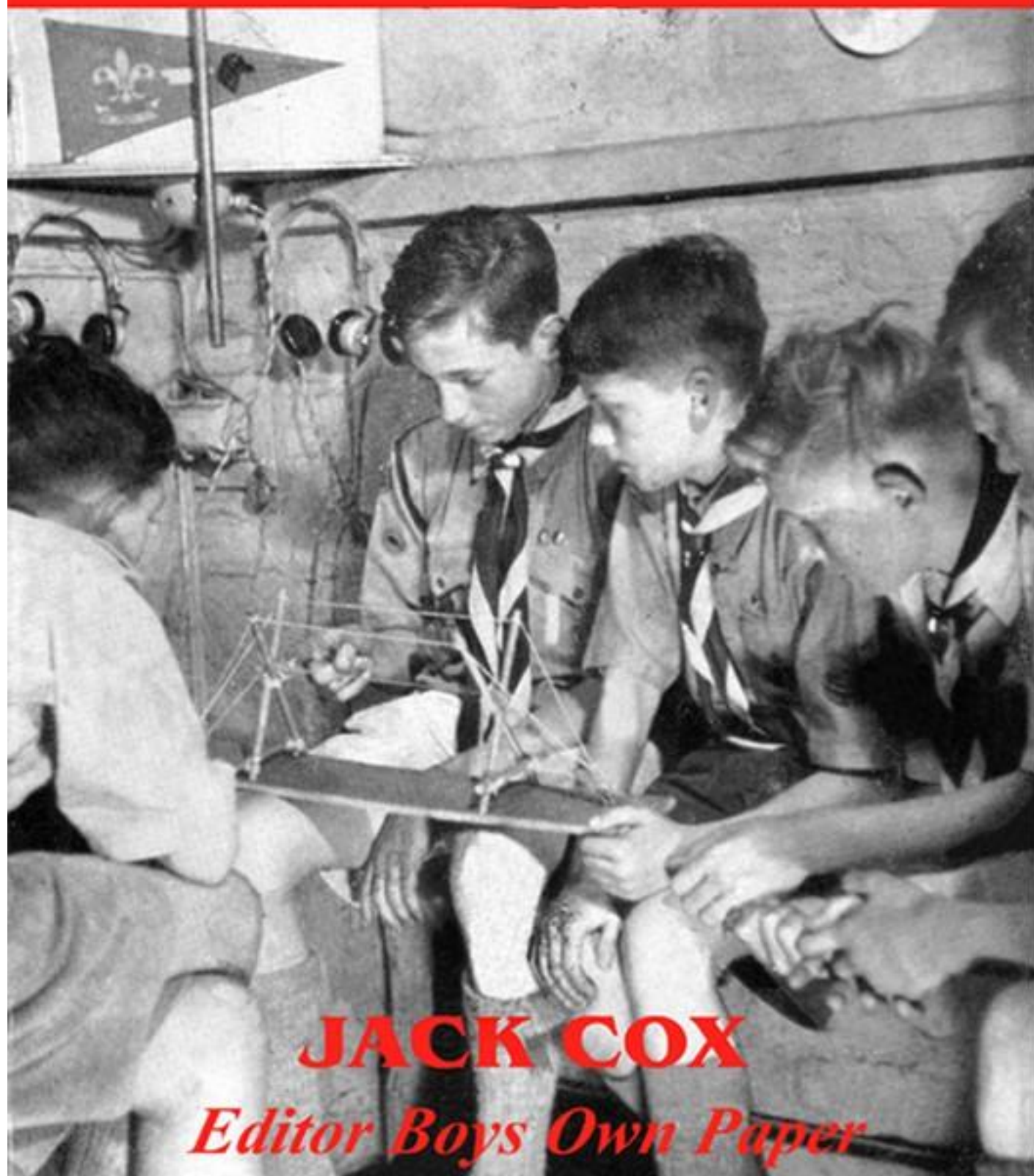


IDEAS FOR SCOUT TROOPS



JACK COX

Editor Boys Own Paper

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By
JACK COX

Editor of Boy`s Own Paper

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Editor's Note:

The reader is reminded that these texts have been written a long time ago. Consequently, they may use some terms or express sentiments which were current at the time, regardless of what we may think of them at the beginning of the 21st century. For reasons of historical accuracy they have been preserved in their original form.

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PREFACE

The aim of this little book is to help anyone whose job it is to run a Scout troop. The reader may be an adult leader with little experience of this worthwhile voluntary work of youth leadership. Or he may be a teen-age Senior Scout or Rover Scout who wants to run a troop. Scouting lore and knowledge and technique has to be picked up as a leader gets on with the job, and his most valuable asset is Lord Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys*. A Scouter or a prospective Scouter needs to be reading it constantly so that he gets his Scouting perspective right. He can also take a practical and valuable Wood Badge training course at the International Scout Training Centre at Gilwell Park or elsewhere.

This book does not aim at presenting new and original thoughts on Scouting technique. It does try to give one sound idea for every troop meeting of the year, based on a long personal experience of running Scout troops. The reader can pick and choose where he likes, discarding or improving or adapting as he thinks fit. No two troops are ever quite alike, and the art of adapting a particular idea to a particular troop may be a test of initiative for a keen and lively Scouter.

These ideas have been successful in ordinary troops. Some of them may be new to the reader. Others he will recognise in new garb. In Scouting we have to keep our ideas forever fresh, and the skill with which we can put over basic Scout training as visualised by the Founder is a measure of our success as leaders. My experience has been that leaders are always on the hunt for ideas and new ways of doing old, familiar things. Frequently programmes have to be made up in a hurry, or something may be wanted quickly. Under such circumstances this book may be found useful.

It is important to realise that Scout training is a continuous process and not something confined to one troop meeting a week throughout the year. In that sense training is not just a matter of putting over a few simple ideas from *Scouting for Boys* on fifty-two nights of the year. Such a presentation of Scout training would always be regarded as artificial by leaders of real experience.

But the fact remains that the majority of leaders are often stumped for a quick idea for a particular meeting. So many leaders, and especially inexperienced ones, have asked me for ideas for Scout troops that I have tried to set some down in this form. All of them come from my own notebooks, which I kept as a practical Scouter, and I have chosen those which have stood the test of time.

JACK COX

Wycliwood,
Wolsey Road,
Moor Park,
Hertfordshire.

Week 1

OCTOBER (i)

HELLO! Here we are at the start of a new Scout year. There's a crispness in the air; fires are being lit; football is getting into its stride. It's October, and the fall of the year. We've already decided this is going to be the best year in the history of the old troop; best in every possible way—for programmes, keenness, efficiency, camping skill, good turns, *everything*. There isn't a moment to lose. We're going to start right away with Week 1 — the first meeting of the new Scout year. Let's spend tonight sorting things out and getting things in trim.

First of all, let's elect new patrols. Court of Honour met last week and approved it. Three patrols of eight? Four patrols of seven? Four patrols of eight? What's it to be? Well, the troop decides that for itself. Every troop in Scouting is alike, yet different! We have a framework for Scouting in *Scouting for Boys*, but the way that Scout training fits into things in any one troop is that troop's concern.

What did the lads say? Four patrols of seven? Good. Let's have it that way. We'll elect four P.L.s first. Boys *only* are allowed to vote. No Scouters in this, of course. We'll use any system of election we like so long as it is secret and aboveboard. With us each boy writes four names on a card and then pops it into an "election box". We soon have four names acceptable to the majority of the troop. Then they need six braves to surround them—and the patrol names must be considered (some bird or animal in the locality is the only logical solution)—and the patrol dens or corners must be sorted out amicably. All this will take a bit of time.

So we're going to stick to Peewits, Seagulls, Woodpigeons and Curlews. I didn't really expect any change in patrol names or choice of dens. We're going to have a quarterly patrol competition. That was decided last week. There's a small silver shield in the Scouter's den and it's worth winning, not to mention the night out that goes with it—a feed in the Pelican Cafe and a theatre afterwards. Now how are we going to run the competition? *Not* chalked points totals on a blackboard; or pencil notes in a book or anything like that. Look at my new competition board! I got the idea from an ordinary ringboard. All we do is get a nice smooth board about three feet by two feet or whatever size you need—deal or pine or oak or anything—and bevel the corners and edges. Then we put row after row of brass hooks on it, paint the whole thing and give it a decorative heading of some kind. Above each hook we paint a number in a distinctive, contrasting colour. Then we take four spare patrol knots, one of each of the four patrols, and make the brass bits at the top into a loop.

Quite easy with a pair of pliers. All we do then is to hang the patrol shoulder knots on the right hook at the end of each weekly meeting. We have a hundred hooks on our board and we're not over-lavish with points during the quarter. *They really have to be earned*. The advantage of this idea is that it keeps the lads on their toes. Anyone can see at a glance how the competition is going, and at the end of any one troop meeting the lads go home knowing where they stand. Try it and see for yourself how it makes for keenness.

Then there's a woodcraft touch we've always had. No chairs, forms, deckchairs or what have you! The real thing. Beech logs. And the way to do it is to cut them all at the same time so they're all the same age roughly. We cut one for every boy in the troop and his log is kept in his patrol den or corner— all the seven together neatly. How useful they are! As seats; for "logs round" at the end of each meeting; in games and stunts of all kinds. Each log is peeled of bark, and dried out, and then has the patrol emblem painted on it—to a uniform pattern and size.

Each boy is allowed to decorate his own log if he wishes. We've had logs like that in our troop for forty years—not the same ones, but the idea. Then there's the problem of what to do with Scout staves and where to keep them. Each lad has one, used on ceremonial occasions only and for "inspection". We have staff-racks on the wall of each patrol den and the seven or eight staves are kept there neatly one above the other.

Week 2

OCTOBER (ii)

THE average weekly troop meeting is so short (one and a half to two hours) that it pays to find every possible way there is for saving time in running it. The main idea is to get the meeting running *crisply and smoothly*, and to know in advance what is going to be done. Boys will soon be as keen as mustard once they realise that they are being "put in the picture" and belong to a troop which gets things done.

We've had a look at those inter-patrol team games which are always being run. During the winter we will be running these games regularly on indoor troop nights. We need a central starting line or a series of "marks". The usual idea is to mark these with chalk, but what a waste of precious time it is! Why not *paint* a permanent line on the troop-room floor for the start of games, say, dark red and some more marks or plain circles or blobs for the finish of them?

There is nothing like paint for brightening up a troop-room. New boys in a troop—"tenderfeet" we must always call them until they have settled down and made the grade—need instruction in simple, basic Scouting. For their benefit the Tenderfoot knots can be painted in bold outline on the walls of the troop room or headquarters. Repaint them every year in the spring or they will soon look shabby. We had a commercial display artist in our troop who was very good at this sort of thing.

Many troops, however, have to use the parish hall or Sunday-school of the church to which their troop is attached, or even a schoolroom in the case of a school troop. The walls of a troop headquarters which is not the property of the troop cannot be painted. In that case the best plan is to paint, say, Tenderfoot knots on large folding sheets of three-ply or, failing that, on frames made of light wooden laths and canvas. Bring them out on troop nights and decorate the walls while the troop meeting lasts. So much in Scouting depends on our imagination and the way in which we adapt the "rules of the game" to suit our troop.

We said we'd paint those starting lines on the troop-room floor in the dark red. That's useful, because if at some time we're practicing first-aid and staging a possible street accident the lines, marks and blobs can represent blood. Don't smile please. First-aid training has to be realistic. If we go along to our local hospital and offer our services in the casualty ward for a week or so we might be lucky and be accepted. We would see something of street-accident casualties as they are brought in.

We might find it very useful indeed for first-aid training in the troop. The lads must be used to the idea that there's sure to be blood about in a street accident. So every time we stage a mock-accident in the troop-room we'll do it around the places where we've painted dark-red starting lines and finishing spots for our inter-patrol team games. It's not being gruesome to say to the boys: "This chap's pretty badly hurt and is losing blood fast. See, there's a pool of it here." A few minutes ago it was the end-point of a simple troop game. We have to use our imagination rapidly at all times in Scouting. If we can convert that dark-red circle of paint into a deepening

stain of human blood with just a change of inflection in the voice we shall be well on the way to real Scouting.

Try it for yourself and see.

Week 3

OCTOBER (iii)

WHY not run a troop newspaper in the troop? As the autumn nights draw in and winter approaches, it is a good thing to plan “things to do”. There is nothing like a live troop magazine or newspaper for keeping troop spirit going. And it does give everyone in the troop a chance to show what he can do. Some troops are lucky enough to have a magazine of many years’ standing, carrying local advertising, printed by a local firm and circulating to all the parents and friends of the troop. Others may have a page to themselves in the monthly parish magazine, or minister’s news-letter, or a special corner in the local weekly newspaper.

It is not difficult to get the paper to produce a regular troop mag. now if we want one, and there is one excellent way in which we can still have all the fun of producing one without the very exacting spadework of producing a printed, circulated effort. Make it a “wall newspaper”. Set about it this way:

Appoint the editor and a small committee of, say, three keen chaps to produce it. Don’t let the Scouters have a hand in it unless there are special reasons why they should do so. Most Scouters will be too busy running the troop and will be **only** too glad of a Patrol Leader volunteer to run a mag. for the troop. The chaps who run the mag. should have an interest in magazines. There might be someone who works in the offices of the local newspaper, or someone who is studying at a good art school, or someone who is apprenticed to a local printer....

Now get some strong large sheets of cartridge paper about three feet by two feet—or whatever you can get. The best colour is white or a pastel shade. If you find it difficult to get cartridge paper, then wall paper would do. Design a heading and title for your paper *and keep to it for every issue*. We called our wall newspaper 27w *Sentinel*, and it appeared on the first troop-meeting night in every quarter. We made a special board for it out of five-ply and this was hung in a special place in the troop-room, with an electric light strung over it so that anyone could read it. In this way we produced an original magazine.

Divide the sheet of cartridge paper into, say, seven equal columns. Try and get *everyone* in the troop to contribute something, at some time or other, for the mag. These contributions should be typed or written on paper the same width as the columns of the main sheet. Paste them on the sheet according to the editor’s “make-up”. Sketches and drawings can be used, and the more colour there is about them the more attractive the mag. will look. Photos can easily be used. Cartoons, newspaper cuttings, jokes, “Letters to the Editor” and practical tips on Scoutcraft can all find a place on the sheet. A student artist can make the whole thing into a very fine and colourful affair. Keep it a *troop* affair as much as possible. Gossip, troop camps, special occasions—all these will appear automatically. Fun should be a real happy keynote throughout!

Parents will always be interested in them, and old copies can be on show on parents’ nights.

In fact, the quarterly wall newspapers—i.e. four a year—can well be a popular form of the Troop Log—even more valuable than an elaborate troop log, because you can display it so much more

effectively on parents' nights, and state occasions such as Local Association Scout Weeks. The public judge Scouting by what they see of it personally in their own districts. I have never yet found a wall newspaper full of original items from boys, well-laced with humour, and packed with personal effort, which has failed to arouse keen interest among parents and lay people.

When a branch of the valuable and growing B.-P. Guild of Old Scouts was started in one district it was not a public speech which aroused the former Scouts who came to the meeting *but a display of original wall newspapers from a really live and progressive Scout troop*. It was not long before they were offering active support in a lay capacity to the troop, thus freeing Scouters for the all-important task of leading boys.

WEEK 4

OCTOBER (iv)

IT'S time to try some outdoor training, and what finer at this time of the year than training patrols in stalking methods and technique, concentrating on good camouflage?

At first we can try some special extra training on Saturday *mornings*, because almost everyone seems to work the five-day week now. That means Scouters are available as well as schoolboys.

Saturday afternoons may be possible, but if Scouters and older boys are committed to sport then they may be better earmarked for individual patrol work. Once we have tried outdoor stalking practice under daylight conditions on Saturday mornings, then we can think about more advanced stalking on a dark troop-meeting night (in autumn or winter).

First of all we'll concentrate on this camouflage angle. Autumn is an ideal time because the woods and spinneys are, in general, warm brown in colour, with probably a good deal of bracken, bushy undergrowth and similar natural cover.

We'll take the patrols out to the nearest wood or large spinney and let them, patrol by patrol, hide themselves in a quiet glade in a given time of, say, three or four minutes. We'll let any one of the other Patrol Leaders be the odd man out, while the rest of the troop watch *in silence* (essential) from a suitable vantage-point. This odd man out has his back to the glade, and when the time limit is up he turns round and tries to locate the positions of the patrol in hiding. At first it will be fairly easy because movement will most likely be the first clue to a human presence in, say, bracken. Note this, because the art of "freezing" will be the first principle of stalking on which the troop will later concentrate.

The spotter can look for uniforms that do not harmonise with the background. If you wear all khaki you will have an advantage, but if your troop uniform is a dark-green melton shirt and navy-blue cord shorts you're in for trouble! At once he and the observers will see that white knees, hands, elbows, arms and faces contrast strongly with the autumn browns and russets and reds. In some cases hair may give a boy away—a boy with light blond hair will always need some camouflage headgear. At all times of the year he is likely to give himself away otherwise.

Let every patrol try this simple initial training in turn until everyone has had an opportunity to hide and spot. That will show the problems in stalking: **(1)** we have to counteract *movement* (and that means learning *to freeze*) and **(2)** we must *camouflage* really well, and especially watch the clash of white, green and grey on autumn backgrounds.

Autumn is such a grand stalking-time that we'll now go a stage further and make some "autumn stalking smocks". Get some good hessian from the Scout Shop (or clean wheat seed sacks, or similar sacks) and make loose fitting smocks from them, making sure the smock will effectively cover the head, face (except the eyes) and shoulders of the average boy in the troop as well as knees, arms and hands. The average troop would need about a dozen of varying sizes. When the smocks are made, break up the main drab brown colour with splashes and streaks of dark-brown paint, and occasional dark-green, because there may be evergreen trees in your stalking training ground. Then even brown and khaki will let you down.

These stalking-smocks will give you hours of stalking fun. Play the same elementary freezing game with patrols wearing them and the difference will be astonishing. Once the simple problems of movement and camouflage have been appreciated and solved, then we can go on to lots of real stalking games, with and without the smocks. Real stalking is only fun when the early training has been mastered. Autumn is the best time of the year to do that, so that when spring and summer are here we can try much more advanced stalking fun. By the time summer camp is upon us next August some of us may be ready to try stalking wild animals in difficult country. Lastly, don't forget to read B.-P.'s camp-fire yarn No. 14 in *Scouting for Boys*, which deals with stalking in B.-P.'s own grand way.

If there is a fifth week in October in the year this is being read, give two weeks' training to elementary stalking. In any case stalking is real Scouting and can be in the troop programme regularly.

An alternative programme for the odd week in the quarter is given in week **13**; in case that one is used make a note to keep stalking to the forefront when conditions next allow—perhaps in March or April.

WEEK 5

NOVEMBER (i)

FIRST week in November is always reserved for Guy Fawkes Night. The fifth may coincide with your Friday-night weekly troop meeting. For all practical purposes it may be as well to hold your Guy Fawkes Night on the Saturday evening of the week. At all events, it is the activity of the week and the idea behind it all is fun, *real fun*. Don't limit it to the troop. It is very important for the troop to know the Cubs who will be coming into the troop in the next year or two. The Cub Pack is the most natural, regular source of new blood for the troop, and there should be a regular influx of Cubs coming into the troop. Better liaison between pack and troop makes for less "leakage" at the most vulnerable age group of all—the ten—eleven period. Once a quarter the troop can carry out some kind of co-operation with the pack. As far as the autumn quarter is concerned there can be no better opportunity than Guy Fawkes Night.

Let's try and plan it this way. We'll have a bonfire in the grounds of troop headquarters if we have our own home; or in some other convenient spot, such as someone's large garden or a piece of waste land—providing we have local council and police permission. The planning of a bonfire means that we can have a jolly good spring-clean (or autumn-clean!) of troop H.Q. and get rid of any old junk that's lying around. In addition we can take the trek-cart around the homes of all Scouts and collect burnable rubbish and old timber and so on. We might even do some autumn trimming in our spinney or wood, or the Local Association camp site. At all events we build a fine bonfire, and we don't need much instruction in the art of collecting the material for it or in building it.

Now for the night itself. We, the troop, are going to run it. We might need some help from the Rover Grew and our branch of the B.-P. Guild of Old Scouts, and if we do we'll ask for it. In any case we're going to make it a real night of fun. We send invitations to all parents of Cubs and Scouts, the Cub Pack *en masse*, the Rover Crew and the vicar or minister or priest of the church we attend once a month for our church parade, the District Commissioner and his hierarchy, and anyone else we like. We ask them all to bring a few fireworks and, possibly, an enamel mug.

Beforehand we arrange the "eats" with the Parent's Committee, or we can look hopefully to the G.S.M. helping us out here. We don't want a supper or anything like that. If we are holding the fire in the grounds of our own headquarters, then we can have a running buffet inside the H.Q. after the fire has been lit. In Lancashire it is the custom to eat parkin (a delicious flat cake made from oatmeal and golden syrup or treacle) and home-made treacle toffee on Guy Fawkes Night.

It ought to be a national custom! Anyway, the mums will delight in providing the "eats" in quantity if asked nicely. All Cubs and Scouts are perennially hungry, so there will be no shortage of good homes for sandwiches and cakes if available. Cocoa is the time-honoured beverage of Scouts, and we shall need many good dixies of it about 8.30 p.m. or so. (The Cubs have special permission to be up late on this gala night.) The Rover Crew love making it, according to a secret old recipe dating back donkey's years.

A guy **must** be made beforehand. He can be an effigy of skipper, bless his heart, or the D.C. or anyone else you like. Start the evening with the flag-break in the usual way, then light the fire with some simple, effective ceremony—perhaps the G.S.M. can appear from nowhere with a flaming beacon, or it can be the privilege of the newest tenderfoot in the troop, or it can be one of your guests. Once the fire is under weigh—and if it's a damp night it may need a little preliminary assistance—we can think of the fireworks.

We decided at Court of Honour that we would have a pool of fireworks, and for safety's sake we'll store them in a new dustbin with a lid. Accidents can happen in the best troop on such nights, and it isn't pleasant to have a casualty on your hands—for instance, a Cub whose hair and skin have been burned by fireworks going off in an outside jacket pocket. So pool fireworks for safety, and also because it isn't a good thing in a boys' show for one boy to have his own private box value a pound or more, and another youngster whose parents could only afford a "bob's-worth". The B.-P. Guild might even run a small firework display or take over the supply of fireworks even. Most boys will want to contribute something towards the firework pool.

Don't forget the potatoes! Put them in the red-hot ashes on the side of the fire in good time—one for every boy. They can be eaten towards the end of the evening with cocoa. After the fireworks have gone their fated way the evening can finish with a camp-fire sing-song (*mental note: must have a camp-fire leader specialist, and a good one at that, for these occasions*). Finish the evening with one last superb rocket (five-bob special!) soaring into space—then the well-known Scout rocket yell, all together—and then prayers, flag-down and home.

Last thoughts:

Ensure that every Cub is taken home personally by an older Scout or Rover if necessary, so that young boys are not out on the street late at night. (The B.-P. Guild may do it by car.)

(2) Have a Clearing Party to ensure the fire is really out when the last persons leave H.Q. On the following morning the party returns to clear debris, especially spent fireworks.

(3) Before Guy Fawkes Night starts examine the first-aid box and check on anti-burn precautions and dressings. Leave the box open on the night so that everything is easily accessible to anyone if required. Check on which local doctor is available that night. You may quite possibly have a large crowd of people on the night and it is well to be prepared.

