He was unable to recall much about the washing facilities and wondered whether, given their proximity to Loch Tay, it may have been used for washing. He then went on to describe the arrangements for toileting.</p>	

	<p>“The toilet – you had a bucket with a canvas screen round it, and that’s what everybody used. They had a basin outside with disinfectant water in it, and you’d cover your hands with disinfectant, and at the end of camp or as required, of course, you’d have to empty that bucket – somebody would take it down, and that just went straight into the Tay.”</p>	28.10 – 28.35
28.36 – 28.49	<p>The Interviewer asked whether the Scouts had a structured programme of activities at camp or whether it was more relaxed. He explained that activities were organised and went on to describe one memory that stood out to him.</p>	
	<p>“One thing we did in the old Scout Hall – we made a couple of canoes with wood and canvas and stuff like that, so they went. So, people would take them out and on to the Loch – older people, I’d say and if you’re really skilled at it...I’m saying Dunkeld, but it wasn’t Dunkeld, it was Kenmore, that’s right, it wasn’t Dunkeld, it was Kenmore.</p> <p>So, if you know that part, there’s a small island not that far off the shore – so people would take the canoe and go round the island and back in and things like that if you were skilled.</p> <p>And on the Sunday, we marched to the church in Aberfeldy, which, I think, was six miles away, so we walked the six miles to the church service in Aberfeldy on the Sunday.”</p>	28.50 – 29.54
29.55 – 30.20	<p>The Interviewer asked whether this was a weekend camp or a longer stay, but he was unsure. He was then asked whether parents were allowed to visit or whether he had any contact with them while he was away, to which he responded that there was no contact.</p> <p>He was then asked about how evenings were spent at the camp.</p>	
	<p>“Well, they usually had things like they’d have a fire, then we’d have singsongs, storytelling, ghost stories, that type of thing round the campfire.</p> <p>Interviewer: Was everybody involved in those types of things?</p> <p>Respondent: The leaders would mostly tell stories and all that sort of stuff, and then we’d have a singsong, and everybody would obviously be involved in that.”</p>	30.21 – 30.45
30.46 – 32.17	<p>The Respondent was then asked whether he could recall any of the songs sung at camp, but was unable to remember any at that time and felt that they might come back to him later. He did, however, recall that the final song sung in the evening was “<i>Abide with Me</i>” and noted that whenever he hears this song now, it takes him back to the camp at Kenmore.</p> <p>He was asked whether the Scouts looked forward to camps, to which he responded that he believed they did, as camps were always good fun, involved plenty of activities, and provided an opportunity to camp with friends.</p> <p>He was then asked whether any other camps came to mind, but he was unable to recall any others at that time. He was subsequently asked whether he had ever attended any Scout Jamborees or international camps, to which he replied that he had not.</p> <p>The conversation then returned to the Scout camp at Kenmore.</p>	
	<p>“This guy came by, walking along the path and gave us a rabbit and said, ‘There’s a rabbit – you can cook that for your tea’ sort of thing. Of course, everyone’s looking at it, even in 1967 or something like that, you are thinking ‘What the hell am I going to do with this rabbit?’ Of course, we had a pretty fair crack at trying to get the skin off it, you know, peel it and whatever it is that you do, and then cook the rabbit, but it was just too difficult – it was really hard work!”</p>	32.18 – 32.46