WEEK 6

NOVEMBER (ii)

WE *might* get icy roads as early as this. We *might* get fog. Or they might come later on. At all events we need to have our first-aid ready and up-to-date. The death and accident toll on the roads is enough to make any Scouter determined that his troop would never be found wanting if called on to help.

We can make first-aid training as realistic as possible with the use of red ink, and so on. The best way to bring the need for ever-vigilant first-aid training before the troop is to reconstruct the commoner type of street accident, possibly with the help of friendly local police.

Or try it this way. Perhaps we know a garage proprietor. Possibly there may be one on the Group Committee or in the B.-P. Guild branch. We ask him if it is possible to arrange some first-aid training in his garage on a troop meeting night so that it would be possible to reconstruct a few possible road accidents between vehicles and cycles and motor-cycles, and so on. A garage is an ideal place for such practical training. Suppose we reconstruct a possible road accident on a suburban road in the darkness or semi-darkness. All lights can be switched off in the garage, or everything except a dim light to represent street lamps. Reconstruct, say, an accident in which two cyclists have been run into *from* behind by a small lorry, or a head-on collision between a motor-cyclist and a private car. On the casualties put tie-on labels indicating where and what the injuries are.

Then give each patrol an “accident” to tackle under these occasions. Carry out first-aid work just as it might have to be done in practice, working with torches. Send messengers to make mock phone calls to the police, nearest doctor and hospital. Make a written report on the spot with an accurate sketch plan of the “accident”. Improvise stretchers from planks, pieces of iron or wooden fencing and overcoats. Or improvise one from a length of wire netting and two garden hoes, as actually happened on one occasion.

Get a friend from the British Red Cross Society or the St. John’s Ambulance Brigade to advise the troop about first things to do in cases of street accidents. If one isn’t known the local police will invariably help and advise. In fact, in London many of them run troops or are members of the *B.-P. Guild of Old Scouts*. Another useful idea is to persuade the “troop doctor” (a most valuable idea—and if he is a parent of a boy in the troop so much the better) to come to troop meetings and advise on what to do and what not to do until expert medical attention is available. Invariably such talks and practical demonstrations are among the most valuable troop evenings of the year. A doctor will soon show a troop that first-aid is not a question of “tying a reef knot on a bandage because it lies flat” or learning how to tie a tourniquet.

Are we *absolutely certain* that we know exactly where all local public call-boxes are in the district? Have we a large-scale map of them on the troop-room wall? Have we impressed on our boys *the tremendous need for common sense and a cool head in handling any street accident*? Have we shown how we don’t run two hundred yards to a call-box down the street if we can see telephone wires leading to a house only thirty yards away?

Lastly, let’s deal with *blood* and *shock* over and over again. A competent Scout is not alarmed by the sight of blood. An accident injury often looks much worse than it actually is, and we must steel our boys to the sight of *blood* in any serious accident.

Above all, we must know how to deal with *shock*, and the sooner we find out from competent people like doctors and St. John’s men the better for our Scout training.

Some years ago a senior boy whom I knew very well saw his first street accident. He was a King’s Scout and held the Ambulance badge. But the emergency found him wanting, because all his training had been theoretical. Instead of dealing with the emergency in a cool and calm manner, he was violently sick and then ran home as fast as he could. The incident shook him badly, and most of all because he was ashamed of his own conduct. He was “cured” by a long spell as a voluntary messenger and orderly in the accident ward of a general hospital.

*Never treat first-aid training light-heartedly.
Never let the boys think it is boring. If they do it’s your fault.*

WEEK 7

NOVEMBER (iii)

IT’S time we had a stunt of some kind, and we haven’t tackled cooking yet. If we want good cooking and better menus in camp next spring and summer we have to think about it the previous autumn and winter. So in week 7 we’ll start some cooking practice. Here’s how.

Send a message in code (troop code if we have one—and why not?—or, failing that, Morse would do) to the Patrol Leaders twenty-four hours before troop meeting, telling them to bring a pressure-stove in good order to the meeting and food. The task will be to cook an original snack

meal for the patrol in not more than thirty minutes. The Patrol Leader will, if he is wise, get in touch with his second at once, plan the snack meal and arrange for each boy to bring something towards the stockpile.

At the appointed time in troop meeting each patrol will start from scratch and prepare its snack, cooking on a pressure-stove in the den or corner and doing its utmost to prepare a tastier and better-served dish than any other patrol. Be prepared for possibly weird and wonderful dishes. Show pleasure at the amount of *effort* put into it, *which is what matters most*, and the experience gained for camp. There is tremendous fun as well as sound training in this simultaneous cooking practice on a patrol basis. The delicious smells alone are worth it on a cold, wet night!

The Scouters are best advised not to prowl around inspecting what is going on during this half-hour. Let them also prepare a snack meal for themselves in their own den, using only a simple pressure-stove. This will please and delight the troop, especially if the patrol efforts are superior to the Scouters'!

Here's a good recipe for such an occasion which has never yet failed to beat all comers as a quick snack meal in camp, using only one dish, an aluminium saucepan, or small dixie, and a pressure-stove at about half-pressure. I call it *Spanish Rice Pronto*, the name by which I first heard it, and it takes only fifteen to twenty minutes to prepare enough for four hungry men if you have taken the precaution to have some plain, cooked rice available in advance. Under camp conditions this would be easy to arrange.

Here's the recipe to end all recipes, then; and remember it needs only one saucepan—the saving grace of Scouters!

Fry two or three rashers of bacon in the saucepan and then cut them up small when cooked. Leave everything in the pan. Add one medium onion, sliced very thinly, and two cups of plain, cooked cold rice. Mix well. Add two cups of boiling water, one pound of thinly sliced tomatoes, a generous dash of tomato ketchup or puree, a teaspoonful of salt, a good dash of pepper, and, if liked, a teaspoonful of mustard. Mix well and continue to stir until the succulent dish comes up to the boil, which it will do quickly. By this time the troop will realise we are really up to something in the Scouters' den, and they will be all the keener to produce a better brew. Resist all spies firmly and allow no one near the den.

As soon as our dish comes to the boil, cover the saucepan with its tight-fitting lid and simmer gently for another ten minutes. It will then be ready for serving, with rolls and a glass of milk, as a speedy supper dish for camp. If the professional touch is required serve on hot soup plates, with plenty of chopped parsley and grated Parmesan cheese on top. For variety, too, put chopped-up cold meat, cold chicken or shrimps into it. It's a camp special!

I wonder if the patrols can beat Spanish Rice Pronto? They may well do so. I once had a Patrol Leader who could make the finest omelettes in the world under all kinds of conditions. My latest find is a boy who would never go to camp without a *pressure-cooker*, with which he produces the most excellent dishes, especially chicken in a variety of forms.

Camp cooking standards are improving, but we need to practise, practise and practise, in the troop-room in autumn and winter as well as kitchens at home.
Fun, wasn't it?

WEEK 8

NOVEMBER (iv)

ARCHERY is coming back into its own as an exciting and highly skilled pastime. The troops can discover for themselves the thrill and interest it yields. Even if the boys cannot acquire the skill and art of England's justly famous bowmen, they can learn much about the value of a good, true eye. An English Scout archery team aroused much interest among the displays at the 1951 World Jamboree in Austria. The sport deserves to be better known among all Scouts. It is only four hundred years since every male in England over the age of sixteen was compelled by law to become a proficient archer.

Archery clubs use bows made of yew or hickory or steel, but Scouts can make their own from saplings and have a great deal of fun on Saturdays or summer troop evenings or in camp. The bows can be made in November, or so, and indoor practice can take place if you have enough room at any time. Put archery in your programme planning and it will not be regretted.

An ordinary average bow is six feet, but in practice a boy will need a bow the same height as himself roughly. He can select a sapling that is really supple and strong, and shape it with his sheath knife. Experts advise that "the saplings must be quite straight, or at least very slightly bowed towards the string. The outside must be pared flat and the string side rounded. A bow must never be reflexed—that is, with the back bent forward when unstrung, as it is then apt to jar when in use. Scout bows can be made widest at the centre and then tapered off gradually towards the ends, remembering that a notch has to be cut at each end for the string. In the centre it will be necessary to glue or fix firmly a grip of some kind. This may be of soft washleather, or a velvet shoe-polishing pad has been used to effect. Then we shall need some arrows made from really straight pieces of pine, smoothed with glass-paper until they are round and free of all blemish. An expert will test his arrow for straightness by putting the tip of one on his thumbnail and then twisting the arrow with his free hand. If the arrow is true it rotates smoothly and freely, but if it is not straight it moves off the thumbnail and can be rejected.

The arrows are tipped with turkey quills, and if we are fortunate enough to camp on a turkey farm on a sandy part of the coast we can collect enough turkey quills to tip arrows for a year or so. This making of bows and arrows in the troop room is an exciting business. Try it and see! The troop must then learn the special language of archery, especially the term "shilling". The weight of an arrow is referred to in silver money. A "four-bob arrow" is light, but a "five-bob arrow" is on the heavy side. Expert archers talk about "four and nine-penny" arrows, but we can forget that—for the time being, at any rate.

The targets can be made up in the troop-room from straw bound with wire and twine into a circle which is four feet in diameter. It is then covered with canvas and five concentric rings are painted on it. In the centre is gold and then comes red, blue, black and white. These targets will seem to be very large to the average boy, but they have to be clearly visible at a range of a hundred yards. Good archers can even hit the "gold" (or bull's-eye, as we might think of it) at two hundred yards. The targets are set up on a frame which should be two feet above the level of the ground.

The scoring value of each ring is 9 gold, 7 red, 5 blue, 3 black, white, with the highest ring touched counting. In a normal competition two targets are set up opposite each other at the shooting distance which has been decided. The archer takes up his position in front of one and shoots at the other. An archer is allowed to shoot three arrows, which is called an "end", and he

shoots another “end” from the other target until forty-eight shots in all have been taken. A scorer is highly necessary. The coveted “gold” is signalled by the time-honoured custom of lying on one’s back with feet and hands in the air. Archery is truly a skilled sport, because arrows never fly straight in a line but in an arc, and the flight is much affected by wind. A Scout gets to know his own bow and how to aim and use it. He will find it best to concentrate on *aiming and position*.

If archery is taken up seriously in the troop, then more advice is needed. Ian Harman advises: For instance, you must never string your bow until you are actually preparing to shoot. Before you do so, make sure there is no one in front of you or behind you. Anyone behind you would be in danger should the bow break accidentally.

Turn almost sideways to your target, and stand with your feet about a foot apart. To string the bow, hold it with the right hand in the middle, with the back (flat part) towards you, and place the bottom end against the instep of the right foot.

Place the ball of the left thumb about five inches from the top of the bow, with the loop of the string held in the finger against the bow. Then draw the right hand against the body, at the same time pressing down the left hand until the bow is bent sufficiently for the loop to be slipped over the top and into the notch.

Unstring the bow after use in a similar manner. Never leave your bow strung when it is out of use. The string should be five inches from the bow at the middle.

To shoot, grasp the bow in the left hand with the thumb locked over the first finger. String the arrow by running the bow-string into the slit, taking care the cock-feather is outside. Do not grasp the end of the arrow between finger and thumb, but with the ends of the first and second fingers.

The shaft of the arrow lies above your left hand and to the *left* of the bow. To release the arrow, raise the left arm, keeping it slightly crooked, but with the wrists straight on a level with the shoulder, and draw back the right hand until it just brushes your chin. The arrow should then be quickly released from your grip.

The object of just touching your chin when you draw back is to ensure that you get the same strength of pull each time you shoot. Always draw the hand towards the head and avoid the temptation of inclining the head towards the hand grasping the arrow. Always stand firmly on your feet and keep your eyes on the “gold”.

WEEK 9

DECEMBER (i)

THIS week we'll tackle Kim's Game. Start by ticking off the troop—"You've remembered nine articles out of twelve, and even eighteen out of twenty-four, lying on a table in the troop-room, and just imagined that's the end of it. I'm ashamed of you!" Tell the boys the ageless story of Kim. Tell them there's dozens of ways of playing the fascinating game of Kim. "Young Kim himself was a cute and crafty boy who knew that a *trained* mind was the result of constant practice in doing simple things." The quotes are mine, but it is any Troop Scouter talking.

Let's improve our own minds with variations on Kim.

There are troops who search through pockets and cupboards and things until they've got twenty-four assorted articles. They chuck these on a table, get a boy to remember eighteen and then he's passed Kim's Game! It makes me shudder. The same old penknife, whistle, comb and notebook. Instead, we'll *grade* Kim. First we'll take twelve simple things all connected in some way. A tent, flysheet, steel tent-peg, wooden tent-peg, guy-lines, eyelets, groundsheet, guy-line runners, tent-pole, pennant, tent-bag and a camp hussif. If we put them on the troop-room floor in varying positions, look at them for a minute, then close our eyes, I've no doubt we can remember all twelve.

Now forget that bit. Any Scout can remember twelve related things out of twelve. Our brain remembers *associated* articles a lot easier. Now go a step further. Can we remember the exact positions of those twelve articles? Try it this way. Chalk a large square on our troop-room floor. Divide one side into three and the other into four and join all points up. We now have twelve squares. Put our twelve related tent articles in those twelve squares and number or letter the squares. Now try Kim again. We won't be satisfied until we get twelve right in the correctly lettered square. Flysheet C, three guy-line runners F, groundsheet K, and so on.

Now let's make it a bit harder. Change the articles about and see if we can remember the original positions. For instance: the flysheet was in C, now it's in C. The three guy-line runners were in F, and now they're in K. The tent's in A. Yes, that's right. Was it in B or E before? That's one we don't know. The first time we try this variation we'll get about two right and then realise we know *nothing* about Kim. After three weeks' practice we may be a genius at it! One of my fourteen-year-olds was once able to change the positions of twelve related camp articles *twice* in a chalk square and give the three positions correctly of every article. We found he had a genuine photographic memory—he could see each of the three positions of the articles in the square in his mind like a picture.

Just to show how important this relation of associated articles is, put twelve very mixed things with no connection in the square and then change them about. We won't be so good. We may even fall into the most elementary trap in Kim—finding ourselves unable to remember the *biggest* (in size) of the twelve articles. We can improve our Kim slowly in this way. Next week we'll try **it** with fifteen, then eighteen, then twenty, twenty-two and even up to thirty! It's not difficult to remember the changed positions of twenty-four related articles.

We'll do something entirely different now. We'll get twelve saucers or plates from the kitchen and ferret about the house, especially the kitchen, for "things with a smell ". This is a Kim variation any P.L. can prepare for a patrol meeting in his own home. Put these things on the saucer if possible: an onion sliced in two, some camphorated oil, some olive oil, a chopped-up

parsnip, some Dettol, a few camphor balls, some grated nutmeg, a solution of Condy's Fluid crystals, a packet of sage or lavender, some large stoned raisins, some ordinary ground coffee, some freshly made mustard! We can find a hundred others prowling about the kitchen with the co-operation of wives and mothers.

First see if we can distinguish between those smells. I'll wager olive oil is labelled wrongly—and sage! Then let's blindfold ourselves afterwards and try Kim again. Clear the saucers away or cover them up with a cloth. Now can we get all twelve right first time? Not so easy, was it?—and we did forget coffee! We'll try putting them in set positions and remembering the smell that was in a saucer on the north east corner of the dining-table. That isn't so easy.

I know a Patrol Leader who blindfolded his patrol and gave them six things to taste one after the other. In this order they were: brown sugar, cod-liver oil, vinegar, lard, salt and lemonade. Then he cleared the stuff away. He then gave each Scout just a taste of the stuff on spoons, and told them to put down on paper what the tastes were and in what order they had been dosed. Not a single Scout got them correctly. Most of them got sugar, salt and cod-liver oil right, but vinegar, lard and lemonade became all sorts of remarkable things. Try this with each patrol in turn. It's a fine variation of Kim. *At all times let's be careful we don't use rat poison or medicines. In fact, we must make certain with all tasting games that we do know what we're giving the boys to taste.* We can have tons of fun.

WEEK 10

DECEMBER (ii)

ONE tasting game we try with the tenderfeet now and then is "Eastern Ecstasy". We blindfold the boy taking his Kim's Game test and give him a few currants to eat if we can get them, then sultanas, raisins, a chopped dried apricot or a chopped prune, and chopped glace cherries. Then we take the scarf from his eyes and ask him to put down on paper what he's eaten *in the correct order*. In seven years' history of that game in my own troop we never found one boy who could do it.

The whole point is that Kim's Game teaches us to make the most of our senses of sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing. Kim's Game develops our mind and perception. It is invaluable character training.

A strongly developed sense of touch is a Scout's heritage. Just look at any Handicapped Scout and marvel. The simplest way to play Kim's Game with an accent on touch is to get twelve empty sugar bags (the stiff Tate & Lyle kind). Blindfold the braves and get them to feel in the bags and describe what's in them. They can "recognise" toggles, guy-line runners, thimbles, nail-files, scissors and so on easily. But make certain they can describe other details—blunt scissors, rusted on one side and a kink in the grip, for instance.

Then when they get good at it be-glove them! Just see if they're still good at it with gloves on. One of my own favourites is to try it with cycle gauntlets or stumping-gloves on—and blindfolded. Now give the boys a poker to feel. Do they know what it is? Not on your life. Usually we try and distinguish between pokers and those things on which Dad sharpens the knife that cuts the Sunday joint when we have one. We can't. And if we want a laugh we have only to watch blindfolded Ginger fingering a thimble with a pair of cycle gauntlets on and wondering what on earth it is!

Yes, Kim's Game develops our sense of touch, too. Hearing? Yes, Kim's Game comes into that as well. Put one patrol behind a screen, or a door slightly ajar will do. A spare Scouter can get on the other side and do certain things at intervals of about thirty seconds.

First of all let him strike a Swan Vesta on its box. Then a "safety" match on its box. Then let him draw a chalk across a piece of blackboard, and scribble an ordinary pencil several times across a chunk of cardboard. He can scrape a shoe along the floor, rub a clothes-brush across the brim of a Scout hat, pour milk into a pan, a glass of water into a jug, bang a pair of plimsolls together on the soles, pull a piece of string until it breaks, stretch a length of elastic and play a tune of sorts on it, and burst a toy balloon. There's twelve simple (but all different) sounds for you. Can all the patrols identify them? Remember, we can bet our sheath-knives that Kim was very good at that sort of thing. If our Scouts can get nine of those twelve sounds right first time they're very good. Let's invent more sounds our self and explore this angle on Kim thoroughly. We'll enjoy it.

We will soon see that camp is a good time to find the possibilities in Kims Game. A few years ago I ran a troop camp high on the slopes of a Welsh hill. One Sunday afternoon I found the Seagulls were near the summit doing semaphore practice with the Hawks "down in the valley-oh". I was about twenty minutes' hard walking from the Seagulls, and it's tough going in those Welsh hills. So I signalled that I was joining them for tea and something to do. When I finally arrived the six Seagulls had a good fire in a snug cleft in the rocks with three Gilwell canteens on it. While they waited for me they were playing Kim's Game. All six were intent on a groundsheet spread near the fire. On it the Patrol Leader had about two dozen wild flowers and grasses which they had collected (for pressing) during the day's exploring. They named as many as they could and gave numbers to those they didn't know. Then they tried Kim, seeing how many flowers they could remember accurately. It's a sound idea for spare moments in camp. When I read Kim now I think of those wild flowers on a groundsheet high in the Welsh hills on an August afternoon. We can do preliminary practice *now* in December on the troop-room floor, and we can still use pressed flowers if we have them.

Lastly, don't forget that *detail* matters in Kim's Game. We may be able to remember that there was a box of matches on the corner of the table. But how much better if we can remember that it was a well-used box of Smiths Safety Matches, was half open and contained nine matches, three of them used. We must impress on our boys that they will be more efficient Scouts by concentrating in spare moments on Kim's Game. But there are a thousand other activities in Scouting as well. Much as we love Kim, we must not forget that.

WEEK 11

DECEMBER (iii)

WE play our team games out of doors on Saturday mornings and afternoons for the most part, although we make every allowance for the boys who are playing for their schools or clubs on that day. We need to think carefully about team-game-playing—about sport in general, simply because Scouting itself, in the Founder's own words, "is a game". The boy who is playing cricket, football or any other game for his school or club on Saturday afternoons is doing first-class Scouting. Encourage him in every way possible—tomorrow may be another day, but tomorrow we need him as a leader of boys. *We must not lose him.*

I suggest that we set about improving our team-games standards now—we have a breathing space before Christmas, and can continue to do something about it regularly throughout the year.

We start on troop-meeting night with a firm resolve to cut out all stupid, senseless, no-rule games which are useless from a character-training point of view. What possible justification is there for rough and ready scrambles after chalk on a dusty, splintery floor? Or for games in which 'nothing is barred'? Or for that ill-named monstrosity of a game— British bulldogs?

Lets try out some real games of proved value to Scout training—seven-a-side rugger; five-a-side soccer; volleyball; and that superb game, basketball.

Take seven-a-side rugger. Of course it is an outdoor game, but we can master its rules and technique in the first half-hour of a few troop meetings. Start tonight. We need a ball but not a pukka rugger ball. It's useless indoors. Get a rugger-ball outer case and stuff it with an old towel or two until it has the shape and feel of a real ball but won't bounce or break windows. Practise holding the ball, taking and giving passes, body swerves, changes of pace—particularly *acceleration*, changes of direction, and so on. Learn the art of low, hard packing and first-time striking for the ball in the set serum. In rugger sevens it is the side that gets the ball that makes progress. Don't neglect the hooker position, and select a hooker *who can move, really move, in the open*. We can practise these fundamentals of technique indoors and put them into practice in the park next Saturday.

Try and get grace and smooth all-in-one-movement handling of the ball in passing. The boys who show the most promise can learn smoothness of body movement. To help here, let them try taking a pillow by one corner in their teeth, and then gently swing it round with the body, just as they would in giving a good pass. They can't overdo this simple kind of practice and teamwork technique. Select the best seven and keep it as the troop seven, with reserves. Give them lots of practice and don't let any of them feel they can retain their places without having to work for them. When a team player in any game is permanently sure of his place his play invariably suffers. When you've got a decent seven together you can challenge other troops and maybe have an L.A. sevens tournament next April, which is the traditional time for sevens.

But *don't* play the game seriously until you've mastered the theory and special technique. It isn't thirteen or fifteen a-side rugby football. It is a different game entirely, demanding resource, stamina and brains, in the tactical sense. Try and get expert advice and help. Practice as much as possible with the "duff" ball indoors, and the pillow. Never practise a serious team game in Scout uniform. Games need games kit. Let the boys wear football jersey or shirt, gym shorts, ankle socks, plimsolls. If they haven't got them, run a troop show of some kind and equip every boy with the right kit—the Scout Shop will get **it** for you at favourable prices.

So far I've dealt only with rugger sevens and have done nothing more than put a few ideas forward on the right way to set about it. Don't be satisfied with anything below the very best in any kind of team-games standards.

Sevens is an exciting, thrilling game, of great value in character training. Go and see the Schools Sevens Tournament at the Old Deer Park, Richmond, in March, or the Middlesex Sevens Tournament at Twickenham every April. That will show the standard at which to aim.

We'll think about soccer fives, volleyball and basketball another time.

WEEK 12

DECEMBER (iv)

CHRISTMAS, of course! We have been practising carols for three weeks *with a piano* and someone who knows something about singing. We are resolved to visit the home of every boy in the pack and troop, of every Rover in the crew and every Scouter in the hierarchy, if they will have us. We are also resolved not to stop more than four times during the evening for sustenance, but know the position will be hopeless long before 10.30 p.m. Nothing is more calculated to draw unbound hospitality on Christmas Eve than a Scout Group carol party carolling on behalf of good Scout causes. Somehow or other a good deal of it has to be resisted. But don't ask me how, please!

I can only say that some of the finest fun I've ever had in my Scout life has been on such jaunts, especially when we had white Christmases, as we did at one time with fair regularity. If we're going to have a live, bright, energetic carol party that will be talked about with affection for years, then we have to plan it like anything else in the troop programme:

- (1) We select a repertoire of carols old and new, bearing in mind the limitations of a Scout troop. In general six well-known ones and six "new" (i.e. not so well known) but tuneful ones will do.
- (2) These carols are practised with a choirmaster of some kind, and a piano, for three weeks prior to Christmas Eve.
- (3) A carol leader is chosen and what he says goes, especially on Christmas Eve.
- (4) The boys come wrapped up well and with as few bulls-eyes and other diversions as possible. In addition they bring Chinese lanterns—if these are still hard to get, any kind of lantern would do, but cheerful, colourful Chinese lanterns swinging on a blackthorn thumbstick or ash staves will make a carol party. Such lanterns provide light, "glamour" and cause much interest as the carol party wends its way through street and lane.
- (5) Torches at the rate of one to every three of the party will be useful, also a few spare batteries, and matches or lighters for the Chinese lanterns. If the carol party is a long one spare candles will be needed for them. A sound troop electrician could easily convert such lanterns so that dry batteries are used instead of candles.
- (6) The Scouter in charge of the glee party—usually the G.S.M., this being a state occasion, makes a firm list in advance of the houses to be visited. He selects the route and confirms the approximate time of arrival with the parent or friend concerned by postcard or phone. This part of the carol party plan is important and needs some careful thought especially in planning the route.

Nothing is more soul-destroying for a Scout carol party in fine form to arrive at a house and sing lustily only to find eventually it is empty and the family have gone away for Christmas. That is why I emphasise the need for a few friendly phone calls the night before just to make sure the carol party is still wanted and awaited. The greatest enemy" to such a carol party is not bad planning, however, but hospitality. The boys will be asked 'to come in' to partake of mince pies, cakes, ginger wine and coffee, while Scouters may congregate in mysterious smaller rooms in the half-light and be regaled with stronger fare. I recollect one carol-party being floored on one

occasion halfway through its appointed route by an enormous cold rabbit pie washed down with flagons of burgundy, and what flagons they were. Gentlemen, we have been warned. Our purpose is to sing carols and raise money for deserving Scout causes.

The great fun of such an evening comes at the end of the evening, perhaps 11 p.m., perhaps nearer midnight—who knows? Then, having succumbed at last to ginger-wine and mince-pies *ad lib* at the last house of all, which is the G.S.M.'s or S.M.'s home, the proceeds are counted. In my experience the most popular decision was to split the money earned between a local Scout cause and a national one. There is sure to be a boys' home or orphanage in the district somewhere. As for a deserving Scout cause, a note to The Boy Scouts Association, 25 Buckingham Palace Road, S.W.1, will soon bring advice on the most urgent ones at the moment. The carol-party will be full of fun, gaiety and good spirits. It may well become an annual troop tradition, eagerly awaited and long talked about. But we must not forget the special occasion of Christmas, its meaning and purpose. This is an especial duty of Scouters in "open" groups which are not attached to any particular church. It is a fine thing if Scouts and Scouters can meet again on Christmas morning for Holy Communion in a cathedral of their own choice, a place of quiet thought and meditation, a humble country or parish church or chapel, where the real meaning of Christmas can come home to our boys.

Carol-parties are not really for the Cubs. I would resist them firmly but kindly and make up the party from Scouts, Senior Scouts, Rovers, Scouters and members of the valiant **B.-P.** Guild if they wish to come along. Lastly, any boys in the party should be seen home finally by an adult. Parents will appreciate that.

A very happy and joyful Christmas to you all, and God bless you!

WEEK 13

SPARE WEEK FOR QUARTER

This programme can be used for the fifth week in any month during the quarter.

I WATCHED a Scout troop practising knotting. They carried out the basic training tests with dry ropes in the comfort of their own troop-room, learning the use of the knots in parrot fashion. That is rarely good enough. The actual *use* of a knot must be learned and then practised *under every possible circumstance*. A live Scouter is always looking for new ways to put over the correct use of a Scout knot.

A boy might learn a simple knot like the reef and be told that it is a good knot to use in first-aid work because the knot lies flat and is therefore very good for bandaging. How much better to reconstruct a possible road accident in the troop-room and learn to tie a reef by putting a temporary bandage on another Scout's arm? The reef knot then has a meaning and purpose. The reef is a fine knot to use on parcels, but how often do we tie a parcel up to demonstrate its use?

Then there is the bowline. We all know that it is a grand knot that will hold fast under great strain. It isn't enough to learn how to tie it in our hands and to be told that it is a safe knot for hauling an injured person up a cliff face. First of all, we learn on a Wood Badge course to tie the bowline round ourself or round another Scout. We practise until we can do it at great speed, as indeed we might have to do in an emergency. Then we learn to tie it with one hand only, quickly and effectively. Imagine we *are* pinned against a cliff face so that our left arm is useless, and we

have to tie a bowline round ourself with our right hand only. It is very easy really, and once a boy has the art he will never want to tie it under anything other than possible practical conditions. To get a real appreciation of the bowline we can make an imaginary cliff in our troop-room with the aid of tables and chairs and boxes. Have a Scout lying on a ledge; lower a rope to him; let him tie a bowline round himself with one hand; and then haul him up carefully.

Knotting *can* be exciting. Practise the hauling up a cliff edge outdoors in some suitable spot. Try it from the limb of an old oak, too.

We know the knot that is used for shortening a long length of rope. Of course we do. Have we learned to tie it when the two ends are attached—in other words, tie a long rope from one end of the troop-room to the other and learn how to shorten it in the middle? That sort of thing can often happen at Summer camp. If we learn a knot that is specially intended to join two ropes of unequal thicknesses, then we *do* practise the knot with a thick rope and a thin *one—always*. We learn every possible way of tying it—in the darkness, blindfolded, or even behind our back! And that can be done easier than we may imagine on reading it.

When the next troop meeting takes place on a wet, howling night let's make some of the knotting ropes as wet, slimy and greasy as we possibly can. Then we go outside and try tying them in the rain. It is much more likely that those would be the conditions of an emergency. For years I kept some ropes well covered in vaseline especially for training boys in emergency knotting. They were invaluable.

Lastly, it is not absurd for a boy to always carry a length of neatly whipped rope in his pocket. He never knows when he might need it. And we have to instil in him the regular practise of knots.

A Scout troops efficiency can be estimated in one simple way—have a look at their knotting ropes and the state of the whipping on them. Rope-whipping needs to be a regular activity in any troop and we need not stick to the same type of whipping. We can experiment, find our own ways and try and improve on existing ways, hard as that will be. We can dip a new whipping in wax and then roll it under the sole of a shoe to really “firm” it. But if a boy doesn't think much of that method and has something better, listen to him. He may be right. He may be wrong. But the grand thing is that he has his mind on whipping at all, because in too many troops it is very neglected.

Knots — whipping — ropes kept “hankwise” — ropes in lockers or hanging on pegs for instant use—lashing spars— drag ropes or trek carts. We spend a lot of time on our ropes just because we use them so much in our Scout training.

Don't neglect rope-work or knotting.

WEEK 14

JANUARY (i)

THE boys are still on holiday from school, and there is still a holiday spirit in the air. So why not make this first week of the New Year a holiday week—and keep it as such in the years to come? I don't mean a personal holiday for anyone in the troop. We're going to give someone else a holiday as a troop good turn. My choice every time would be crippled children or orphans from the nearest children's hospital or orphanage. But there is no reason why it should not be old-age pensioners or blind kiddies or children from the heart of a city slum.

The good turn needs to be kept before boys constantly—not only the daily personal good turn but the troop good turn as well. Let's suppose the Court of Honour has met and chosen a crippled-children's party. We can't hold such a party on a Friday night but we can spend troop meeting night getting the troop-room shipshape and ready for the party on Saturday. The troop are not expected to do all this themselves. It is a wonderful occasion for co-operation with the Senior Scouts and the Rover Crew and the B.-P. Guild of Old Scouts, especially the B.-P. Guild. They can take over responsibility for the guests once the troop has invited them officially. They can collect them in cars, bring them to the troop-room, and eventually take them home again.

The Rover Crew and the troop will provide the party—the “eats” and the entertainment. The cost of the party may well be partly a charge on group funds, or may be defrayed by a personal levy to be earned by everyone in the group, or the B.-P. *Guild may decide to donate quite a chunk of the expenses.* Whichever course is chosen is the group's own responsibility and business.

I doubt if there is greater joy anywhere than in the faces and hearts of crippled children being entertained by boys who are healthy and *fit*. It is not so much in the “feed” and the helping hand that may be necessary then; nor the entertainment that follows, with all the well-tried old troop favourites like “Custard Quick”; nor even in the carrier-bag of books, toys, gifts, sweets and fruit which each eager youngster takes home with him. It is in the *spirit* of the whole show—the way in which everything is done, the advance preparations, and the day itself. A yearly good turn on these lines by the entire group—and let us not forget the Cubs either—is something worth having as a group tradition. It is worth sacrificing one troop night of the year to preparing for this good turn. The troop-room will need cleaning, dusting, decorating and making as cheerful as possible, for *it* is still the Christmas season. First aid to that is a blazing log fire in the open hearth on the day, and that will need logs cut by the troop and Seniors. More useful Scout training here in the use of the cross-cut saw.

I have always found that quick, ready entertainment goes down better on these occasions than any display of Scout training, such as the troop might put on a parent's night. A display of bridge-building, or physical training, or games, or life in an ordinary Scout troop, might only serve to remind the crippled youngsters even further how handicapped they are. It might even depress them.

But a good conjuror or ventriloquist; lots of snappy, short sketches and numbers from Ralph Reader's Gang shows; and, above all, slapstick, seem to go down remarkably well. The G.S.M. may appear dressed as King Farouk, and the S.M. may make positively his last (?) farewell appearance as Britannia or the Rose Queen of the garden-party burlesque. What does *it* matter so long as everyone is having a jolly good time, and particularly the guests?.

A group good turn in the first week of every year—it's a tradition worth having.

WEEK 15

JANUARY (ii)

IF it's a really dark but dry evening, then we'll forsake the cheerful troop-room and its log fire for the nearest stretch of wooded country. It might only be a spinney, or a "dell", or farmland with high hedges and raised banks. We shall have to make the very most of what we have got in the way of terrain. If we have no woods at all, then we can still do quite a lot on a dark, dry winter night in an open playing field or football pitch.

Let's assume we are going to do some real Scout training in mixed woodland. We're going to start from scratch and play Cat's Eyes. It will be as well if we play it in country which is fairly well known to us, because we are sure to have several tenderfeet who have never done any night training before.

The boys play the game and learn much about stalking, stealth and woodcraft. The Scouters act as umpires, although it may be considered useful for Scouters to give some real practical instruction at first by taking part in the game. It may be better for the Scouters to concentrate on training the Patrol Leaders hard and then leaving the P.L.s to get it down to the patrol in their own way. Now for Cat's Eyes.

At a set time known to all, one umpire will hang a small electric lamp (of the cycle-lamp variety) or a pigmy storm lantern in a selected tree about seven or eight feet from the ground. The lamp can be covered lightly with green tissue or flimsy paper. The effect will be a single green unwinking light visible clearly in all directions for some distance. It is important that the light should be visible from all points of the compass. At the same time the umpires should not select too obvious a position, but one that will take a little Scouting skill to locate and reconnoitre.

Meanwhile the patrols meet at pre-arranged separate rendezvous and open sealed envelopes which will tell them (possibly in troop code) that "the green eye of a famous pagan god has been stolen from an Eastern temple and is believed to be in the keeping of a native woodland sect". The instructions state that the eye must be found at all costs and returned intact to Troop H.Q. A suitable story can easily be written round such a promising plot by any Scouter of imagination and resource.

It is absolutely essential that each patrol should try to secure the "eye" without being seen by the other patrols. The game thus becomes a real test of woodcraft and skill. The umpires are there to see fair play, to set a time limit on the game and to award a handsome bounty of chocolate to the winning patrol, or possibly even a theatre or cinema visit.

When you have three or four or even five patrols trying to locate the eye we can have a good deal of fun listening to the mutterings, the pleas for quietness, the inevitable crack of broken twigs, and the occasional mad rush or skirmish in the darkness as patrols clash. It is essential for each patrol to have a secret password of its own, and woe betide any member of the patrol who divulges it, knowingly or unknowingly!

From my own experience of this simple training game over many years I can say that it pays a P.L. to appoint two spies in each patrol. It is not only essential that he should make plans for recovering the green eye of the pagan god. He must also have some idea of what the other patrols are doing. Hence the need for spies. Once the eye has been captured it will require some quick thinking on the part of all unsuccessful patrols. Plans will have to be abandoned; new ones for

preventing the successful return of the eye will have to be put into operation at once. That is where the fun comes in, and it is not good Scouting for patrols to be heard crashing through the undergrowth like a herd of young elephants in the later stages of the game.

Hold an “inquest” on the game round cocoa in the troop room later on. Be frank about the standard of stalking still attained. Let all resolve to do better on another occasion, and meanwhile let stalking practice “proceed apace”. Keep the first-aid box handy to deal with the inevitable minor scratches and abrasions.

And let’s remember this is only one out of twenty or more good stalking games for both night and daytime use that we ought to have ready for use when required.

WEEK 16

JANUARY (iii)

SCOUTS are always asking Scouters for *good* games. Here are some proved good ones for winter indoor troop meetings. A game to improve “smartness off the mark” is “First!” The game leader stands in some central position and says a whole host of things beginning with “First”..... “First Scout to touch oak!” “First off the floor!” “First in complete Scout uniform at the alert!” “First Scout to tie a bowline!” and so on. The game leader can vary his commands by signalling them or writing them in the troop code.

The Magic Circle is a firm favourite. The game leader draws a circle about a yard in diameter on the troop-room floor in chalk. The circle should not be in any central position or a corner. The patrols are given a brief thirty seconds to memorise the position of the circle. Then lights are snapped out. Scouts creep forward from one end of the room and have to halt when they think they are in the circle. Lights are put on again after one minute and Scouts must freeze where they are. The patrol with the greatest number of Scouts in or near the circle wins. This game will test a boy’s sense of direction, also an important and little-known sense which I call “fixation”.

Here’s a game that is packed with Scout training. Make a number of obstacles with logs, chairs, ropes, and so on. Now let each patrol have a “victim”. (Young Tiny will love to be this.) On the word “go” each member of the patrol (if he is physically able to do so) has to carry in turn the “victim”, using the fireman’s lift, to the opposite end of the troop-room and back over all obstacles. As well as being an exciting patrol race, it teaches a boy how to carry an insensible person over obstacles in, say, a smoke-filled room, an emergency that might have to be faced in any kind of building.

If we think our patrols are good at Map Reading, let’s try this quick-thinking game. Have a one-inch map of the district mounted on a piece of soft wood. Then stand about six feet away and throw a dart at the map-board. (If we don’t want to mark **it** too much, then we can use a piece of soft, sticky wax or plasticine.) As the dart (or wax) hits the board say: “There’s a fire at that point! Where’s the nearest fire alarm? Nearest doctor? Nearest hospital?” Other versions are: “There’s been an accident there”, or “A stranger wants to get to the nearest railway station from that point. What’s his quickest route?” We can make this perfectly grand game as original as we like, based entirely on our own district. It is one of the best training games I have ever played.

Impromptu ice hockey is a real winner. Have two simple goals at either end of the troop-room. The two teams (five-aside) can be of members of one patrol. In fact an inter-patrol tournament is easy to arrange. The “chuck” is a piece of polished hardwood about three inches square and one

inch thick. Each Scout has a short stout stick about two feet long. (*Don't use Scout staves for this game.*) Goals are scored as in ice hockey and the same rules can be used. The referee should be *very strict* on ankle-tapping, lifting the stick above shoulder height and any kind of rough play. This is a skilful, fast game. It is the perfect answer to Scouters who want a good stock indoor game. Try also playing it with the smallest size soccer ball, or a junior-size rugby ball, instead of the chuck. The sticks can be replaced by real cut-down hockey sticks if you are as lucky as I was, and find a hockey club disbanding!

WEEK 17

JANUARY (iv)

SCOUTS who are keen campers may well start asking for tips on winter camping about now. Tell them at once that winter camping is a tough, hardening experience, even in a mild winter, and that it is a *Senior* Scout and Rover Scout activity. I know many keen campers among young Scouts are eager to try the idea. But I do *not* recommend it for young Scouts in the twelve to fifteen age group, nor would any other winter camper of real experience.

Even Senior Scouts have to adopt special technique. Winter camping should only be done by Senior Scouts in small parties under expert adult leadership. B.-P. always said: "A Scout is not a fool." The line for a Scouter to take is: "No one but a very experienced camper would go camping in winter. At your age you just haven't got the experience. Wait for April and May and we'll get down to camping proper."

Keen campers can do something, however, at this time of the year. Let's go through our list of patrol camp sites near home. I mean those sites which are within, say, ten or fifteen miles of your home and which are used for weekend patrol camping during the spring and summer.

Good campers always try to see their camp sites under the worst possible weather conditions. This enables them to study drainage, prevailing winds and local weather lore. Then if we had a spell of heavy rain or bad weather during our summer camp we would know these important things.

So get the troop out on bikes on this winter weekend. Go and see all the local camp sites. They look very different now compared to the summer months. Make brief reports with a map; and if one troop share the sites with other patrols and troops, as often happens, let them have copies. This will all help to build up the troop's camping experience. We cannot spend too much time exploring and studying camp sites.

Remember—winter camping is for tough, older Senior Scouts. The day *will* come when our boys will be old enough to try it for themselves.

But if our boys are keen to try camping in January we are going to make the most of that interest in tonight's troop meeting. Let's imagine that we are stranded in the backwoods, in the wilderness of the mountains of British Columbia, in the Far West of Canada, if we want a real-life setting. Let each patrol, in its own den or corner, make up the contents of an "emergency field kit for an individual or lone camper under such conditions.

To get the atmosphere really right give each patrol a flat tin, with a lid, about six inches by four inches by one inch. A tobacconist will no doubt be able to give you three identical lidded tins very easily. We'll give no clues at all as to what we as Scouters would put in such a kit.

What we want to do is to find out what the boys would put in it—the same boys who have the guts to think of going to camp in January. We may have the quietest night we've had for a long time!

When this game was first played patrols produced lists containing Elastoplast dressings, nylon fishing-line, fishhooks, waterproof matches, compass, powerful magnifying-glass, steel mirror that could also act as a signalling helio if necessary, razor-blades, small supply of highly concentrated foods such as Nescafe, soup concentrate or dehydrated meat, miniature first-aid kit, needles, thread, pins, small powerful magnet, map on silk not paper, small hank of tough light twine, scissors, sharpening-stone for sheath-knife, etc. etc.

Let the troop discuss and criticise all selections at length and let the boys decide which patrol put up the best show. There may be debatable points, such as that powerful small magnet in a steel box with a compass! When the kit has been discussed at length put forward a Scouter's point of view: if a man is in difficult country alone he may need an immediate food supply and the opportunity to catch food more than anything else. Dehydrated food, and a fishing-line and hooks, yes! He will have to make a fire for cooking the fish or game he catches. The 'waterproof matches and the magnifying-glass for lighting bone-dry tinder, yes! And he needs a fire at night to keep bears and moose and mountain lynx away. Yes? What animals *are* there in British Columbia? Do they include bear, moose and lynx? Would these animals attack man if unprovoked? Would they kill for lust of killing or for food if mad with hunger?

Finally, we can make up an actual kit that will be approved by everyone, and we will keep it in the troop-room somewhere, ready for an emergency. At some camp or other, possibly during summer camp itself, we'll try it out. Some of us *will* get lost for a day or so, or for a weekend, and we'll see how good our emergency kit is. We may have to revise our opinion on some things in it as a result of personal, practical experience. So the idea of winter camping wasn't such a bad one after all!

WEEK 18

FEBRUARY (i)

WE start preparing for troop summer camp in the first week of February. It's exciting in winter for the Court of Honour to meet and consider suggestions from the patrols for the biggest event in the whole Scout year—the annual summer camp.

Some troops like to go to the same place year after year. Others prefer a different spot each year, returning in some years to old and favourite haunts. Most troops prefer “somewhere by the sea”; that is not difficult when we remember that in Britain no one has to travel more than a hundred miles to reach the sea.

Let's suppose our troop wants to go to a completely new site. The Scouters will have to write many letters and make many enquiries, following up the original suggestion that may have come from one patrol. This early spade-work is done *now* so that an inspection visit” can be made at Easter. This visit is very important. In some troops the Patrol Leaders go with the Scouters on this trip. The idea is to get an idea of the site layout, the surrounding country and to meet the host, usually a farmer. Then troop camp can be planned in detail between Easter and August.

Other jobs for summer camp are started now. Parents must be visited; school and family holidays are important dates; and a good P.L. makes notes about all patrol members and hands them to Skipper. The troop starts a weekly “camp bank”, so that the cost of fares, food and so on can be paid for well in advance. (The Troop Leader makes a good treasurer for camp subs and a special bank or Post Office account is opened.)

The troop expert on maps starts to make his collection for summer camp now. I would recommend the Ordnance Survey one-inch and Bartholomew's quarter-inch as essential—the one-inch for general use and the quarter-inch for getting a sound idea of the country around the site. Most troops have wide games and exploring trips at summer camp. A six-inch map is useful for the actual layout of the camp site, place names, and so on.

Between February and summer we shall have lots of time to renovate tents and cooking gear. But it's not too soon to start talking and thinking summer camp tonight. Let's get our Scouts keen, enthusiastic and *interested*. The success of summer camp depends on the solid work which goes into its planning in those early months before spring is here.

And here is the letter which I used to send in the first week of even. February to the parents of every boy in my troop:-

February 1st.

Dear Parent,

Preliminary Letter—Summer Camp—19....

We had a record list of 17 suggestions for Summer Camp this year, all of which have been carefully considered by our Court of Honour. We are going to break new ground in going to South Devon and we hope to dodge the inclement weather that has followed us for four years. Preliminary arrangements are as follows:

Date and Place: Leave at 11 p.m. on Friday, August 12th, arriving back in at 6 p.m. Sunday, August 28th. Place of Camp—Salcombe, on the South Devon coast.

Cost: Inclusive of everything except pocket money:

Boys under 16 £
Boys over 16 or Scouters.....£

Camp Bank is now open and boys may pay so much per week towards Summer Camp if they care. Bank Cards will be issued.

I hope to be personally in charge of the camp and can assure you that your boy will have a grand time. Summer Camp is the best thing we can offer your boy in Scouting. Will you do your very best to allow him to go? Further particulars will be issued later.

Yours sincerely,

Scoutmaster

To the S.M. Troop:

I will allow my boy to go to Summer Camp, 19..