32.46 – 33.26	<p>He was then asked whether, while at camp, any other Scout Troops were camping nearby or whether they ever interacted with other groups. He responded that they did not.</p> <p>The conversation then returned to regular meetings, and he was asked whether he could recall any community engagement during his time in the Cubs or Scouts, such as litter picks or Bob-a-Job.</p>	
	<p>“Oh yeah, we did Bob-a-Job, yeah, we did that.</p> <p>Interviewer: What are your memories of Bob-a-Job?</p> <p>Respondent: It was hard work because you know you are going round people’s doors and asking them if you can do something like wash their car or stuff like that, so see what you can get back at the end of it, but yeah, my memory was that a lot of people didn’t want to do it. You had these yellow stickers that you gave to people that they would stick on their window, so if you saw a sticker on the window, then they’d already been ‘attacked’ so you didn’t go in and accost them again. [laughs]</p>	33.27 – 34.05
34.05 – 37.16	<p>The Interviewer asked whether the boys were assigned specific houses or streets for Bob-a-Job, but he believed it was left to individuals to go around houses in their own neighbourhood that did not already display a yellow sticker and ask whether there were any jobs they could do. He recalled that most people were happy to offer work and did not remember anyone being annoyed by the approach, and noted that while some boys enjoyed Bob-a-Job Week, others did not. When asked whether it raised a significant amount of money, he was unsure of the exact success of the fundraising, although he presumed it was effective.</p> <p>The conversation then moved on to other fundraising activities, and he recalled that jumble sales took place in the old Scout Hall a couple of times each year.</p> <p>He was then asked whether he remembered the Scouts organising any other events, such as shows or plays that were open to the community. He did not recall any, although he acknowledged that such events may have taken place without his awareness. The community events that stood out most in his memory were the Gala, the Easter church parade, and the jumble sales.</p> <p>He was then asked about Scout outings to places such as museums, castles, or the theatre, including attending the Gang Show, but again he could not recall taking part in any such activities. He also did not remember any visitors coming to the Troop to run an evening, stating that the group seemed very self-sufficient, with leaders responsible for all activities and entertainment.</p> <p>He did recall that there may have been a Guy Fawkes or Bonfire Night event held in the back garden of the old Scout Hall and remembered people dressing up. He was then asked whether they celebrated any other events.</p>	
	<p>“There was Halloween. So, we had Halloween in the Scout Hall. I don’t remember it here, but certainly in the Old Hall, we had that. So you had treacle scones and dooked for apples and nuts in flour – truly disgusting, but anyway when you’re a kid you don’t bother so much about it, so you had these scones dipped in treacle and of course it’s all over your face cause they are hanging on a string across the hall and then you’ve got this plate of flour with nuts in it – so you’ve got treacle, then flour and then at the end of it you’ve got the water for the apples and things like that [laughs]</p>	37.17 – 38.18

	<p>Interviewer: And who's responsible for tidying up the hall? Was that the Scouts' responsibility, or was it up to the leaders?</p> <p>Respondent: Good question. I suppose we all joined in, but I don't remember. I suppose the leaders must have taken responsibility for certain things."</p>	
38.19 – 40.12	<p>The Respondent was then asked whether he recalled receiving any Chief Scout's Awards or the Queen's Scout Award, to which he responded that he did not. He did, however, speak about other members of the Troop who had gained such awards and would attend meetings well presented in their uniforms, displaying numerous badges. He was then asked whether other Scouts looked up to these boys, to which he said he could not really say.</p> <p>The conversation then moved on to whether there were any experiences during his time with the 30th that gave him a sense of accomplishment or achievement, which he went on to discuss.</p>	
	<p>"Well, you know, some of the things that you did, that you learned are things that are still with you, you know, for instance, reading a map and that sort of stuff. So I learned how to do that sort of thing there and I can still do that, so we got shown things like that and, as I said, the correct use of an axe, or misuse of whatever, you know learning that sort of thing, becoming familiar with that sort of thing and a lot of that stuff, if you stop and think about it, I did actually learn to do that in the Scouts."</p>	40.12 – 40.55
40.55 – 42.31	<p>He went on to say that Scouting was probably more basic in terms of what was taught during his time compared to today, but that everything he learned had stayed with him over the years.</p> <p>He was then asked whether he felt that Scouting made him more self-sufficient at a younger age, to which he responded that he believed it did and explained that Scouting helped him become comfortable mixing with others, working as part of a team, and learning important life skills.</p> <p>He was asked whether he continued to use any of the skills he learned in Scouting later in life, and he said that after leaving the Scouts, he continued to enjoy activities such as camping and kayaking over the years.</p> <p>He was then asked for his thoughts on modern Scouting, to which he stated that he did not know enough about it to comment in detail, but was pleased to hear that it was still ongoing. He said that he had enjoyed his time in the Scouts and was glad that he had taken part, and a brief discussion followed about family members who had been involved in Scouting.</p> <p>When asked whether he had any final thoughts or memories, he said that he felt he had covered many things he had long forgotten, which he found very interesting to revisit. He also expressed delight at returning to the Scout Hall and seeing how well it was doing.</p> <p>The Respondent was then thanked for giving his time to the project and for sharing his memories.</p>	