I will not

Signed.....(Parent)

WEEK 19

FEBRUARY (ii)

IF we get any snow either now or in the next few weeks there is a wonderful reason for taking the entire troop out. We must all be warmly clad, yet not so bundled up with scarves and pullovers that we find it difficult to move about. There'll be lots of fun snowballing and sledding, but we don't neglect a visit to that spinney on the hill. If we are quiet and keep our eyes open we shall find all manner of bird tracks—large and small—and what fun will be trying to identify those tracks.

We may find rabbit, squirrel, Cat and dog tracks quickly.

When the snow has gone away let's go down to the farm and have a look at some tracks; in the muddy lanes and about the farmyard. We can soon recognise some of the bird tracks that we saw in the snow and can compare them with the farmyard rooster, and perhaps the turkey if there are any left.

The cat and dog tracks will be easy to spot, just as they were in the snow. Then we can search for the deep tracks made by the cows, pigs and horses, and if the mud is not too wet we can start making a few plaster casts.

Let's start with a good specimen of a Jersey cow—or any sort of cow. Look for a firm print on the verge of the farm lane where the mud is not slushy. Any Scout knows the difference between mud and slush! First of all we put a "collar" of thin but tough cardboard round the print. We make these collars in advance from lengths of cardboard about nine to twelve inches long and four inches wide, gluing the edges carefully.

Now we mix some plaster of Paris to a smooth paste with water – neither too thick nor too thin. We can buy this at any builders' merchants or decorators' supply stores. But if we want to make a specially good plaster cast we buy some dental plaster at a chemist's shop. It is more expensive but very much finer in texture and gives better casts. Carry this plaster around in a tin with a tight-fitting lid and don't let it get damp. Whatever we do we don't mix it up with our food, especially if we are going camping or cycling or picnicking. We can also carry a suitable tin to mix the plaster paste in, and water is available in the nearest stream or house, or we can carry some in a bottle. When we have mixed our paste really well so that there are no lumps in it, we tap the sides of the tin to get rid of bubbles. Use plaster as fresh as possible because air spoils it.

Don't make too much, either—just enough to fill our cardboard collar.

Just before we pour the plaster into the collar we remove any leaves or twigs from the print—they will spoil it otherwise. Then we pour on the plaster carefully. Let the plaster set as hard as possible. It will do so in a very short space of time. Then we gently remove the collar and any adhering earth, and take the cast home. Let it remain a day or so, when we can wash it and find the track or print in permanent form.

It is real fun to make a collection of such casts to decorate the walls of the troop-room or patrol-den. The Scout who makes the cast can write the date on the back of the cast in pencil or Indian ink, or scratch it on with a pin just before the plaster sets in the collar. He can paint it with a hard-gloss paint, decorate it in any way he likes, or he can just paint it with shellac to make a

permanent decoration for the home. Plaster casts can be given away as presents, or made into bookends, using a wooden mounting, or wall plaques with very little trouble.

Soon the troop will want to do something better than taking casts and tracks made by the commoner birds and cows, horses, ponies and pigs. It is more exciting to search for fox and deer and badger tracks, and the boys can search for lesser known birds along the banks of streams and the seashore.

The quality of the casts will improve as we make many more of them. Sometimes the plaster cracks or breaks and each patrol will have to judge by practice the right texture of the plaster mix. To strengthen the cast, and make it more permanent, put some hair or fine wire or string, or even matchsticks, into the mix. Some cast-makers use powdered alum or mercerised wax as "strengtheners", but whatever we do we don't put salt into the mix—it makes the cast brittle.

All this casting of tracks can be done on fine days in winter and early spring (February—March) so that in late spring and summer we know the technique really well—those are the best outdoor times. Then we can collect leaves for pressing and mounting with cellophane protection in a loose-leaf photo album. Has the troop ever tried mounting a spray of leaves? Put a spray of thin twigs and leaves between sheets of newspaper carefully and then put it between, say, the carpet and under felt in a place where people will walk on it. Leave it a week or a fortnight and the spray will be pressed beautifully.

These are simple outdoor hobbies for the troop, but they lead on quite naturally to more exciting things—photographing wild birds and animals by day *and* night; sketching and painting landscapes; camping or cycling with a purpose, such as "collecting" old and interesting stiles or bridges or church-towers or windmills, or bringing old maps up to date by our own field observations and study.

The troop can "adopt" a stream or pond and get to know it at all seasons of the year, and the wild life connected with it.

Outdoor hobbies are *always* fun if the troop is prepared to work hard on them, and is ready to go out of doors in every month of the year, not just spring and summer. That is the standard to aim at in the troop—to get out in every week and month of the year.

WEEK 20

FEBRUARY (iii)

the most impromptu programmes often give most fun. here's one the Peewits and Seagulls tried out. Saturday afternoon was spent on bikes, spinning through the woods on a cold but sunny day, ending up with an inspection of a favourite patrol camp site some miles away. Then back to Troop H.Q. in record time, with the wind behind them and a warm glow in every boy's cheeks.

The patrols shared tea round a roaring log fire in the troop-den and then thought out ideas for the evening. The Peewits wanted a table-tennis tournament, but it was young Tiny of the Seagulls who won the day. "Let's have some stump speeches!" he said, with a cheerful grin. "And I'll bet the Seagulls are better at it than the Peewits.

So the P.L.s let young Tiny organise it all himself. First of all Tiny put the name of every Scout there on a slip of paper and put those slips into a Scout hat. Then he asked every chap to think of

any subject he liked and to keep the idea to himself, but to write it down on a slip of paper. These slips were all put into a separate Scout hat. You could tell by the grins that some chaps had some rattling good ideas up their sleeve.

Then Tiny shook both hats up and finally took a name out of one hat and a subject out of the other. The “victim” had to speak on the impromptu subject for three minutes or longer.

First name out of the hat was Joe, P.L. of the Peewits, and he had to speak on “My Favourite Book”. He made a very good job of that, because he could talk all night about *Treasure Island*. It led on to quite a discussion, and young Tiny found that half an hour had slipped away just like that. Then Tiny had the tables turned on him, for he was the next name out of the hat and he found himself down to speak on “Girl Guides”! And so it went on, until it was time for a mug of steaming cocoa round the dying embers, and then home.

When Skipper asked Tiny what they did on Saturday night in the den he said with an infectious grin, “We had two hours of stump speeches, Skip—and, golly, they were fun, too. I remember that wet day in camp last year when they filled an evening up... they’re just as good for a winter Saturday night when you’ve had a bike trip and the chaps are feeling like a lazy evening. . .”

Let’s try it again for ourselves and just see.

We can try out another idea at this time of the year. To train a boy’s sense of observation properly we should train him in a sense and appreciation of shape and design and pattern, as well as visual observation of tracks and signs and so on. We can try it very simply in this way, and soon spot the boys with talent in this direction. Draw the outline in Indian ink on a drawing-block of a number of islands around Britain—the Isle of White the Isle of Man, Arran, Anglesey, and so on. The boys will spot them reasonably quickly. But supposing we forget all about scale and produce a second set of island shapes on differing scales such as Holy Island, Anglesey, drawn twice as large as Ireland itself; the Isle of Wight drawn upside down; Iceland half its normal size, and so on. That might keep the patrols very busy for some time, and it can be as original and full of fun as we can make it.

Then try it in a different way. So far we have dealt only with outlines of islands drawn in black on a white, or possibly buff or yellow, background Try the reverse. Cut out islands in thin black tissue-paper and lightly tack them on white backgrounds. If we have the time, patience and ingenuity we can try the effect of differing colours and backgrounds.

A shape or design or pattern—it doesn’t have to be an island every time—is done in many colours on many coloured backgrounds. Don’t go in for elaborate designs but simple squares, circles, figures of eight lozenges, diamonds, hearts, spades, clubs, and so on, with differing backgrounds. How easy it is to identify a black shape on a white background! But how difficult to identify black shape on a dark-green background, or even red or blue. The variations on this theme are delightful and will keep an intelligent troop going for weeks.

Stump speeches and “shape, design, pattern” observation Not a bad evening at all.

WEEKS 21 AND 22

FEBRUARY (iv) MARCH (i)

AN emergency situation has developed in the troop. Skipper has been taken away for an emergency operation (fortunately not serious!) or has gone north on business for a fortnight at short notice. No one is very sure at the moment. And Andy the A.S.M. has at last gone into the R.A.F. for his National Service.

Skipper has merely sent a note to each P.L. saying, "Please carry on until I return.., it may be a fortnight and certainly will not be less. Good luck and Good Scouting "

So the next bit is addressed to the boys who are carrying on in Skipper's absence.

So you've got to run your troop meetings now! Well, yours isn't the only troop with an S.M. in hospital and an A.S.M. doing National Service. Nor is it the only troop being run by three or four Patrol Leaders. I know how you feel when you say it's a tough job being "S.M."

You say you feel short of experience, that things don't always pan out quite like you intended, that you feel pretty sore over those youngsters in the Peewits messing up your Kim's Game stunt, that you feel a bit self conscious taking prayers like Skipper always does. Yes, it's true, no doubt. But let's try and sort out the next troop meeting, shall we? It's Weeks 21 and 22 we have to keep going. Put yourself in the place of one of those "ornery" youngsters. Would you like to come into the troop-room ten minutes before troop meeting, on a starving cold night in February, and find just nothing doing. No! You know the difference a smart duty patrol makes. Suppose you came and found a really good fire going, a duty patrol working high pressure to get the place spick and span before seven-thirty, you'd soon feel like being cheerful with members of your patrol. If there's snarling and shivery misery around the patrol corners at seven-twenty-five you're going to find it tough to run any kind of meeting.

So there's the duty patrol to get onto hard. They've *got* to get down early enough to make a good job of the duty. Let's put one patrol on duty for a month at a time. Give them points for the Patrol Competition. While you inspect patrols let the other Patrol Leaders inspect the duty. See there's no dust on shelves and books; that the floor's really clean: that the fireplace looks respectable and has a decent fire going; that there's coal and logs in the buckets. Skipper marks each patrol each week out of **20**, giving a possible 80 (or 100 if there's five Fridays in the month) for the patrol.

You've *got* to start meetings promptly at **7.30** p.m. If you can, kick off at 7 p.m. so as to get the youngsters home earlier. See you get everyone off home at 9 or **9.15** p.m. at the latest. Let's suppose you begin at **7.30** p.m.

You plan the meeting out with the other Patrol Leaders two or three nights ahead. Meet at each other's houses in turn for this special secret meeting. (Mums and dads are glad to see you doing it.) Keep a stunt or two up your sleeve to keep your patrols up to scratch.

At the monthly Court of Honour you decided to keep normal training going. That's grand. Don't forget the spring and summer are just around the corner. You must keep that Court of Honour going through thick and thin. Why, it's genuine self-government! And Skipper might be away for months.

Let's plan a ninety-minute troop meeting—7.30 to 9 p.m. or 7 to **8.30** p.m. Subtle that, because you've got three periods of thirty minutes each. One we'll book for patrol work, one for games in which we'll enjoy ourselves (Skipper calls them "recreational") and one for games where we enjoy ourselves and *learn* at the same time (Skipper calls them "instructional") Wait a minute, though. Inspection, flag-break and subs take a good five minutes right at the beginning. "Logs round" for cocoa and cake, notices and prayers, take another good five minutes at the end of the meeting. Right—we'll make our meeting into three sections of twenty-five minutes each. That'll give us fifteen solid minutes for getting all these in. Good. We'll start. We'll give them a meeting where there's no time for the "ornery" ones to start kicking around.

At **7.30** p.m. Ginger and Old Tub are inspecting duty while you go round the patrols on inspection. They're smartly brought to the alert by patrol seconds. You look at uniform quickly. Is the general impression one of smart neatness? Buttons O.K., knecker ironed, woggle fit to look at, stockings a sight for the gods to see, shoes polished? You look for clean nails and teeth now and then, pocket linings, blades of sheath-knives, the *insides* of Scout hats (to see if they're brushed well). You don't make yourself a darn nuisance. But you *do* a quick, thorough job of inspection. Don't stand any lame excuses for not wearing uniform. There might be a good reason. But if there's not and you find out, the patrol suffers.

Lateness is vile. If you begin at **7.30** p.m. you mean **7.30**p.m. Not 7.34 p.m. or **7.42** p.m. Sorry, if there's anyone in that habit they're in for a rude awakening. When all your fellows are in the habit of getting down between **7.20** p.m. and **7.29 3/4** p.m., you're on the way to having a really good troop. Allowances must be made, though, for illness or homework or prep". You'll have to use your discretion, son.

Inspection is over by **7.30 1/4** p.m. Grand! Now let Patrol Leaders collect subs right away. Each Patrol Leader collects subs each week, keeps his own patrol sub-book and hands over the books and cash to you once a month at Court of Honour. You give points on the state of those sub-books. Encourage smart "bookkeeping". You hand the sub-books back initialled and make a note in your own notebook and give the cash to the Group Treasurer as soon as you can. Businesslike? Perhaps. But it pays in the long run.

Flag-break two minutes later. Horror! What if the duty patrol, whose job it is to prepare the Jack for breaking, did it wrongly? We'll get over that by making certain one night— yes, we'll do it tonight—that *every* fellow in the troop knows *how* to prepare a Union Jack ready for breaking.

After flag-break we'll have fifteen minutes of our twenty-five for really good team games. This gets everyone thoroughly warm, especially if the weather is still unmentionable. Make a point of seeing troop-room windows are open to let some fresh air in, though. This week we'll try a game indoors and some of our training work outside. If the snow's still there and the moon's up well get a snow-fight in as well. You must always have alternatives on your troop programme. If you always intend to keep strictly to one programme you'll be the luckiest troop-runner ever. Make allowances for visitors (Commissioners, Scouters, parents, other Scouts, the wastepaper man), for weather (you wouldn't play a crawly-crawly night game on the golf-links in a torrent of rain), and *temperament*. You're justified in giving an extra five minutes to patrol corners if you find things are going well and the Patrol Leaders want to finish something off. You're justified in cutting a game out in order to get the fellows off home in time. Why were you late last week? Because the boys wanted name tapes, county and Tenderfoot badges, and it took about twenty-five minutes to get it done. These things are always occurring.

See your programme is elastic. You mould it to suit what you think Friday night will require. When Friday night comes you are not afraid to adapt if you find it necessary.

One thing: you *must* keep a troop programme notebook. On one side put down your programme with times and notes of games and gear required. Make certain that you have *all* the gear you need on Friday night. Then you don't waste time chasing round for balls and chalk and cooking gear and rope. On the other side put down notes *after* the meeting. Put down the games that went down well, those that weren't so good and why, your views on the Peewit patrol work, things that want tightening up, a note about the defective light at the north end of the troop-room, and so on. It'll be a mine of usefulness to you, and shows you where you're going.

We were about to start on our fifteen-minute team game. We'll go for floor-ball. There are two painted lines at either end of the troop-room about two feet from the wall. Put a couple of logs on each line about six feet apart. These are your goals. A paint spot marks the centre of the room. Split your fellows into two equal sides for weight and size and line them on their own lines. One is goalie. All the rest forwards. The soft ball (good red rubber ball) you put on the centre-spot. Now each side bounds for the ball and tries to score by shooting at and through the other goal. Each player may use *one hand* only. The ball must not travel higher than one foot off the ground. Keep it on the floor. Encourage slick quiet passing. The goalie can stop the ball with both hands. Have a bounce-up for fouls (kicking, high and reckless passing, and so on). The best players at floor ball get a drop-kick effect by hitting the ball accurately and hard as it comes bouncing to them. A grand game and the fellows like it. Have two halves, seven and a half minutes each way.

You ref.

Send the fellows right off to patrol corners for twenty-five minutes. You've decided what to do at your meeting with the Patrol Leaders. So Old Tub and Ginger and Eddie get on with the job right away. They're going to finish those Second Class badges off, get recruits through Tenderfoot and start talking about First Class Journey reports. This gives you a breather to prepare the rest of the meeting, using the Scouter's room or the kitchen. Ten minutes later you stick a head round the troop-room door and see how things are going. Yes, the "ornery" Peewits are signalling under Ginger. Old Tub is showing a couple of Seagulls how to deal with someone suffering from shock, while the Woodpigeons are doing all sorts of mysterious things with rope. Good work.

You do something entirely different. You go round to Mr. Gee (who's the Troop Treasurer) and arrange "something awful".

What happens? Well, at almost 8.20 p.m. the Patrol Leaders suddenly tell their patrols that a man leapt out of the darkness in the High Street at 8 p.m., smashed the plate-glass of Johnson's the Jewellers and was off like wild fire with a load of real "jools". His only refuge is the troop-room (don't ask why!); He tried to phone a confederate. Think!

Smashed plate-glass window, jools, a bleeding hand, a slinking thief in the night trying to phone. So Old Tub's patrol are the first to find the bloodstained handkerchief in the call-box at Edwards Avenue—they trail that slinking figure in the snow, see the bloodstains (no fainting in Old Tub's patrol, please!) And it's Old Tub's patrol who have a free fight with him near the troop-room. When the Peewits and Seagulls find the trail Old Tub's crowd are calmly eating "jools" and sitting on *your* head. Marvellous what you can do with three bottles of ink, a quarter of a pound of liquorice allsorts, an old trilby and Joe's old mackintosh.

To clinch matters, you have your ten minutes' snow fight outside the troop-room (providing there's snow!). Old Tub's Patrol v. The Rest. The Rest get their own back and win hands down—five heads buried in snow to two snowballs stuffed down neck.

Crumbs! That's nearly 8.45 p.m... ! We'll have to cut out the cooking practice. You meant to show them (on a pressure stove on the stone hearth because you want the fire for cocoa) how to make a flapjack. You take three quick-fire ideas for three patrols instead. Each patrol under its patrol second while the three Patrol Leaders make the cocoa. Quick, quick, three ideas! First patrol. Know it? First patrol off the floor, first patrol on it... to touch glass, paper, wood, aluminium, green curtains (careful!) First patrol right round the troop-room outside and back at the alert in its own patrol corner. Watch them pant!

And you're still ready! Three patrols spaced out in lines. (You've got a sign for doing that.) The troop knows true north in the troop-room. Right across the Seagull's corner. "Face north", you shout. They do. "North-east", "Southwest" and so you go on. Last three in get points for their patrols. Grand fun.

As Old Tub signals that the cocoa's going great guns you put three Scouts blindfold with legs wide apart in the centre of the room. Put the rest of the troop at the south end. See how many can get through the Scouts' legs and safely to the north wall. It only takes three and a half minutes. But only four of the gang get through. Don't they love it!

Then you have the cocoa, the troop chatter and Old Tub's Pride (Madeira cake, numb one!). Notices and prayers follow. Yes, they're quiet and they'll like your idea of Lord's Prayer together with hats off, then a different fellow each week reading a prayer from *The Scout Prayer Book*, a silent prayer (especially for your absent Scouters) and the benediction "Teach us, Good Lord, to serve Thee as Thou deservest .

Flag-down. Troop dismiss. And inside six minutes everyone, including the duty patrol, are gone. If you are lucky, that is!

That leaves you and Old Tub and Ginger and Eddie round the fire for fifteen minutes or so, to talk of old times with a second cup of cocoa and a second piece of Old Tub's Pride.

H'm! You were twelve and a half minutes late on that troop meeting—according to *your* schedule! You wish you had as many shillings. Well, that's not so dusty, son. Make up for it next week!

WEEK 23

MARCH (ii)

SKIPPER has made a record recovery and is once more back in harness. He will be forgiven if he is not quite up to the mark and prefers to let the boys run most of the games and stunts. Instead of his usual "something up my sleeve" he gives the troop a talk about World Friendship round the cocoa and cake at the end of the evening. It is good for a Scouter to give a serious talk, but not too serious, now and then to the troop. Scouting has always stood for world friendship in the widest sense. B.-P. said: "Look wide." He did not mean that Scouts should be so wrapped up in their troops and groups that they had no time or inclination for Local Association, County, National, or International Scout affairs.

At least once in his Scout career a boy is eligible to go to a World Jamboree, and it can be the most memorable event of his life. We can do much to develop the right “wide” outlook in Scouts by encouraging worldwide correspondence with Scouts in other countries; by encouraging our own boys to camp abroad, and by inviting foreign Scouts to come and camp with us at our annual summer camps....

Boys may seek to find their own “twin” and write to boys who were born on the same date as themselves. That is a fine idea and one we shall try to adopt in the troop. But in the first flush of enthusiasm young people are apt to overdo their writing at first. Then the odd letters get missed, replies may be erratic, enthusiasm flags, interests change and letter-writing becomes boring. The net result is that the whole thing is a waste of time—and stamps!

Think of letter-writing on these lines if you will, possibly giving a talk to the chaps who are interested. In the first place you cannot expect to meet a congenial pen-friend on paper at the very first attempt. Indeed you might have several “goes” at it before you find that common interest and the same kind of thinking about the same kind of things, which is a feature of all good correspondence. If at first your pen-friendship seems unsatisfactory, be patient. It may take a little time and the writing of several letters before congenial friendship is reached.

New lines of thought, new possibilities and new adventures open merely by receiving a letter from a friend, even though he or she may be thousands of miles away.

Writing letters to someone you have never met is not easy for young people. Yet the idea of expressing yourself and your personality on paper is very good indeed. *It always clarifies your thoughts to put them down on paper.* And if you are thinking along Christian lines, and thinking of the good you can do in this world, the value will be enormous.

Write to someone about your own age with the same kind of hobbies and interests. You may collect stamps, or autographs, or book plates, or even labels off cheese cartons. You may collect newspaper titles, coins, college crests, animal photos or pressed wild flowers. All those things you can exchange by post. You may be a photographer, or an amateur artist, or a whittling wood carver, or you may be a lover of poetry and fine writing. It is easy to fill your letters with your own enthusiasms and interests and hobbies.

In your first letters you may exchange personal photos, details of your family and home, and even that troop of yours, or school and church, sports club, or social club. Tell your “twin” all that you are doing, and do not be afraid to tell him or her all about your hopes and ambitions.

Youth is fired by enthusiasm—by great thoughts, and great deeds, and great ideals. We must keep these ideals before us in a world of changing values. The world of tomorrow depends on the youth of today. And tomorrow is sooner than you think.

A hard-core of right-thinking young people is the greatest asset any community in the civilised world can have today.

Sometimes correspondence may be entered into with wrong motives. It is quite wrong to *expect* presents or souvenirs, or to ask for them. If a present of some kind is received unexpectedly from your pen-friend, then do feel obliged to exchange gifts if you possibly can. Good pen-friendships are founded on mutual respect and interests, and ideals, and not on gifts. Pen-friends may, however, want to exchange small gifts on their birthdays and at Christmas.

Pen-friendships of the right sort may lead eventually to exchange visits to each other's homes, usually in the school holidays. This is most valuable and will cement the friendship. But such visits should be true *exchange* visits—au *pair*, as the French say—and then nothing is one-sided.

Because this does involve your home and your parents, do keep them fully informed as to what you are doing. You would not invite your pen-friend to come to your home without telling your mother and father.

All this is the basis of Skipper's talk.

WEEK 24

MARCH (iii)

B-P. told us that we could learn a lot about character *from* a careful observation of the types of boot and shoe worn by people—and from the way in which they wore their foot-gear. Let's read our *Scouting for Boys* again on this point. It is a good idea to read it out aloud to the troop and to have a brisk discussion afterwards about boots, shoes and every kind of footgear.

We can even do some preliminary work in a London tube train if and when we have the opportunity. There it is easy to study the footgear of people sitting opposite one and to do so without arousing any suspicion or hostile glances. When B.-P. first showed boys how to study character by looking at people in trains and buses there are reports that the boys did it so literally that they were misunderstood!

At any rate some preliminary study, say every morning for a week, in a London tube will reveal the astonishing variation in *types* of footwear, soles and heels, shapes and styles, condition of shoes, methods of cleaning them, and so on. Note that women do not necessarily keep their shoes in better trim than men, even though they may appear to do so. We can make a notebook about it all in each patrol, comparing a week's notes at the next troop meeting.

We can try "shoe study" in the weekly patrol meetings this week, as well as on troop night. Let's start with ourselves, taking off our shoes to see how we wear them and any idiosyncrasies or traits we may have known little about before.

The point to emphasise to the boys is *observation training*—and especially the ways in which we can identify the movements and habits of people by shoe study and eventually, though it may not be so easy at first, character study. At this stage we can bring a guest-speaker into the troop meeting, none other than Joe Binks, the well-known local shoe repairer down the road!

In his own way Joe can tell us a lot about boots and shoes and the strange ways in which customers wear their shoes. He will tell us, as if we needed telling, that he never sees dirty shoes being worn by smart and cheerful Scouts. Although we want him to tell us something of shoes and character study mainly, there is no harm in Joe showing the boys how to clean their shoes quickly and easily and how to look after them. This is useful training in cleanliness and thrift. I know one troop who made their own Joe Binks an honorary member after such an evening!

Shoe study can continue under suitable conditions outdoors in the sand-pit used for observation and deduction practice, and especially in distinguishing between rubber and leather soles, crepe soles and heels, and so on. Trick ideas can be tried, such as walking across the sand-pit in football boots fitted with bars, which fooled one troop for a very long time.

We can try walking on dry concrete in wet shoes with different kinds of soles and heels, or even on newspaper or a dry wooden floor, if we want to do it indoors. It will all help to identify footprints and make deductions from them. For instance, it is fairly easy to determine whether a chap is knock-kneed or not from a set of his footprints—and the reverse! Try it for yourselves in your own troop.

Shoe study and deduction from footprints is not something to be looked at in week **24** and then left for ever. It needs constant, regular practice in patrol meetings and the occasional ten- or fifteen-minute stunt in a troop meeting to keep up to date.

WEEK 25

MARCH (iv)

THIS week we're going to have an outdoor meeting, and we'll challenge the troops down the road to a grand game we'll call Running the Gauntlet.

Here is an observation game suitable for an inter-troop game or for a wide game in a Local Association Scout Week.

It takes the form of a combined wide game in which every troop in the district can take part. It teaches every Scout a little more about the art of keeping his eyes and ears open; one has only to read *Scouting for Boys* over again to realise the emphasis B..P. placed on training in observation.

It serves still another purpose. The troops concerned or the Association will be in the local public eye for a whole afternoon; the best type of publicity for Scouting is always simple— smart, cheerful Scouts doing plain, simple, honest-to-goodness Scouting. What better public-relations work for Scouting can there be than a successful wide game in the district?

This game can be organised by two or more Troop Scouters working together, or a D.S.M. with the assistance of two or three Troop Scouters. First of all select a suitable day. (In four successive post-war years March (iv) was delightful.) The best time is undoubtedly a Saturday morning or afternoon in early spring before the main camping season is upon us. It is essential that a lot of 'general public' should be around, and I can think of no more suitable setting than the average city suburb or town High Street on a Saturday morning or afternoon, with its shopping crowds and people out for walks.

Now a route of, say, two or three miles is determined by the D.S.M. Some careful thought should be given to this. The route can ideally be part country, part town or suburb. My route started at a suburban station, wandered along the entire length of a typical high street with shops, an ancient church, old buildings, garages, cinemas and so on. Then out past straggling modern houses, through a poultry farm, a fairly extensive wood, a lonely lane with thick hedgerows, another wood, a stretch of main road and to a final point—a clubhouse on a golf-links.

To make certain this route is thoroughly understood by all Troop Scouters the D.S.M. prepares a simple map on a relatively large scale and gives a copy to every troop taking part. The map and a brief description of the game and its simple rules should be studied by each troop for at least a week before the game.

Now the D.S.M. makes "top Secret" arrangements with a neighbouring Association to borrow some personnel who are prepared to disguise themselves and act as "the hunted" on the set route.

A mixed bag of Senior Scouts, Rover Scouts and Scouts is essential. Old and young Scouters, thin and lanky types, rotund and portly, greying or bearded, young fresh-faced P.L.s, Scouts and Rover Scouts. Absolute secrecy by “the hunted” is essential if the game is to be successful. As a rough guide, depending on the size of the L.A., about thirty could form the strength of “the hunted”.

The theme of the game is that “the hunted” will appear on all or part of the set route of two or three miles between the hours of, say, 2.45 p.m. and 5 p.m. on the set day. *They will be in disguise.* All troops with their Scouters gather at a central meeting-place at 2.15 p.m. Here the D.S.M. addresses them briefly on the game and what it is all about. He hands written descriptions of the normal appearance of all thirty members of the hunted to every troop half an hour before the game starts. These descriptions, of course, give no clues to the disguise adopted by “the hunted”. They are merely normal physical descriptions, e.g. “Man about thirty-eight, five feet ten inches, thirteen stone, well built. Greying hair brushed well back. Fresh complexion.

Blue eyes, etc. etc.,” or “Boy aged sixteen, five feet nine inches, slim, lightly built, mop of blond untidy hair, prominent ears, deep scar on left ankle, etc. etc.”

The troops are told that all these thirty people will be in disguise and will make every attempt to avoid being challenged, but have strict orders not to leave the route between the times stated. A password is given. If one of the hunted is challenged correctly he must admit his identity and hand over a red counter. Each one of the hunted has ten counters. Obviously he will want to keep his counters, for when his ten are handed over he is out of the game.

At the end of the game each troop hands in its bag of red counters—the troop with the highest number wins the game. It is worth making it rather a special show and having a tiny cup or shield for an annual competitive wide game in the Association Scout week.

Let the afternoon finish with tea for all and an evening of camp-fire and plenty of impromptu turns, with each troop making some contribution to the programme.

Of the thirty “hunted” in my rehearsal only four succeeded in retaining their ten red counters throughout the two and a quarter hours the game was on. Their disguises were almost perfect—two burly Scouters dressed as corporation employees, in blue overalls and dusty garb, pushed a hand-cart laden with cement, tiles and sand along the entire three miles of the set route. They were only half-challenged once (and wrongly!) during their marathon effort.

A Rover Scout disguised himself as a window-cleaner and solemnly did his job at two houses en route without being challenged at all. No Scout thought it suspicious that a window-cleaner should be engaged at one house for over an hour at a time.

Possibly the most barefaced member of the hunted was a keen cross-country runner. Adopting no disguise at all, he simply ran along the three-mile route in running vest and shorts with a big number on his back and front. Having ran the three miles, undetected and unchallenged, he did the return journey also undetected. Some Scouts later said they suspected him because they saw him on both his up and down runs, but his pace was too fast for them to catch him!

Most troops found it best to split their chaps up in pairs. Most Scouts learnt a little more than they already knew about the great art of observation. The winning troop divided the route into

three sections and allocated a section to each patrol. They ran a despatch service between each patrol and compared notes on progress.

The most successful individual “spotters” were two Scouts who stationed themselves on a stout branch of a tree overhanging part of the route. From this vantage point they had a clear view for some distance along the route. Using binoculars, they scanned every single person coming or going along their chunk of route. Their bag of counters was considerable, but they were beaten by the gentlemen with the corporation handcart and the cross-country runner.

The most unfortunate member of the hunted was a very sporting vicar who decided that he would casually cycle along part of the route in his normal clerical attire. Alas, every Scout seemed to have decided that all gentlemen in clerical collars were *ipso facto* highly suspicious characters. The sporting vicar lost his ten red counters inside forty-five minutes.

One last tip—we let the local police know what we were doing. It saves odd complications and we found they were only too glad to enter into the spirit of the game and make useful suggestions.

WEEK 26

SPARE WEEK FOR QUARTER

This programme can be used for the fifth week in any month of the quarter.

WE’LL “recap” on our team games’ standards and technique just to see what progress we have made since the start of the Scout year.

- (1) Active team games follow inspection and flag break.
- (2) Snap, zip and surprise are features of the games that boys like.
- (3) The boys wear plimsolls for *all* indoor games and old clothes or games kit if possible. (Plimsolls can be kept in patrol lockers or dens at troop H.Q.)
- (4) Change into games kit is done at top speed with possibly some incentive for speediest patrol.
- (5) We *never* use chalk to mark our “pitch”—but have painted permanent lines and marks on the “deck” if it is our own H.Q.
- (6) Windows and lights have wire-netting screens if it is our own H.Q. We avoid using heavy case balls but use football bladders blown-up or a soccer or rugger ball outer case stuffed with old rags or towels.

Now for our quick-fire team games. We all have our own favourites, many of them adapted from games used in physical-training classes at school. Let’s try simple team games in rapid sequence to get zip into the programme. Using our “stuffed” soccer ball try Tunnel Ball (through legs, last man to front until all patrol finished). Over-ball (overhead passing in same way). Side-ball (one-handed passing, first to right, then left). Then do the same again *blindfolded*. This is much more difficult, but great fun.

Try “agility” games—boy holding ball hops to finishing-line and back; boy holding ball jumps to line and back in standing jumps; boy crawls on feet and hands to line and back.

Try simple “endurance” games in which one boy carries another either pick-a-back or “fireman’s lift” fashion. Try dribbling games in which the ball is propelled by feet only to line and back, and then with one foot only (and no “booting” to gain distance!).

Fifteen fast and furious minutes of these variations on simple team games will put the patrols in form for Touch Rugger. Two or four sides of about seven players are wanted, or as near to it as you can get. Use the stuffed soccer or rugger ball. Each game lasts not more than three minutes each way. Quick first-time passing, no forward passing, no tackling. If touched, a boy holding the ball must “play the ball” in Rugby League fashion at once, i.e. quick heel to his own team. Tries are scored over opponents’ line; ball must be grounded with both hands. This is a grand game and can easily be made into a knock-out tournament if we have a guest night and entertain another troop.

There’s our first half-hour of games. Now we’re ready for training stunts, for use in patrol or troop-work. How good is our sense of hearing? Let’s blindfold lightly a boy with handkerchiefs. Get him to identify sounds at varying distances: e.g. striking a match; dropping a piece of coal in a bucket; rattling a bag of marbles; pouring water, corn or flour into containers; opening a letter; imitating bird-calls e.g. jay, woodpigeon, curlew, blackbird, woodpecker. If he is very good at it, train him to identify other boys by the sound of their footsteps. It needs practice but it is invaluable training.

WEEK 27

APRIL (i)

HERE is an Easter programme, and if Easter comes in March then it can easily be used then. Easter camping is for Rovers (and well-trained Senior Scouts). It is better to advise young Scouts between eleven and fifteen to wait for more certain and better weather rather than risk an all-time aversion to the great sport of camping by an unfortunate Easter experience.

Easter is wonderful hiking time for older boys, providing the programme is neither too strenuous nor too ambitious. The great thing is to give the boys as much fresh air as possible, and as much open-air healthy recreational activity as possible. Blow away the last dregs of winter cobwebs.

There are two possibilities open to the average troop of fair experience: (x) patrol day hikes, or patrol "camps" using some kind of indoor accommodation after nightfall; and (2) troop day hikes, or troop "camps" making use of indoor accommodation for the evening and sleeping.

For some years we used Easter in my troop as a chance for getting the troop together away from home surroundings. We would go to a recognized Scout camp site (county training ground or Great Tower, etc.) and do as much outdoor work and training as possible under patrol conditions. After night-fall some night training games would take place, but we found it better to have an indoor camp-fire round a blazing log fire, especially in those March Easters when snow fell. Sleeping was achieved by patrols using either palliasses filled with straw on a troop-room floor, or hammocks. Such a weekend is also possible in a country troop's H.Q. Scouts can learn to make their own hammocks and take them as part of their own kit.

WEEK 28

APRIL (ii)

WE have already suggested ideas, old and new, for putting snap and sparkle into indoor programmes. We have tried training stunts to test and improve the troop's sense of hearing. Before we leave this all-important sense training for the time being, because spring and summer are upon us, let's "recap" on our ideas for testing the sense of taste, smell and touch, and introduce some new ones if we can. (Our first training was done in weeks 9 and 10.)

TASTE

Here we need to be very careful because the sense of taste varies considerably with individuals. Non-smokers often have a more acute sense of taste than smokers. I found, for instance, that a heavy pipe smoker when blindfolded was unable to distinguish between orange juice and tomato juice to which water had been added. That is a test we can try out on any troop Skipper, or even Dad if he doesn't mind being a guinea-pig! Boys' sense of taste is likely to be acute. We can try some useful tricks here, providing our victims are blindfolded and do not know what we are doing. For instance, give a boy a slice of apple—but not too sweet a variety. He can probably identify it at once. But if we then give him a slice of turnip which has been lying in syrup or water and sugar for some time he may not be so sure what it is.

Another good tasting test is to have about half a dozen or more varieties of jams on saucers. Test individually in very small quantities on spoons. Some of the answers we may get from blindfolded boys may be quite remarkable.

An unfair test tried on a young blindfolded Scout was to give him a little canned pineapple juice to drink. He had never before tasted pineapple in his life and had no idea what it was.

Remember these taste tests for summer camp programmes. They can be very amusing. But *never* ask a blindfolded person to taste something unknown to yourself. Never use medicines or chemical powders, to avoid accidents and trouble. *The object of taste training is to sharpen the senses and to accustom us to handle foods in pitch darkness, something which we might well have to do in an emergency.*

Touch

Have you noticed what remarkably fine senses of hearing and touch are possessed by blind people? Nature seems almost to compensate them for their sad lack of vision. An acute sense of touch is invaluable in all outdoor training and again is immensely useful in emergency.

Blindfold the boys and ask them to put gloves on. First give them a simple ordinary poker to handle—we will get some remarkable answers as to what it is from the new boys, and maybe a few older hands will forget what we did in week 10. Take gloves off and see how easy it is to “recognize” that poker by touch alone. This will show the patrol or troop how important this sense of touch is. Try it with a small-size cricket stump, a garden hoe or a child’s sand spade (both wood and metal). Now try other ideas. A cricket ball, tennis ball, hockey ball, golf ball—they’re not so easy as they may sound. Try things made of wood—in quick succession—cricket bat, tent-peg, cricket stump, Indian club, garden dibber. Then things made of metal or wire. This training game can be both amusing and interesting if we keep our victims blindfolded, seated on chairs or logs.

Have you ever played this Christmas-party game? Put the room in total darkness. Have one person to recite in doleful tones the well-known monologue *The Green Eye of the Little Yellow God*. As he recites it pass round a peeled grape. Of course, it *could* be the eye! That is a very good game for testing the sense of touch.

SMELL

The sense of smell is probably the most variable of the human senses. Some people have a very poor sense of smell and live in constant fear of gas-stoves and gas-fires. Others have an acute sense and can not only tell, for instance, that a smoker has been in a room but also what brand of tobacco or cigarette he was smoking. It is most useful to know who possesses the best sense of smell in your patrol or troop.

Again blindfold the Scouts. Try something simple for a start. For instance, pass a saucer on which we have put some sliced onion under their noses *quickly*. They will name that quickly. Then try sliced orange, tangerine or pineapple (if possible), apple, tomato, pear, banana, and so on. Try tea, coffee, Bovril, Marmite, and, if you like, various kinds of cheese. If you can distinguish blindfolded between gorgonzola and Camembert you will be regarded as an expert for the rest of your Scout life!

Your grocer may stock a wide variety of flavouring essences for cooking purposes. They are usually in small bottles. If troop funds run to it buy half a dozen and see if they can be recognised by blindfolded Scouts. If kept tightly corked when not in use they will retain their characteristic smell for a considerable time. Try, too, such things as oil of cloves, turpentine,

ammonia (be very careful in using this), paraffin, smelling salts, lavender water, eau-de-Cologne, and so on.

I kept an individual sense record chart for my troop. It was always useful and instructive, and it gave the troop a lot of fun.

WEEK 29

APRIL (iii)

THE Court of Honour has decided that as we all have bikes we'll make use of them in Scout training this Spring and summer. First thing to do is to get a local expert, such as the chairman or secretary of the local cycling club, to come to the troop meeting and show us how to take care of our bikes and how to use them properly on the roads under all conditions.

This is what the expert might say to the troop:

“So you're all going to do a lot of cycle exploring this spring and summer! It's worth spending a little time getting the machine ready now. If you wait until the last moment something may need the attention of a cycle repairer. If he is busy, and he's sure to be soon, you may not get the “bike” back until it is much too late.

“A pair of old gloves will protect hands against sharp edges and black grease. An apron or old dress just in case you get splashed with oil completes my cleaning outfit, plus a few sheets of newspaper to cover the ground. If tools, oil-can and pieces of cloth are kept on one piece of newspaper time will not be wasted in looking for them every few minutes.

“First of all, remove any dust or mud with a hard brush and rag, like this. Then clean the machine thoroughly with a good quality light machine oil. The frame and bright parts can be polished with a soft cloth, but do not remove the thin coat of oil from awkward corners. Oil prevents rust.

It is more important to protect a bicycle against rust than to have the frame highly polished.

“Celluloid mudguards can be cleaned with a good liquid metal polish, and a good rub with a soft cloth will make them look like new. Let the chain soak in paraffin on an enamel plate for a little while. Then clean it off with a stiff brush—an old tooth brush will do—and dry it particularly well before applying oil. Chain graphite or petroleum jelly can be smeared on the chain after oiling, like this.

“The next task is to check the adjustment of wheels, pedals, chain and brakes. This is much easier if the machine is turned upside-down. We hold the rim of the wheel first of all and try to move it from side to side. If there is any appreciable side-play it will be necessary to tighten the cone. Slacken the spindle nuts and locknuts. These are on the outside and inside of the forks, respectively. The cones are part of the bearings, and only one on each wheel is adjustable. It has two fiat sides, and can be turned with a thin spanner. The wheel is correctly adjusted when it runs smoothly without side-play.

“The pedals need special attention. If they are loose the ball-bearings will crack, and you will have to dismantle the pedal. Remove the dust-cap and loosen the locknut. A small screwdriver or knife can be used to turn the cone. This has a slot for the purpose, and is separated from the locknut by a washer.

“Chains that jump off the chain wheel area nuisance at any time. It is not difficult to correct the fault. The spindle-nuts are slackened and the wheel pulled back until the chain has about three quarters of an inch up-and-down movement, midway between the chain wheel and small sprocket. Some machines have special “adjusters” which fit over the ends of the rear-fork slots.

To adjust the chain with these, simply tighten the small nut on each adjuster until the tension of the chain is correct.

“The last things to be tested are the brakes. My method is to grip the levers as hard as possible, trying to break the cables or brake-rods. If there is a weakness it is better to find out at home before you start than on a steep hill miles away from a town or village. Replace worn brake-blocks, and adjust brakes so that the blocks are about an eighth of an inch from the rims. The rims *must* be quite dry if the brakes are to be efficient. There are several types of brakes, and most of them are simple to adjust if you study them carefully. On the cable type there is a threaded sleeve on one end of the cable, with a knurled nut, which closes or opens the brake-arms according to the direction in which it is turned.

“Real cyclists have a golden rule for keeping a bicycle in good trim: *all working parts must be oiled*. There are lubricators on the wheel hubs, steering-head and bottom bracket, while the pedals have a hole, either in the barrel or the dust-cap. Before oiling the three-speed hub or free-wheel lay the machine on its side and pour a *little* paraffin into the sprocket. This will wash out any dirt that would eventually clog the springs and pawls. When the paraffin has drained away pour about two teaspoonfuls of best-quality thin oil into the centre of the sprocket.

“Now comes our final check. We test the nuts, and inflate the tyres until they are board-hard, no more no less. A final look at the tool-kit and repair outfit, and we can set out on our spring and summer cycle spins without fear of the cycle ever letting us down. A bicycle of good, sound British make will give years of fun to Scouts if it is looked after properly.”

And for real variation we can in good time try Bicycle Polo. This is how to set about it in the troop. In the real game of bicycle polo five adults make a team. The pitch is a hundred and ten yards by eighty yards at the maximum, and the goal is the same size as in hockey. Specially built cycles with fixed wheels are used.

In a Scout troop we have to adapt all that to the conditions we have at hand, remembering that we'll get more fun out of it on a dry, firm hockey pitch or a field, or even on a cleared bomb site, or part of the local park if there are no objections. The boys can make their own mallets, and the ball can be a soft rubber ball.

Don't play it so often that everyone tires of it quickly. You can enjoy it occasionally with another troop, perhaps.

WEEK 30

APRIL (iv)

OME time in April the National Bob-a-Job week takes place, and if it isn't this particular week the April suggestions can be switched around to suit the date. For instance, in 1949 it was April 18th - 23rd; in 1953 April 6th — 11th

First of all it's important that the troop should know what Bob-a-Job is all about and how Scouts earn money to keep the movement going. This, then, is the official policy on the scheme, and we can have it printed or produced by the troop artist on cartridge paper and pinned on the troop notice board:

SPLVELESS AND SPOONFED? Not Scouts, we claim.

Take Bob-a-Job Week which starts on April. . . Money is needed to carry on Scouting. So what do Scouts do? Do they ask the State to provide? Rattle collecting boxes? Let Dad fork out?

No. They EARN it. If a thing is worth having it's worth working for; so during one week of the year they do odd jobs for payment. The rest of the year they do their daily good turn without reward.

Scouts are taught not to expect something for nothing. Bob-a-Job is not only a money-raising scheme—it is an important part of Scout training for citizenship. That the public approves has been vividly demonstrated during the past four years since it began. There has been no shortage of jobs.

Nearly half a million members of the Scout Movement will be bob-a-jobbing during the week.

Of the money they earn two shillings will go to the National Scout Funds and the rest towards the funds of local Scouting.

Well, that's a good start to Bob-a-Job. The troop should know that a considerable part of the money they earn goes to keep local Scouting going. It is important that the boys should always carry their official Job Cards, which need to be signed by the person authorizing and paying for the particular job. It is also most important that once having contracted to do a job for a householder, the boys should turn up to do it. Nothing is more calculated to annoy than failure to do a promised job.

In my district Scouts start to make plans for Bob-a-Job as early as February 12th. Business-like P.L.s call at homes, ask for jobs and survey the work that is to be done. Taking 1953 as a typical year, I found that a local riding school needed help in cleaning horses and stables, and wanted attendants for young children learning pony-riding. A market-gardener was glad of the extra help on Saturday mornings to take fresh fruit, vegetables and flowers to customers. Caddies were in demand at a golf club. An old lady wanted a tree taking down in her garden. Someone wanted a dog exercising. There were plenty of cycles, cars, brass and silver awaiting cleaning, not to mention garage windows.

One last thought for April (iv). Don't forget April 23rd:

St. George's Day. St. George is the patron saint of Scouting and on that day we renew our Scout Promise. If this isn't done in public at a local Association St. George's Day Parade, then do it in the troop-room. The annual renewal of the Scout Promise as a troop is part of the tradition of a good Scout troop and is regarded as of the utmost importance.

WEEK 31

MAY (i)

THERE'S a warmth in the fine spring air, and patrols are getting ready for the great outdoors again and the first patrol camp of the season. Does each Second Class Scout possess a sleeping bag of his own? If not, he can make one now at very low cost. There's a real satisfaction to be had, the P.L. tells him, from sleeping under canvas in a bag made entirely by his own efforts.

Decide which of the two main types are preferred—square or tapered. Then be quite sure about the size. This will depend entirely on height and how roomy the Scout prefers his bag. If he is growing fast, then tell him to make the bag about a foot longer than he really needs it now. It will then last him two or three camping seasons easily. If he likes a really good stretch he can make his bag eighteen inches longer than his own height.

Two army blankets are ideal material for the base of the bag. Don't go in for the hard, rough grey type of blanket. They are often very heavy. There are suitable blankets now on sale at the Scout Shop and elsewhere made of soft, warm, navy-blue material. They cut well and make excellent bags.

Try the style of bag before completing it; pin it together roughly and then try it out for size and roominess. One useful style is to divide the length of your bag into two halves. Let the bag be the same width for the first half. Then taper the sides so that the width at the foot is about half that at the centre. At the head of the bag have an entrance" by leaving one side of the bag unstitched for about a foot. This can be fitted with a zip-fastener or overcoat buttons, or, simply, draw cords. I fitted a zip to a blanket bag which I got from the old engine cover of a Flying Fortress plane—a "find" in a junk-shop!

To make the bag hygienic, make a sheet-bag to fit inside it, with button fastenings at the head of the bag. A Scout needs to be told. "*Always* remove the sheet-bag daily and turn your blanket-bag inside out, spreading it out in the morning sun on your ground-sheet." Another good idea is to tell him to stitch a loose "sock" of cotton twill on the head of his bag, about two feet square. This will act as a pillow-case if placed over his spare clothing.

Right at the start of the camping season—and we can start this week—appoint two bright sparks to jot down all the funny things that happen at this year's camps. Scouts always seem to find great difficulty in finding suitable scripts for autumn and winter troop shows. Yet the best scripts are simply sketches based on the troop's actual camp fun, and if parts can be played by "the original cast" so much the better.

Parents and friends will chuckle to see simple cooking problems and ways in which they were solved: a sleeping-ten invaded by mosquitoes—the discovery of hard rocks near the surface after beds have been made up for the night and occupied—an unexpected inspection of the camp site by visiting Commissioner. Every troop has first-class material of this sort. All it needs is someone to record it as it happens during the camping season. So begin now in May and don't let any camp fun go unrecorded.

On checking my own camp fun notebook I find that we were able to convert these incidents into first-class troop show material later in the year:

- (1) A “friendly” farm dog who made a habit of slinking into the food tents and absconding with the meat.
- (2) A notorious “camp ghost” who turned out to be neither cow nor sheep but a determined old Billy goat.
- (3) Two duty cooks who fell asleep after drinking parsnip wine provided by the farmer’s wife, and were still asleep with no sign of dinner ready when a hungry bathing-party arrived back in camp.

I won’t bore you any more with the things that happened at patrol or troop camps in my troop. Your own experiences are much more fun. *Don’t let them go unrecorded this summer.*

WEEK 32

MAY (ii)

THE sixth Scout Law says that a Scout is a friend to animals. There are many ways in which this fine law can be put into practice.

Some folk rush off for a weekend leaving their poultry without water. Some think the best way to exercise a dog is to make it run miles behind their bikes. Others turn their cats out when they go away for a few days, and leave them to fend for themselves. The troop should know about these cases and the many ways in which keen Scouts can help animals.

The *first* thing is to ventilate the problem at troop meeting and then let the patrols discuss it in their own dens or corners with a view to seeing what can be done about it. In one troop this is what happened afterwards:

The Seagull Patrol went to a kennels (specialising in breeding cocker spaniels) on the next available Saturday morning and learned much about the care and training of dogs. Three members of the patrol kept dogs and one of them, a fine black cocker, became the troop mascot.

This patrol helped by supplying water containers for dogs in High Street shops during the summer and keeping them in a clean and hygienic condition. They also helped the local police by trying to locate the owners of stray dogs and cats, and also offered to exercise the dogs of old-age pensioners who could no longer manage long walks over the golf-links or even the local park, but still wanted to keep a dog.

Another patrol kept rabbits, cavies, poultry, bantams and homing pigeons. They studied the needs of these pets in turn, allowing one or other Scout to be the troop expert. In this way all the boys came to know something of domestic animals and birds and the way in which they should be kept. The local Horticultural Society had a rabbit club and a poultry association, and they invited the boys along to meetings and shows and talks. An official of the R.S.P.C.A. came and told them something of the society’s work and ways in which Scouts could help.

We can’t do better than to get each patrol to act a mime of the law to finish off the troop meeting. Good turns to animals—it’s worth putting the sixth Scout Law into the troop programme in mid-May.

If an interest in animals is encouraged in the troop some boys are sure to want to keep a dog. Since dogs can be useful in outdoor troop meetings, and at troop camp if handled properly let us “recap” the main points in dog training.

- (1) A dog needs one master, and loathes being nagged.
- (2) When a boy calls a dog he must be firm about it. This will save a good deal of possible trouble in the long run—road accidents; fighting other dogs; cat-chasing; worrying sheep or chickens.
- (3) Lots of regular exercise, but not when he is a puppy or in hot weather, If he is exercised in the rain dry him on returning home.
- (4) Clean water and simple, regular meals with no table tit-bits, Plenty of coat-brushing and regular examination for illness or foot troubles.

And what can you do with a troop dog? Think of the characteristics of a good dog. He is an uncanny *judge of character* ii. human beings, even though he is an expert in turning a dog blind eye to possible weak points in his master’s character Then he has *imagination*, like every good Scout. He will curl up in his master’s chair when he is away from home, because he thinks someone else will come along and take it. He might be prepared to fight on occasion simply because he fears an attack on the most important person in the world to him, master. And a dog *can* think! Watch him carry a long stick through a narrow opening. He will manoeuvre it carefully through in quite an intelligent fashion. And he has a very long memory, remembering places, smells, houses, people over long periods. So it is worthwhile for Scouts to use patience and understanding in training their dogs.

A dog *can* be trained to guard a patrol or troop camp site while a wide game or bathing-party is in progress. He *can* be trained to help in field sports during camp and trek such as bunting for rabbits and birds, and so on.

WEES 33

MAY (iii)

THERE’S great excitement in the troop. The patrols are getting ready for their first patrol camp of the season. Let’s look at the Seagulls. Joe, the P.L., is a wise Scout. He has two young “tenderfeet” in his patrol who have never been to camp before. So this weekend camp takes place at a farm site about four miles from home. The less time spent in travelling means more time for Scouting.

We emphasise at troop meeting the great things about patrol camping: (1) we fill in all the training gaps that can’t be done at troop meetings, and (2) we build up the troop standard of camping. A troop that can camp really well at summer camp has three or four patrols who have done plenty of weekend patrol camping under their P.L.s.

Joe is making this camp a cycle camp, using lightweight tents. (The alternative is to borrow the troop’s trek-cart and a Nijer patrol tent and trek to camp.) Everyone has a job of some kind. Alf, the second, is Quartermaster, plans menus, and arranges food. One Scout is to get fuel supplies when tents are pitched. Another arranges water supplies. Another plans the route, cycling back a different way. Joe himself is keeping the log-book and planning a simple programme. The main object of the camp is to teach the new boys “the ropes”.

Joe, of course, has to prepare a report on the camp for troop's monthly Court of Honour.

The tenderfeet will learn how to pitch a tent; how to make themselves comfortable under canvas; how to cook their own food and like it. They will take turns at washing-up, collecting fuel, running games of their own. There will be just the seven members of the patrol—a “cosy” number running their own show and learning real Scouting.

On Saturday evening they'll have a camp-fire, with Joe spinning yarns of famous Seagull patrol camps of the past and Alf entertaining on his mouth organ. On Sunday morning the patrol, with the exception of the chief cook, will go off to morning service at the local church. It'll be a weekend packed with fun and hard work. It will tone up old members of the patrol for the new camping season and teach new boys the art of camp-craft.

The best patrol camps are based on *simplicity*—*good*, honest practical Scouting, with time for fun and games and learning the *spirit* of Scouting.

And troop meeting tonight can have one part devoted to all this, and particularly to checking camp gear, camp programme, routes and maps, and so on.

Let's “recap” the main points of cycle camping for the Seagulls—the other patrols are going on trek, but will try cycle camping in June.

For cycle camping we can recommend Gilwell Two-man Hike Tents, as sold by the Scout Shop, or lightweight wedge-shaped ground tents. Metal tent-pegs are better than wooden ones. Oiled fabric ground-sheets pack into small space. So does a down sleeping-bag. But few boys are likely to have them so we must make the most of what we have got. Pannier-bags need to be packed so that rattle is avoided. Aluminium cooking gear, enamel mug and plate, jars with screw caps for fats, sugar and tea, a jack-knife with tin-opener, a light canvas water basket and a dish-cloth are essential details of kit. Personal kit includes soap, towel, toothbrush and paste, shoe brush, toilet-paper. Finally a change of clothing, woollen sweater, pyjamas, cape, sou'wester and one set of reliable maps are packed.

(On a longer camp, say five nights duration or more, the Post Office can save the trouble of carrying clean clothes. If a Scout addresses a parcel to himself at the *poste restante* of an office on the route the parcel will be handed to him. The post office will keep the parcel fourteen days, so there is no need to spoil the route to pick it up on a set day.)

Tell the patrol: Never cycle with nick-sacks on backs. A good carrier can easily be fitted with two stout pannier-bags. Don't wait until you are hungry before looking for a camp-site. Do most of your cycling in the morning. Settle on your site for the night's camp in the afternoon. A small pressure-stove is extremely useful to the cyclist-camper.

Carry a little Vaseline to smear on parts of the cycle liable to rust. The cycle may have to be left in the open overnight. Chain and lock the patrol's cycles together at night.

With extra weight on the cycle the camper needs a lower gear. A free-wheel or fixed sprocket with one tooth more than on the one he normally uses will reduce his gear by approximately five miles—that is about right. With a three-speed set he will use bottom gear more.

Have a full-scale rehearsal at tonight's troop meeting to see how the patrol is going to pack its kit. The P.L. distributes the load evenly and does not duplicate items of kit. The patrol needs only one pressure-stove and axe. The cleaning materials, needles, thread, darning wool, buckets, a first-aid kit, cycle repair outfits and tools can all be shared to reduce weight.

After practice we can go home tonight with every confidence that all the patrols are going to have a grand weekend.

WEEK 34

MAY (iv)

AST week's patrol camps showed that we need better standards of cooking and preparing meals. Some meals were very late and none of the cooking was extremely good. Perhaps we forgot cooking in the excitement of all those practice packs and learning about cycle camping....

Anyway, it's cooking and cooking-fires tonight.

Every Scout has to be a cook of some kind. With practice he can be a good one. Knowing the right type of fireplace to build and where to build it, knowing the right kinds of fuel to burn on his fire—birch twigs for kindling, pine or birch for quick burning, ash or beech for slow, steady burning.

Tell the troop that the main thing about a cooking-fire for a Scout is that no one must ever let anyone see where his fire has been. A Scout cuts turf carefully and keeps it in a shady place, grass downwards, and waters it daily. When he strikes camp the turf is replaced carefully; only another Scout should be able to tell where the fire was. A Scout *never* builds his fires against a living tree, or directly against a wall, nor does he build fires close to tents, dry bracken or undergrowth.

When making cooking-fires a Scout must consider local conditions. The prevailing wind and type of soil are important. If he is camping in wooded country he will probably use a trapper's or hunter's fire, based on a simple plan of two green logs placed side by side, if he is camping on sandy soil in a pine forest what kind of fire would he build? Would he build a different kind for use in "green field" or meadow camping (e.g. the local camp site)? These questions we can discuss with our own patrols and troops. We will, after much experiment, find our own favourite types of fires. Let's not get hide-bound and then resolve to stick exclusively to one type. We should always be ready to adapt a better design or style if we find one.

Why can't we devote a weekend camp to making and testing out several kinds of fires?

And now we can give a camp-fire talk on cooking followed by clubroom or home practice on pressure-stoves or gas-rings or electric-stoves. Why not? A Scout who can already make a good omelette at home is going to make a better shot at it when he tries it for the first time on a windy morning at Whit sun camp.

Here's the camp-fire talk.

Are you a good cook? Have you any new, exciting dishes to put over to your patrol this year in camp? We do not take this question of camp cooking seriously enough in our troop. Menus for weekend and standing camps can be worked out now. "Experiments" are worth trying at home, if

Mother is willing! There is no need to stick to the same old dishes when you go to camp. I know one troop who used to delight in making a huge roly-poly pudding the size of a motor tyre. They used to serve **it** at *every* camp they ever went to—some of us often wanted to throw it at them!

We need variety in our camp menus. For instance, there are all sorts of ways of preparing fish. The herring is one of the cheapest and best foods. If you make a “reflector” fire herrings can be grilled on the fireback—and very delicious they are, too. Prepare kippers and plaice this way, too, fixing the large flat fish carefully first with wooden “nails”. Old pioneers in the backwoods used to talk about “planking” fish they caught in lakes and rivers. This is a variation of the same method.

Can you steam a large piece of cod, or serve roes on toast or fried bread? Do you know how to make a white sauce which can be the base of many an attractive addition to the camp menu? A patrol I know have just decided that grated cheese on steamed white fish is the easiest of camp supper dishes to prepare.

If you are taking fresh meat or fish to camp it is wise to clean and prepare it at home first. Wrap it carefully in tissue-paper or clean muslin and keep it inside your Gilwell cooking canteen.

Never place fresh food at the bottom of your rucksack. Keep it in a separate pocket if you can. As soon as you pitch camp make a cool larder for food. The best larders are made to hang from trees in a shady spot, safe from creatures of the wild and stray dogs....

And so we can go on, giving the troop all the camping lore we know, like this in odd bits and pieces, going over the same ground a dozen times if need be until the patrols know it all backwards.

Let's be good cooks as well as good campers. We'll get so much more fun out of camping then.

WEEK 35

JUNE (i)

LET'S have a chat about wet-weather camping tonight round the cocoa. We've had a crackling evening of outdoor team games, especially volley ball, so it will be a good time for a camp-fire chat.

B.-P. used to say that anyone could camp in fine weather. but only a Scout knew how to camp in the rain. We have to be prepared for rain in this uncertain climate of ours, even in the summer. If we know what to do we will enjoy a rainy camp just as much as a fine hot-weather one. Really it's all a matter of common sense. Make sure our rucksacks are really waterproof, that we keep our groundsheets near the top of the pack and that we have dry matches and some dry kindling wood to light our fire when we pitch camp.

In wet weather it pays to wear as little clothing as possible My troop used to delight in putting on their bathing trunks and getting into the rain for a good game of handball. Never hang about in wet clothes, say the experts. Rub ourselves hard and vigorously with a really rough towel afterwards Wise Scouts carry a spare change of underwear and stockings with them for wet days.

When we choose our camp site in wet weather we must be sure that water is draining away from the site and not on to it. As soon as we have pitched our tent dig a small trench around it.

This trench should be right under the tent eaves so that water drains into it and is led away.

We don't leave our rucksacks lying about in the rain. Keep them as dry as possible under tree branches until our tent is ready. We never unpack rucksacks on a wet day until we are certain our camp site is sound and that we are going to sleep dry and cosy despite the wet.

This is a good time of the year to make useful odds and ends of equipment from leather. For instance, look at those hand and felling axes. We know all about masking them in use, but what about making leather masks for them? We can do it easily with a few old handbags from co-operative mums, or the last jumble-sale. All we need to buy is some good-quality leather thonging.

Most sheath-knives are supplied with leather sheaths for wearing on the leather Scout belt. It is good fun to make a special sheath, thonged in a contrasting colour, from soft, pliable leather and to decorate it with the patrol emblem. Can we arrange for each Scout to have a sheath-knife like that? By the way, just check on the position of the knife when worn. Scouts should carry knives on the sides of belts, not the rear. There are so many reasons why. We can start listing them now! A notice-board for camp can be made now from leather, strung with thonging on to a stout frame of ash sticks. And panniers for Scout cyclists are made easily from old school satchels fitted with home-made angle irons. Think around leather-craft—there's dozens of ideas for a busy, active troop.

WEEK 36

JUNE (ii)

THIS is Whitsun weekend: we can use it for the first troop camp of the season—a long weekend under canvas at the L.A. or county camp site. It will be run on the patrol system.

Whitsun is a great camping weekend for Scouts, a grand time to polish up Scouting technique and pave the way for the annual summer camp, the finest event of the year in any Scout's calendar. Let's suppose we are in camp, well settled in and enjoying all the fun, health and real joy of happy days under canvas. Here's something to do based on Kims Game.

(1) *Kim's Game in Camp.* We get together twenty-four simple things all connected with camp life: Tent-pegs, mallets, dixie, ladle, length of rope, first-aid kit, frying-pan, and so on. Put them on a groundsheet and look at them for a minute. Cover with another groundsheet. Then draw a rectangle on a sheet of paper. We have to write on the paper not only every article on the groundsheet but also its exact position. This makes Kim much more exciting.

When we can do this well we go for a short ramble around the camp site. Collect twenty-four different wild flowers. If we can't manage that fill up with tree leaves and different types of grasses. Place them on a groundsheet. First of all identify them. If we can't do that between us we get a countryman to help us. When we know the wild flowers, grasses and tree leaves we cover them with a groundsheet and try any sound variety of Kim's Game. It will sharpen the troop's sense of observation in the country.

(2) *Long Distance Kim's Game.* This fine game comes from John Thurman, Camp Chief of Gilwell Park.

For this game a number of articles should be arranged against a background fifty or sixty yards away; for example, a stuffed bird perched on a branch, a Cub cap hanging on a bush, an axe masked in a log, a coil of rope wound round a tree-trunk. The degree of difficulty can be made progressively greater. In the early stages of the game the article should be of contrasting colour to that of the background and should be red, blue and yellow, etc. As the Scouts become more proficient they can not only learn to pick out something from a similar background but will be learning at the same time the use of camouflage. For the Sea Scout a variety of the game consists of having the articles arranged on some stretch of beach or on the side of a river, the Scouts going past in their boat and spotting as they go.

(3) *Kim on the Run.* Another well-tried variation on Kim from Anthony C. Wilson. Highly recommended.

A number of fair-sized objects, the initial letters of which spell the name of a town, are collected by the S.M. and put into a box or sack. He then tells the boys that he is going to wander about within a defined area of woodland, holding up these objects one by one, for say, one minute each. The boys have to stalk him, and remember the objects they see until the end of the game. Patrols are then given paper and pencil to write the objects down, then to take the initial letters of them, and so discover the town. The objects need not necessarily be held up in the correct order. Any boy seen by the S.M. during his wanderings has a point deducted, and is sent back to base to begin again. Patrols receive three points for each object they get correct, plus a bonus of ten for solving the town.

(4) *Kim's Compass*. I first tried this in 1936 when I was trying to link up Kim's Game with the use of the compass. The result was Kim's Compass, and it soon became an established favourite in my troop:

Draw two large concentric circles in chalk on your den or Troop H.Q. floor. Divide these circles up into the compass sectors as normally used. You can if you wish use rope or even neckerchiefs to make your circles with Scout staffs or thumb sticks for the straight lines. Put one compass direction—north—on a point of the outer circle only. The outer circle is called Circle One and the inner Circle Two. It is thus possible to locate any compass-point on either circle very easily—for example, North **1**, North **2**, South-East **2**, West-South-West **1**, South-South-East **2**, and North-West **2**. Thus there are thirty-two known points, each of which can easily be referred to in this manner.

Having got this clear, Kim's Game enters into it. Place an ordinary article on every one of the thirty-two points, just as we do in Kim's Game. You now have thirty-two articles on thirty-two compass-points, and if you name any compass point on either circle there is an article on it—or should be!

The rest of the instructions are simple. Let all the players have a long look at the circles and then blindfold them. It might be advisable in the first place to have only one circle and then to use both circles when you have more experience.

The Scouter in charge of Kim's Compass shouts out compass point, i.e. "North 2"; "South—West 1"; "East—South—East **2**". The first Scout to call out the correct article on that compass-point gets two points for himself. Usually you have to wait a minute or so for the correct answer!

When you have mastered this you can go on to three circles with forty-eight compass-points. In this it is best to have similar articles on the three compass-points; e.g., put a Scout hat on No. **1**, a hatband on No. **2**, a P.L.'s hat badge on No. 3 or a pair of stockings on South-West **1**, a garter on South-West **2**, a pair of garter tabs on South-West 3. You will find it comparatively easy to remember forty-eight articles in that way.

Kim's Compass can be made just as easy or difficult as you like, and the wise games leader will grade the game over a period of time. It can also, like all our Scout tests, be played in camp easily.

WEEK 37

JUNE (iii)

LONG, fine summer evenings mean that the weekly troop and patrol meetings can be held entirely out-of-doors. In a good troop the headquarters is very rarely used during the summer months. Outdoor troop meetings can be held at the local camp site, or in a field, or park, or, say, a small clearing in a fairly thick wood, especially if it can only be reached by scrambling through gorse and fern, and a wilderness of scrub in the undergrowth. If you have this kind of troop meeting, place make the clearing permanent.

In the clearing erect a flag pole, and the Union Jack and the and troop flag can then be broken at the start of every meeting. Each patrol can have its own patrol-den, just as in the Troop H.Q. in the town; these are decorated in true woodcraft fashion, and each patrol vies with the others to make the best den. Eventually you can possibly erect a small log cabin to keep games tackle, signalling equipment, and so on, for summer work. There is always a supply of dry kindling

wood in that log cabin so that the troops can have a jolly camp-fire now and then to wind up the troop meeting.

If you are in a town or suburb and it isn't easy to get to your outdoor troop meeting-place, remember that there is a free corner on the many public parks and open spaces. No Scout in England can honestly say that he can't get out *somewhere* on fine summer evenings.

In addition to the usual troop programme it is a good idea to keep one main activity going through the summer months. This will encourage more and more outdoor Scouting. For instance, you can make a survey of all the field footpaths in your district. It may well take the rest of the summer and all autumn to compile, and then we can keep it up to date. This is how we set about it one spring, to show you what is possible.

We secured some six-inch maps of our district, really large- scale detailed ones. Then we took the paths one by one. We noted their condition, recording in notebooks the kind of hedges that fenced them in and methods used to keep them trimmed. We took photos of stiles on the paths and made scale drawings of them, showing how they had been made. Our Nature "experts" searched for wild life on the field footpaths, recording birds'-nests—the dates of hatching, the number of fledglings, and so on. We made notes on the black-and-white maps in red and green ink and then mounted them on five-ply drawing-boards. They made a fine decoration for the troop-room walls in winter months.

Local streams can make an equally fascinating interest. Careful watch can be kept on the rise and fall of the stream level, the type of plants which grow in and around the stream, the kind of fish and water insects. Bridges can be sketched and photographed, stream banks watched for signs of erosion, and culverts found and kept check on. One of our patrols "adopted" a local pond and even kept an aquarium of fish from it.

The local Borough Surveyor said we knew more about the district than he did himself!

A keen Scout thrills to read the story of his patrol and troop in well-kept log-books. What fun it is to turn the pages and read all about summer camps and hikes! That is the way tradition is built in a good Scout troop, recording the life of the troop from month to month and year by year.

The old idea was to appoint a "Keeper of the Log" and then let him record the activities of the troop. But is it a good idea to let the log record the life of the troop as seen through the eyes of one boy? It's a better idea to *put everyone in the picture*, and let the log contain short items from every Scout who wants to put something in it. Really keen interest can be aroused by thus letting everyone have a hand in keeping the log.

Here is one good way to go about it. Make a point of featuring camps, hikes and special occasions as they come along. The bulk of the story of a camp can be done at the camp itself. You get the atmosphere better, and those funny and exciting incidents which happen at every camp are best recorded at once. The log itself can be a large loose-leaf book. This means all write-ups can be done on the same size of paper. That helps to make it neat and workmanlike in appearance. There will be lots of scope for the artist and photographer. The artist can do his sketches and paintings on cartridge-paper cut to fit the troop log. Photos can be mounted or enlarged and then placed neatly in the best places to illustrate. Make leaf impressions, press wild flowers and make accurate copies of the route maps used on camp or hike. There is space for all these things in the troop log. Especially keep copies of the camp programme, menus used by the

camp cooks and any letters of thanks to people who helped the troop to have a jolly good time. A Scout is courteous,” says the Scout Law. Courtesy can be reflected in the log, too.

Probably the best things in most troop logs are those “on the spot” commentaries of the day-by-day camp life. Make them live for the boy who will be reading the log in ten years time. In some logs I have seen scale drawings of bridges built at troop camps as a good turn for the farmer. In other logs I have seen delightful thumbnail sketches in the text. If a boy looks at his copy of Scouting for Boys he will see the grand drawings which Baden-Powell did himself. Use them as a model. B.-P. could draw equally well with either hand, a wonderful gift which he used to the full.

It pays to have each volume of the patrol or troop log bound in leather, with the patrol or troop emblem embossed on the cover. Then have some special place for these treasured books in your headquarters. Believe me, you will never regret the time spent on them.

WEEK 38

JUNE (iv)

LET’S go for a tree hike! Woods are now looking at their very best and this is a good time of the year to start “tree interest”. First of all we must learn to identify the common British trees. Go to the public library and ask for some really good books on trees (I recommend Richard St. Barbe Baker’s books). Take photos or make sketches of all good specimens in your district. Introduce a Tree Quiz into the troop meeting now and then: “What tree is this?” “Which trees have smooth barks?” “How can you recognise a hornbeam?”

When the troop is thoroughly familiar with our British trees and can recognise them at sight easily we can start a more ambitious plan. Collect leaves, seeds, fruit, pieces of bark. This will take us twelve months really, for we must see the tree at every season of the year. Then we will have a complete picture of a tree in all its stages of growth. My troop used to make “tree boards”—sheets of three-ply on which we fitted photos or sketches and then glued samples of bark, seeds, and so on. These tree boards were extremely useful for winter evenings. We made them up at camp during the summer months.

A Scouter can get in touch with the Men of the Trees Society and learn how they care for British trees. Foresters are only too pleased to help. They will tell Scouts of the great dangers of forest fires and the best methods of fighting heath and woodland fires in camp. They may show a keen troop their tree nurseries where they care for young trees before planting out.

We learn from them that we *must* plant a tree for every one we fell, no matter how small. Tree-planting can become a troop custom. Trees make fine memorials for Scouts who have passed to Higher Service. They can form boundaries on camp sites and beautify the grounds of the Troop H.Q. They must be treated properly at all times. No Scout would ever drive an axe into a living tree or carve his initials on it.

The best Saturday-afternoon hike of the summer in the Seagull Patrol was an acorn hike. They searched for depleted hedgerows; wherever they found a gap they planted acorns. They marked the planting places on six-inch maps and next year will check up on progress. The great thing is to get all patrols *tree-minded*, for trees are part of our British heritage.

Flies are now a great menace out of doors. They will continue to be for the rest of the hiking and camping season; we *must* take every possible precaution against them. Declare war on all flies!

If flies buzz around camp kitchen or latrines in great numbers, we know we are camping very badly. First thing, then, is to be scrupulously clean in and around the camp site. Keep all food covered. Take some butter muslin to camp. Erect a “larder” for meat, fish, bacon, sausages, fats or dish, cover securely with muslin and then string it high over a bough with rope in a cool, leafy, airy spot. This keeps flies away from meat; also foxes, stray dogs and cats. (My advice is to cook all perishable foods as soon as you can. Cold meat and fish can be an excellent base for camp meals.)

Don’t leave dirty crocks around the camp kitchen. The Secret is to put a big dixie of water on the cooking fire as soon as a meal is served. Then wash-up in really hot water as soon as the meal is over. Burn all refuse; what we can’t burn, bury deeply. Change hay or grass on grease pit covers regularly.

Latrines need plenty of good disinfectant and constant watching so that they don’t attract flies at any time.

Here are more anti-fly tips:

Avoid damp low-lying meadows as camp sites; get in more open country on rising ground. Flies breed in swampy, moist, badly drained land. They haunt river valleys and streams, especially in wooded country. Bear all these points in mind when choosing a camp site. Before long common sense will tell any Scout what is, and what is not, a good site.

Biting midges, mosquitoes, horse-flies and harvesters are nasty open-air enemies. Carry the right remedies *in* the patrol and troop *first-aid* kits in case Scouts get bitten or stung out in the wilds. Oil of citronella is excellent as an anti-midge device, but it does burn some people’s skin, and on a very hot day the effect disappears very quickly. Let’s talk it over with our local chemist. He will probably advise one of the creams which proved so effective against mosquitoes in the Burma War campaign.

My experience is that different campers react very differently to insect and fly bites and stings. If we have the slightest doubt about a bite or sting we get the “victim” to a doctor as soon as we can. We can’t impress that too much on the troop.

WEEK 39

SPARE WEEK FOR QUARTER

*This programme can be tired for the fifth week in any month
of the quarter.*

LAST year the Seagulls had (to quote *P.L. Alf*) “a patrol hobby” during the camping season. They made a special

study of stiles. Whenever they went to camp, or on hike or trek, they kept a look-out for stiles. They studied the way they were made and the purpose they served. Most were made of wood. Some were very old and made of iron or rough untrimmed timber. The Seagulls sketched them and took photos of outstanding types. At the end of the season they made a “stile log” of their

sketches, photos, “thumbnail” maps and the details they found. As a patrol hobby for the summer it was a great success.

This year it is young Tiny’s turn to select a patrol hobby. The patrol laughed when he said scarecrows could be really interesting ! Now they discover he’s right and that there’s a lot in it. It means more photography and less sketching, but the Seagulls are getting quite keen on camera work. Types of scarecrows vary greatly from county to county. In some places they are simply stuffed figures of policemen, convicts, game-keepers, Victorian old ladies! I have even seen a tailor’s dummy dressed up, standing in a field of cabbages! More up-to-date scarecrows have long tails of glittering tinfoil tied to them; others have tin cans tied together which bang in the wind and scare birds off growing crops.

Anyway, the Seagulls are going to take photos of all the scarecrows they see outdoors. At the end of the summer young Tiny will have a lot of fun making a “scarecrow log”.

WEEK 40

JULY (i)

THE main topic of conversation now is the annual summer camp. For most troops it is going to be a glorious week or fortnight, during the school holidays, camping by the sea—probably on a farm. Great days!

The camp bank has been running since Christmas; the site has long since been fixed by popular choice and carefully inspected by Scouters and P.L.s; yarns on looking after oneself in camp have been given regularly. Above all there has been plenty of good camping practice at weekend patrol camps.

Let's see if we can't do something more to improve camping standards this year. Take cooking, for instance. Experiment now with types of cooking fires. Have you ever used a reflector fire and known the thrill of eating fish that has been "planked" and grilled by this method? Have you made a biscuit-tin oven and cooked in it to perfection? Have you made a bucket fire?

Get right away from the eternal frying-pan-and-dixie habit. Menus can be planned now, well in advance. Usual dishes can be tried out first at home. Scouts learn good cooking by constant practice. Get mothers to show their sons how to make good pastry and cakes. Experiment in the grounds of Troop H.Q. Try and make them in the biscuit-tin over Salads are a neglected item in camp menus. They are ideal for lunch, take very little time to prepare and can be made very attractive—even to a hungry fifteen-year-old camper.

If you have a clear stream near your camp Site learn how to make a "refrigerator" near the bank with rocks and stones In hot weather your stream will help you to turn out cold sweets. But be careful if you have a storm. The "fig" may be swamped. My troop's favourite camp sweet was always simply a thick Bird's custard with fresh or stewed fruit in it. Strain the fruit juice off before adding the fruit to the custard. Make a sweet like this in an enamel pail and let it set in the stream "frig". Add gelatine to stewed fruit and let it set overnight in the same way. Make some whipped cream to go with it. In Devon or Cornwall you can now get clotted cream.

Eggs and cheese are rarely used to advantage at camp. How many Scouts in your troop can really make an omelette? Have an omelette competition at camp and give a prize for the best effort! Grated cheese on salads and cheese sauces on vegetables are only two ways of serving cheese at camp. There are dozens more, and cheese is a great camp standby.

If we are camping in the country we can try our hand at catching a rabbit, skinning and cleaning it and then turning it into a delicious rabbit-pie. If we succeed it will be talked about for years! Take my tip and boil all milk as soon as it is received. We keep it in the coolest spot we can—in bottles in dixies of water in a shady spot, or again in our stream "fig". I met a P.L. who was proud of his "new idea "in camp cookery. He had learnt how to make a junket! There's another idea for you to improve cooking standards.

And now we can test troop resourcefulness by arranging patrol weekend camps without cooking gear! The idea is that we will try and cook all our meals without cooking-pots, frying-pans, and so on. It's real fun!

All Scouts know how to make “twists”, “kabobs” and “dampers”. There are other exciting things to do as well as baking bread curled round a green stick, or pieces of meat, onion and potato skewered on to a peeled stick.

I knew a Scout who used to make a low, hot fire of glowing ash. He then made a grille of strong peeled green twigs and placed it over the embers. On this grille went thin slices of meat (seasoned beforehand), sausages, sliced potato. His favourite grilled dish in this way was a herring or bloater. Then he cut an orange in half carefully, using the fruit for dessert. The skins were scraped clean, greased with butter or margarine and then placed carefully in the hot ashes so that they wouldn’t tip over. In these “halves” he would poach eggs perfectly.

I also saw him steam potatoes in a novel way. He scooped a clean dry hole in sandy soil and then put really hot stones in it from the fire. On top of these he placed wet grass and then his potatoes, cut in halves and speared on sticks. The top of the hole was covered quickly with a piece of old corrugated iron. The hot stones had to be changed twice before the potatoes were done.

I have often heard tales of delicious pigeons and young chickens cooked whole in clay. The idea is that you place the whole bird, feathers and all, in a thick “balloon” of clay, then covering the “balloon” entirely with red-hot wood ashes. If you do it properly you should open the “balloon” to find the bird perfectly cooked, the feathers coming away with the clay. I have never seen this amazing trick yet done properly, though I’ve seen some very good attempts. Have you any special “wilderness cooking” ideas of your own? The gipsies catch and cook hedgehogs in this way, but hedgehogs are much too valuable in the garden to think of eating them. Foresters tell me grey squirrels are delicious if cooked in this way or broiled in a stew like rabbits. There’s an idea!

WEEK 41

JULY (ii)

TREKKING to a patrol weekend camp is really great fun. No Scout troop is really complete without a trek-cart of its own. Given good regular service it will serve the troop faithfully for many years. In my troop the duty patrol of the month was responsible for trek-cart maintenance. They had to clean and oil it and keep it ready for instant use at any time. Drag-ropes were never used for knotting, splicing or any other purpose except drag-ropes and were kept in good trim. Every spring the trek-cart was repainted in Scout green with the troop’s name painted proudly on the side boards.

Now the patrols can borrow the trek-cart in turn for patrol camping. This enables the boys who haven’t got bikes to go to camp. It also gives the cyclists a change, which is good for them. It always cuts down expenses considerably, for there will be no rail or bus fares.

If we plan a patrol weekend trek camp we pack our trek-cart on Friday night. There is no need to economise on weight as we do in cycle camping; at the same time there’s no need to carry things we are never going to use. We pack cooking gear carefully so that dixies won’t rub against tent material or personal kit. It’s a good idea to carry cooking gear in a light wooden box. Pack personal kits (rucksacks or kit-bags) and food on Saturday and pack them tightly. Make a neat job of this packing and cover the complete kit with groundsheets rubber side outwards; lash everything down firmly with good rope. (Make certain *all* rope ends are whipped beforehand.)

If it's a dusty July day when we hit the trail with our trek-cart we can wipe surplus oil and grease off wheels and axle. We carry an oil-can, spare grease, at least one spanner and some spare wheel-pins. Before we set off we test our loaded trek-cart for two things—rattle and squeaks ! A loaded trek-cart which rattles and groans is a loathsome thing! Squeaky springs, wheels and axles are just as bad. Let's resolve there won't be rattle or squeaks on *our* trek-cart.

Here are some tips for trek-cart camps:

- (1) Don't go too far away, and keep off main roads as much as possible.
- (2) Obey the *Highway Code* and cut out all horseplay. A good routine is two Scouts on the trek-cart handle, two on the drag ropes and two or three pushing at the rear.
- (3) You may have to use your trek-cart after dark. Remember the dreadful Chatham bus disaster. Therefore carry a hurricane lamp for rear-light. This is all laid down in *Policy, Organisation and Rules*. The chaps at the rear must not obscure this light, *which should always be on the right hand side of the trek-cart*. We simply can't be too careful about this precaution at night.
- (4) Before we set off on the trek (especially on a hot day) the patrol sits down and takes off all shoes and stockings. The P.L. ensures that every Scout dusts his feet and stockings with boracic or unscented powder. If the patrol has not got any powder it can use soap. No Scout wants his weekend spoiled by blisters.
- (5) Learn some good Scout songs that can be whistled. I know no better sight in Scouting than to see a really smart patrol off to camp on a Saturday in summer whistling their way cheerfully along a country lane with a well-packed smart trek-cart.
- (6) Develop a troop tradition for good trekking which can be based on one simple phrase: TREKKING IS FUN!

WEEK 42

JULY (iii)

THIS is an important week for the troop, because next week we go to a farm near the hills and the sea for a whole week, or ten days, or a fortnight, if we're lucky, and there is sure to be a lot of excitement at troop-meeting tonight We'll spend the weekend overhauling the camp gear, packing it up and sending heavy stuff on in advance.

So tonight it's *my* turn for a rather practical kind of campfire yarn. I know it's only a week before camp and tent overhauling may be overdue, but the Nijers have been used a lot for patrol camping this summer and somehow all these jobs are left to the last moment. Every year we say we'll do the tents earlier and every year we don't. Here goes.

Hello! You must be on tiptoes for summer camp when it comes along. In most troops it coincides with the school holidays, and the end of July is drawing closer! Like most troops, you will be taking special care of your equipment in these difficult days. There is long life in all camping gear providing you look after it.

First of all let's examine all tents carefully for signs of wear and tear. Go over the fabric slowly looking for small tears and faults. These can be repaired yourself. You need some strong sailmaker's needles and waxed thread or fine twine. Use a simple back-stitch to do the job and make certain the neat side is on the outside of the tent. When the repair is complete proof it with a little beeswax, working it well in the fabric with a warm fiat-iron. On an old tent you could 'do it with a shoemaker's heel-ball if beeswax is scarce.

Rope guylines often work smooth with years of wear on tents, and then they slip in windy weather. It isn't easy these days to replace the guy-lines immediately with good new rope. You can make your present guys last longer by taking off the wooden toggles and "roughing" the inside of them with a rasp or old file. This is more satisfactory than risking the edge of your sheath-knife. You want that for better things. Don't let your guys ever get too dry. In the cool of the hot evening you can damp them a little, but don't overdo it, for there may be a heavy dew later on.

A good idea is to make metal stub-plates to go under your tent-poles. They will improve the pitch of your tent. Another useful idea is to make a substantial "sod-cloth" for each tent. This is nothing more than a wide piece of green dyed hessian (sometimes sold in varying qualities for covering furniture) sewed with strong twine on each tent wall. If you make it about a foot wide you will be amply repaid for the time and trouble taken when rainy days come along. Also check up on all eyelets and replace those that are faulty.

Many Scouts forget to check over their tent-pegs. Take one good stout peg, preferably oak or beech, for every guy and pegging place. Then add ten percent to the total to replace those you break and lose. It is good fun to make your own tent-pegs in spare moments. Lastly, make friends with your grocer and try to persuade him to let you have some white sugar sacks from time to time. They are sometimes hard to get these days, but they make splendid tent bags, and you can decorate them with your troop or patrol emblem.

Tears can be repaired on groundsheets by sewing or by careful use of the best brands of surgical adhesive tape. Press the tape in place with a *warm* flat-iron. Use a wide tape and do the repair on the inside of the groundsheet.

Cooking gear needs every care. Never leave your pots and pans dirty. Get them cleaned in really hot water as soon as you can after a meal. Clean the outside as well as the inside, and take a real pride in the cleanliness of your kitchen. Cooking gear will last for years if you remember never to leave water standing for long in your dixies and never to leave them on the fire longer than necessary.

Get all your cooking gadgets prepared well in advance. For instance, have you thought of designing your own cooking bars or grille to suit your troop's requirements and then getting a local blacksmith to make them for you? If you haven't, there's just time to make them up before we go.

And when the camping gear is packed and off, we can have a check by patrols on personal kit and give each boy a note to take home, signed by Skipper. This note informs parents of such things as:

- (1) Exact dates of camp, giving time of outward train and station and expected time of arrival home. Warn them the train is always very late.
- (2) Exact address and nearest telephone, but it must be understood by parents that this must only be used in real emergency. (If you don't "trust" the parents of some of your boys leave the telephone number out altogether!)
- (3) Date of parents' visiting day and exact details for finding the blessed site, always remembering that half the parents are sure to arrive at some other troop's site a mile away.
- (4) Exact amount young Johnny has in camp bank, etc. Parents always want to know this and they always say it isn't enough. Usually it is more than enough, as every Scouter knows.

End everything connected with parents, bless 'em, at (4). Otherwise parents will be fussing around all week and the camp itself will never take place at all.

All this gives us about an hour only to get the last bit of heavy baggage off—and I don't mean dear old Skipper. After all, we only have a camp like this once a year.

It's going to be terrific fun! Heavens! One of the P.L.s has just remembered the two overseas Scouts we have invited to camp with us! What time do they arrive? Who's going to meet them? Who is going to act as buddy to them? Who *would* a Scouter be?

WEEK 43

JULY (iv)

THERE'S just time—the night before troop camp—for a pep talk on the type of country we are visiting. Illustrate this with the maps we shall be using throughout camp. If we have some photos of the area so much the better.

Many Scouts make for the hills in really hot weather, including our troop tomorrow, says Skipper. There we avoid fly-infested river and stream valleys, and the marshy banks of lakes. If we are camping in hilly country, as *we* are going to do, or merely exploring on day or weekend trips, we must treat hills with respect. Hillcraft can only be learned by experience, but it depends largely on common sense and using your head. That includes all *of you*.

For instance, you'll soon find that distance and time have new values in the hills. The tenderfoot looks at hilly country ahead and says, "It's about five miles, we'll be there at dinnertime." The real hill walker doesn't. He gets out a one-inch map, like this one here, and studies it carefully. He weighs up the hazards and the steep winding hill paths, the gradients and the type of country. Just look at this map. Then he plans a route that doesn't stray far from farms and avoids unknown moorland, scree-covered slopes and boggy, dangerous areas.

Young Scouts will have plenty of time later on as Senior Scouts and Rover Scouts to tackle real fell walking, "climbing the tops" and exploring in earnest. In the next two weeks you can have lots of fun on the hills without doing reckless things and attempting climbs and treks beyond your capacity.

Let's start simply, when we do, and always supposing that the British Railways get us there. B.-P. said, "softlee softlee catchee monkey", and he was right. We've learned how to use a compass in our patrols and how to read maps, both by day and by night. We've learned how to cut kit down to a minimum at patrol camps and yet still carry essential items like a pocket first-aid kit, emergency food (soup concentrate, malted-milk tablets, meat-essence cubes, biscuits). We've learned how to look after our feet and skin in hot weather. We've learned how to walk in the fresh early mornings and cool of the evening and to rest during the main heat of the day. All these things we can put into practice in the next couple of weeks.

If Mr. Roberts the farmer, or any of his men, tells you that a certain path or track is bad, then take his advice. Only a fool ignores advice from a man who lives on the spot. The older chaps may get a chance to practise way-finding with a pal until they can really be sure of themselves in unknown country. You youngsters must not be afraid to ask older and more experienced Scouts for help and advice.

Soon you'll all realise that the art of hill-craft does depend on simple rules. Let's simplify them now:

- (1) Don't underestimate distance and time.
- (2) Always walk in small parties rather than alone or in pairs.
- (3) Let's enjoy all the fun of high summer on the hills, but go prepared for the worst, just in case. (That lovely big hill—see it there on the map—just asking to be explored, might look very different covered by a rolling white mist and drizzly rain.)
- (4) Every hill in Britain has its moods, and so do those in North Wales. Learn what they are from men who live on the spot.

Lastly, here's one final tip for all patrols. Carry at least one mirror with you. Used as a helio with the sun to flash Morse or other prearranged signals, it can be more useful in the hills than anything else in your rucksacks.

And that's enough for tonight. You won't remember it all, but we'll have another think about it when we arrive at the farm and settle in. Now then, home as fast as you can, and I'll see you all at the station at 8.30 sharp tomorrow morning. The 8.55 waits for no one. If you miss it you miss camp. That's all. Good night, chaps!

Meanwhile Skipper prepares a few ideas for the four- or five-hour train journey even though they will probably never be used.

Odd as it may seem, the best idea I found for the train was an inter-patrol quiz—each patrol having its own den, i.e. a third-class reserved compartment, to sort out ideas. The quiz was to invent collective nouns, e.g. for “jokes”, “boys”, “mannequins”. And here are my own efforts, strictly copyright: “a howl of jokes”, “a breeze of boys”, “a mince of mannequins”. Why should that parlour game amuse a gang of high-spirited boys in a train en route to high adventure? I don't know. Perhaps they were thinking about the farm and the sea and the hills....

WEEK 44

AUGUST (i)

SOME of the best fun in Scouting is possible in stalking games. But you cannot just go out and play them like a game of football. First of all you must train properly in stalking principles. We have already done a lot of this in the troop especially in March, April and May. When boys have mastered the simple ideas of never standing up against the skyline, of “freezing”, of “shadow dodging”, and never treading on dry twigs in woodland, then the troop is ready to play real stalking games. But not before. .

Dispatch Running is a simple but grand game. B.-P. says a lot about it in *Scouting for Boys*. I think he got the idea in Mafeking, where so much depended upon stalking skill. A Scout is detailed to take a message to a certain house in a given time. Other Scouts have to stop him doing so and are given very little information beyond a brief description of “the agent”. If played in wooded country this game can be particularly exciting. Keep it up your sleeve for early use at summer camp. If you happen to be camping near another troop, then challenge them to play you at this and other stalking games. Pool ideas, for summer camp is a time for swapping ideas and experiences, too.

The troop can think up ingenious ways of carrying messages as a spare-time activity at summer camp. We had a Scout in my troop who kept a secret hiding-place for messages a close secret for three years. He bored a tiny hole in the end of his Scout staff, kept his rolled message in it (on cigarette paper and always, as a precaution, in code) and *sealed the end of the hole with wax!*

Once we have tried Dispatch Running and simple message carrying we can try real stalking under camp conditions—in woods, sand dunes, heather, moorland, rock face or scree, or whatever terrain we’ve got. Tell the boys, if they are new to it, that they cannot just go out and play stalking games like team games. First of all they must *train* properly for stalking. Show them why they must never stand up against a skyline. A boy cannot be a good stalker if he doesn’t know how to freeze instantly if he thinks he may be spotted. This needs absolute concentration. Practice over and over again in the patrols until the troop can do it automatically in the woods or dunes (see week 4) or anywhere without effort.

On a sunny day a boy is often given away by his own shadow. So he will have to watch the position of the sun so that if he has to freeze suddenly he does not cast a tell-tale shadow across a woodland path, for instance. Many an inexperienced stalker has failed because he stood on a dry twig at the wrong moment. A stalker always watches where he is treading in wooded country. He cannot be too careful about it.

Now for some games to put training into practice. Remember, we would not play stalking games in a wood in summer in khaki uniform. Watch the effect of this by sending a good stalker to creep across a woodland path. Wear green clothing harmonising with the background. Improvise as best you can. What about some old sacks dyed green—or some cheap green Hessian? Seed sacks used by farmers are ideal. Perhaps our host has some in his barn we can borrow and clean for the purpose.

First we can show the boys that in August the woods, parks and countryside are not looking at their best, unless we have one of our all too frequent, long, cool, wet summers. If we have a good summer the continuous hot sun will mean a better standard of stalking skill. That is why summer camp is the best time of the whole year for real stalking games.

Once we have played a few simple games in improvised stalking smocks made from sacks we can try merging ourselves into a background without them. Not so easy in high summer! Khaki is useless in “green” country, but how useful it is in the sand dunes! Now let’s camouflage our arms, legs and faces so that the white doesn’t show up against the sand. We can use anything we’ve got in the kitchen—diluted black coffee is often quite sufficient. Don’t worry if it takes a day or two to wear off.

Hair colour needs to be watched, too—and *the back of the neck*. A very dark or black haired boy shows up instantly in sand dunes, and so does a red-haired or very blond boy in “green” country. Try it and judge for yourself. A boy who freezes on his face when crossing a sandy rabbit warren on his stomach will be spotted at once if the back of his neck, arms and knees have not been camouflaged as well as his front.

In some parts of Britain, and Anglesey springs to my mind at once, there are stretches of gorse-covered common with grassy clearings and outcrops of rock within easy reach of the sea and dunes, and excellent farm camp sites. This is perfect stalking country for boys, and summer camp in such terrain is the finest possible opportunity for real Scouting for any troop.

Stalking, then—both the initial training and the real stuff—is a major activity for summer camp. There will be more time and probably better conditions for it than at any other time of the year.

WEEK 45

AUGUST (ii)

AT Last once during a fortnight’s camp each patrol can go off for a one-night trek camp away from the site exploring on its own with a hike tent or two or trying out some special idea. For instance, it is fun to make cooking gear and then go out for an overnight trek to use it. First of all collect a number of tin cans from the kitchen. Some of these will be of better quality than others.

Open the cans carefully with a turn screw can-opener. This will save work later on. The average patrol will require two frying-pans, two or three cooking-pots and probably mugs as well. Try a simple cooking pot first. Mark the size on the can and cut the rest of the can away carefully. Be careful about this. Hold the can away from the body and use a sharp strong pair of cutters. Wire cutters might do, or any old strong pair of scissors sharpened-up well. With a light hammer tap a “lip” on your cooking-pot on a vice or carpenter’s bench. Now punch some holes in the side and fix strong wire handles. If a patrol doesn’t like its first efforts let it try again until eventually it has a workmanlike set of cooking gear which has cost nothing to make.

The wise Scout will make his pots so that they fit inside each other and so save space in packing his rucksack. A frying-pan can be cut from a really big can. The best I have seen were made from large cans used for tomato juice (gallon size). The important thing to remember with the frying-pan is that the handle must be strong and rigid.

Don’t let a boy expect too much from his home-made cooking gear. If they last him for two or three camps the work has been well rewarded. Suggest he keeps experimenting until he finds the right kind of cans. You may find the shiny bright cans used for coffee are better, say, than tomato-juice cans for making cooking-pots for vegetables. An oval tin as used for pilchards might make an excellent frying-pan with very little adaptation.

When washing-up in home-made gear always do so in *very hot* water. Dry home-made pots in the sun or near the cooking fire. They are liable to rust easily and should then be discarded. Even if the cooking gear is not very successful the patrol will have had a lot of fun in making it. From that stage the patrol can go on to making attractive camp dishes without any cooking gear at all.

An attractive idea used by American Scouts is worth trying on these overnight treks from main camp. It consists of a “tennis-racket griller” made from a three-pronged forked stick. Green cross-sticks are used to convert it roughly into the shape and style of a tennis racket. Meat, fish, poultry, or rabbit is then held in position on it with more green sticks and toasted or “grilled” before glowing embers or a hot fire. This is a really good idea.

WEEK 46

AUGUST (iii)

HERE is a thrilling wide game which you can play at troop camp. My troop log shows that it was voted the best we ever had. That summer we were camping in a valley in Central Wales, a region full of rolling hilly country. We had three overseas Scouts with us as our guests (that can invariably be arranged) and they asked us for a really good wide game. We decided it should be worked out as a patrol game and that we would be twenty-four hours away from camp.

A fine sunny day was selected about halfway through our annual camp. A “skeleton guard” of four visiting Rover Scouts said they would look after the main camp for us so that the whole troop could take part in the game. After breakfast each P.L. was handed a sealed envelope of instructions and given a small compact brown-paper parcel marked with the words *Not To Be Opened Until Told To Do So*. Each patrol was told to open its instructions at a rendezvous about half a mile away from camp. Each patrol had a different rendezvous, and soon the country lanes were echoing with the cheery laughter and songs of three patrols all going different ways.

Each patrol carried twenty-four hours’ food for eight boys, in addition to two small hike tents and some groundsheet that could easily be made into bivouacs for the night. The P.L.s saw to it that they were equipped with compasses, torches, one-inch maps covering the area, water-bottles, matches in a waterproof box and simple cooking gear. Each P.L. carried the patrol first-aid kit and a short list of useful phone numbers in case of emergency.

Each patrol soon found **out** that they had to follow a picked route to another rendezvous and this in each case was the summit of a rugged Welsh hill. We arranged it so that each patrol would be alone. The patrols were going different ways, and there would be no chance of seeing each other. Yet all patrols had a hill to climb. It was not a very strenuous climb, but the way up was not made too easy. Each patrol made its rendezvous correctly by 2 p.m., but one of the P.L.s misread his map and went about two miles out of his way. His patrol had a very short lunch-hour.

The instructions said that each patrol was to await developments after 2.30 p.m. Meanwhile everyone wanted to know what the mysterious parcel was that they had been carrying all morning. They were not left in doubt very long. Between 2 p.m. and 3.10 p.m. each patrol spotted a series of flashes from a fourth hill-top. The flashes persisted for twenty minutes or so until it was obvious they were Morse messages. They gave the troop calling-up sign and then told the patrols to open their parcels. Everyone did this, in great excitement, and found they contained simple helio signalling equipment. With these helios each patrol was soon answering the original flashes sent out by the Scouters, and then sent messages in Morse to the other patrols. Fortunately it was a really hot day and the sun was at its best.

The game did not end there. The Scouters said that each patrol must find its own camp site for the night within a set area and do its best to remain *unseen* by the Scouters, who would try and find each patrol site after 7.30 p.m. "To see and to be unseen" is a great maxim for any Scout. It says much for the skill of the P.L.s that the Scouters only succeeded in finding one of the three patrol sites that night, and then only by the slight smoke from a tiny cooking fire in a secluded hollow. Yet each patrol saw each other patrol!

The story of the watchful night spent under "bivvies" was exciting enough. The whole troop talked about that wide game for many long months afterwards, and yet it really was a very simple affair. It shows that simple ordinary Scouting with a dash of enthusiasm and originality hits the bell every time. *Don't forget wide games at summer camp.*

WEEK 47

AUGUST (iv)

MOST Scouts are now home again from annual summer camp. Let's hope it has been one of the finest camps ever, even if it was marked by hard ground and baked, sun-dried turf. It is easy to sit back now, chatter about camp fun, clean camping equipment and repair tents and then put them away until next year. *There is one important thing we must not forget.* The Scout Law says that a Scout is courteous. We must sit down and write letters of thanks to everyone who helped to make our summer camp a roaring success. First and foremost to our host—probably a friendly farmer or landowner. Let tell them in our own way exactly how much we appreciated their efforts to give us a good time. Other people may have helped us—the village policeman; the local station-master, who struggled with all our kit and baggage and reserved us a coach on the return train; the grocer and butcher and baker, who delivered our stores so cheerfully; the gamekeeper, who taught us so much local nature lore; the local Scout troop, always ready to lend a hand and give us tips of all kinds; the local vicar, who arranged a special service for us. There was the old lady in the village post office who dealt with our mail; and the Girls' Club at the village institute, who came along to our public camp-fire and sang some old English country songs. One or two of the boys said that was a good idea. I wonder why! And the visiting Commissioner, who came to our Scouts' Own and gave a short talk....

All these good people deserve letters of thanks on troop notepaper. In this way we build up goodwill for Scouting; and when we write maybe for a camp site again next year the answer will be "Yes, certainly."

I think it is so important that I put it down as a main thought for week 47. Camp aftermath will fill up the rest of the time tonight.

WEEK 48

SPARE PROGRAMMES FOR AUGUST

Beach Games

WE can have fun on the beach, when fleecy clouds scud through a summer sky and there's a salt tang on our cheek from a whisking sea breeze. If we've ever played beach games we know the zest the troop have for them, the holiday joy and enthusiasm. There's no need for the weather to be baking hot, either. We can get just as much fun from beach games if the day is wet. If we have a good rub down with a rough towel and change into dry things there will be no ill effects.

Beach games need not be highly organised affairs run to a set time-table. The secret of good holiday fun is to make plans as elastic as possible so that we can take every possible advantage of the weather, wet or fine. Here are some ideas, old and new, for you to think over.

I am always recommending volley ball. The “props” consist simply of a tennis net strung high on posts in the centre of a roughly marked-out court rather like a tennis court. I have often seen young people in France playing this game in camp, too.

Teams of three, four or five are chosen, and the game, simply, is to pass a football to and fro over the net, keeping the ball in the air. As soon as the ball touches the ground or passes outside the “field of play” the defaulting side loses a point. The team with the lowest number of points wins a game. Games can be fifteen minutes each way. Knock-out tournaments can be real fun, especially if you invite other holiday-makers, campers and the local boys to make up teams.

Beach tennis is a good game for a rainy day. Wear trunks and plimsolls only, and make certain you get that rub-down with a rough towel as soon as the game is over.

A good cheap substitute for a tennis net is a length of rot-proofed pea or bean netting with three-inch square mesh. A fourteen-foot length three feet wide costs only 2s. 6d.—or seven feet wide 5s. ^{3d} at the time of writing. Volley ball or beach tennis is a skilful, exciting game and can be fine training for the football season.

Camp rugby is ideal for the beach. We can play the real thrill-packed seven-a-side game if we have the space. Tries only are scored. If we haven’t a rugby or soccer ball, then an old soccer ball case stuffed with a towel can be used. Mark dead lines distinctly. Don’t play longer than fifteen minutes each way, for it is a strenuous game. Keep rules simple, and remember, no forward passing. Wear plimsolls (pumps or gym shoes) and bathing trunks or shorts. If we play in the cool of the evening, then we can have a good rub-down afterwards and put some warm clothes on, including a light pullover or sweater.

Beach cricket is always a “winner”. All we need is an old cricket bat, six stumps and a ball or two. Bails are not necessary. Go in for carefree cricket in the Saturday afternoon spirit of league cricket. Let each side have a time limit for batting. It’s grand fun.

Beach baseball is hectic. It need be nothing more than a fast game of rounders. It is a splendid morning game if we play before the sun is very high. An Indian club and a tennis ball are all we need, with stones to mark the bases. We make up our own rules and size of teams.

A camp sports meeting is fun and makes a change from team games.

Here are just a few ideas to help you in making up a programme:

- (1) Team chariot race round a set course on the beach. The chariot consists of 3 “horses” and 2 “chassis”. Get down like a rugby scrum with a “driver”, who stands on the backs of the two “chassis”. This can be real fun, but needs lots of care.
- (2) Throwing the cricket ball. Easy! Longest throw wins.
- (3) Throwing a football. Jolly good practice for the soccer season.
- (4) Throwing the javelin. The javelin can be a Scout staff.
- (5) Throwing the hammer. The “hammer” is a tent mallet, but don’t have this item unless your mallet is a very solid one.

- (6) Hop, skip and jump. (Also long jump.)
- (7) Dixie relay. Teams of four carry dixies full of sea-water. Team with most water left wins!
- (8) Fireman's lift race. Big boys carry youngsters, using the fireman's lift. Twenty-five yards is quite enough for this.

One last word. Don't make a fetish of beach or camp games. Leave plenty of time for exploring the hidden mysteries of pools left by the tide, for scrambling over seaweed and sand dunes and tufty grass, and for learning something about boats.

WEEK 49

SEPTEMBER (i)

WHEN a troop returns to a city suburb from a country camp they often talk about the country folk they met.

Skipper said to the troop beforehand: "Make an effort to get to know the boys and girls who live in the country. They will be our hosts. At first you may find them shy and reserved. They may even seem very slow-moving to you. Their normal everyday life is bound up with country ways and customs. They don't live in a world where they are constantly jumping on and off buses and trains, like you do.. .

Although these differences are often marked, the troop should remember that the country boy and girl is just as interested in town or city life.

Country boys have a lot to teach us as Scouts. They know a lot about birds, trees, animals, weather lore, farming, shooting, climbing, riding, fishing, swimming, country sports. They will tell you the direction of the prevailing wind on a camp site, where the best drinking water is, the best spots for swimming and fishing, which bull to avoid (!), where you can catch rabbits and find mushrooms in the early morning!

So the troop should invite them to join in camp games and sports, and camp-fires. They will study camping technique carefully, and may be full of suggestions and ideas.

We can make real friends with country hosts met in August summer camps so that in the winter we can invite them to come and have a few days in our home town or city as our guests. We can show them the sights, take them to a theatre, and give them lots of fun. In this way we build up understanding between town and country boys and girls. We'll soon realise that really there's very little difference between us. Scouting (and Guiding) has the supreme advantage of appealing to all young people, no matter where they may live or what their background is.

When we get home we continue to write to our country friends. If our town has some well-known delicacy we can send our hosts a souvenir—perhaps our town is famous for its short-bread, butterscotch, pork pies or cakes.

This idea is worth thinking about in September before we forget about summer camp.

We once had a Scout in my troop who never gained his First Class or King's Scout Badge. He wasn't very good at knotting or splicing, and his P.L. did not rate him a tip-top camper. But he had talent, and we unearthed it for the good of the troop. He was a natural and splendid camp-fire leader. He always knew a good song to sing in the railway carriage when we were going to summer camp. He was always the first to break into song on a wet day when everyone felt miserable. He was one of our greatest assets, and we were proud of him, especially when we had visitors.

Good camp-fires, especially international camp-fires, will live in your memory, as they have done in mine, for many years to come. They will stir your heart and send your spirits flying high, for the appeal of a Scout camp-fire is like nothing else.

Some chaps are shy about getting up in front of their friends and singing a song or acting some kind of potted play or mime. The good camp-fire leader will see to it that the shy chaps are encouraged. B.-P. was a great believer in camp-fires because they gave chaps confidence in themselves. And a chap who has confidence in himself is a long way towards being self-reliant. Our present Chief, Lord Rowallan, is often to be seen at camp-fires, for he, too, knows that they are among our finest traditions in Scouting.

If we analyse the methods of good camp-fire leaders we notice that they all depend on simplicity for their success. Watch Ralph Reader at work, for instance. Walt Dobson (of Dobson & Young fame) could do amazing things with huge Scout camp-fire audiences with little more than a flick of his fingers and a sudden, quick "Now!" Here is a successful method which has certainly worked well with at least half a dozen good camp-fire leaders I know. The first thing to do is to get it all down on paper. Think of old *favourite opening choruses* you know. Think of all the good *yells, part songs, rounds, individual turns*. Add a few good *simple, short, easily remembered sketches* for one or two Scouts. Make a good list of *traditional English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish songs*. Make another list of songs which are traditional to your part of the country. *These are very important.*

When you go to another district or another county there is nothing finer than to hear the old traditional songs of another part of Britain, sung by the Scouts who live there. At World Jamboree camp-fires you hear wonderful national songs from all parts of the world. Learn all you can and so bring variety to your own camp-fire programmes in the months to come. There are some good camp-fire books on sale at the Scout Shop. A recent book by Sid G. Hedges, entitled *Youth Sing Book* (Pilgrim Press), is particularly useful.

WEEK 50

SEPTEMBER (II)

HOW about running something especially for the parents? A "Mum and Dad's Day" or evening—something quite different from the usual troop meeting. There might be some especial show on in town—a theatre or cinema, a horse show, gymkhana, something at the Albert Hall, Earls Court, Olympia, Wembley, Harringay, the White City, Belle Vue or a dozen other rendezvous. Each Scout can invite his family or friends along as guests of the troop.

If funds do not run to this kind of social occasion we run a Mum and Dad's Day in the grounds of Troop H.Q. or at the local camp site. Give them a picnic prepared by the troop!

Set aside a patrol tent as a "ladies" tent with soap, towels, bowls of water and mirrors. Have a big box of Sweets for young brothers and sisters and a large bath of water somewhere, and a sandpit where toddlers can splash and paddle and play to their heart's content. At tea-time give everyone some speciality of the troop—such as delicious rock cakes made in biscuit-tin ovens, and make sure they *are* delicious, or you'll never hear the last of it. Arrange a few games or some clock golf or an impromptu camp-fire if the weather is cool. The latest idea in this kind of entertainment is a barbecue, with sausages toasted at an open-air charcoal fire.

To make up for no troop meeting we'll have some extra-special patrol meetings this week. Joe, for instance, is a P.L. with bright, original ideas. It was no surprise to the Seagulls to have a note from him in Morse code saying: *Weekly patrol meeting this week Clarion Garage Tuesday 7p.m. sharp. Don't be late. Joe.*

Joe's idea was to give his patrol a change from ordinary Scout training. He persuaded the owner of the Clarion Garage to give them an illustrated yarn on motor-bikes and how they worked, followed up with another two talks on British cars and their engines. Said young Tiny, "This is modern up-to-date Scouting". Providing you treat it in its right perspective, it is.

Joe and the Seagulls found the work-benches of the garage fascinating. They made a good friend of the owner and he allowed them to use one of his benches from time to time. They learnt a bit about metalwork and welding, made a cooking grid for patrol camp from scrap iron, some mudguards for the troop trek-cart, an electric porch light for the main door of the troop-room. Two Seagulls made a model dynamo and Joe himself made a simple food safe for summer camp.

WEEK 51

SEPTEMBER (iii)

STORE camp gear now for the winter, after renovating it. Most Scout troops are now storing their camp gear for the winter. It pays to do this carefully, for careless storing will ruin tents and cooking gear quicker than anything else.

Take tents first. Be absolutely sure that each tent is dry and well-aired before packing. If the weather is good give them plenty of sun-drying.

Brush all mud off flaps and sod-cloths, do all minor repairs and check that all toggles, tent-poles and guy-lines are in order. Each tent should be folded neatly towards the middle and packed in canvas bag or sack. Store tents on shelves in a dry, airy room.

Cooking gear should be cleaned thoroughly, inside and out, and dried. Use plenty of very hot water and remove all stains. When the cooking gear is really dry smear a very thin layer of Vaseline on the inside—but don't overdo it.

Groundsheets need special care. Never put away a ground-sheet that is showing signs of wear and tear. It is now possible to buy water-proofing compounds which will add a lot of life to old groundsheets.

Make a point during the late autumn and winter of airing all your camp equipment regularly. Hang your tents over lines for a day or so and then re-pack. Watch for any signs of mustiness or mould on tents, rust or green mould on cooking gear. Deal with it immediately.

Appoint someone as a Troop Quartermaster. It can be his special job to look after troop equipment. The wise troop will also insure its equipment against loss by theft or fire.

Moth and Butterfly hikes are especially good for late summer camp programmes. It is a simple thing to spread a blanket after dark on the ground under a thick bush. Give the bush several sharp raps and if there are any moths they will fall on the blanket. They are fond of the pussy-willow. You can examine the moths with a dim torch and take any specimens you want in match-boxes. Butterfly hikes are easiest in late summer when the Michaelmas-daisies are out, but in high summer a good haunt is any stretch of common with plenty of furze and gorse bushes.

Have you ever tried a half-way hike? Make friends with a troop in the country or another town. Arrange to meet them in some good spot half-way between your two headquarters and have an

inter-troop games competition, followed by a camp-fire. There is fun for the asking on a half-way hike.

You can help your local Scout Commissioner by looking for new camp sites for young and inexperienced troops, and so you will be doing a Good Turn to Scouting itself. You can also look for little things to do—caring for the garden of an old-age pensioner or crippled person, digging the foundations of a swimming bath for an orphanage, or helping the vicar of a country church in these days of labour shortages to keep the lawns and hedges round the church in trim order.

WEEK 52

SEPTEMBER (iv)

THIS is the last week of the Scout Year and we can “recap” on things we have learned this year.

(1) *The most successful troop meetings are planned in advance.* The ones which make Scouts enthusiastic and eager for next week’s meeting are those which run smoothly and efficiently, with never a dull moment or spasms of boredom. This is where the boy comes in. He can do so much to help his Scouters by obeying orders smartly and without question, by resolving to make his patrol the best in the troop and by doing his very best at all times to live up to the Scout Law and Promise.

(2) *There are many ways of saving time in the weekly troop meeting.* The end of September is the time to go through normal troop-meeting routine and see if **it** can be improved even further. A bright boy, if encouraged, can often hit on ideas which will help.

(3) *What is the best night of the week to hold a regular autumn and winter troop meeting?* My own choice is Friday every time, especially if you have your own Troop H.Q. On Friday nights you don’t have the homework or prep.’ problem. There is a spirit of anticipation of the weekend, too. If you hold troop meetings on Fridays it is easier to plan weekend or Saturday-afternoon Scouting. My troop went in for weekly patrol meetings as well. These were run by the boys themselves, usually in the Patrol Leaders home.

(4) *September is the time to start planning autumn and winter troop meetings.* No set plan can be laid down and everything depends on your own troop’s situation. (You may have to use a church hall on a certain night of the week, for instance.) Here is one plan which worked very successfully over a long period, and it has been used throughout this book.

We decided on a general scheme of one and a half hours for a meeting (**7.30** p.m. to 9 p.m.) on Friday nights throughout the year. An absolutely *prompt* start is the first essential. This scheme had three half-hour periods. In the *first period* we had troop inspection, flag-break and a really good team game to let off steam. We liked basketball, volley-ball, and our own version of “touch” rugby (it is good to invent your *own* troop games provided they are sound games).

The *second period* was devoted to patrol work in patrol dens or corners. It was varied, with inter-patrol games and training for tests. The real work was done by the Patrol Leaders.

The *third period* was the highlight of the evening. It was organised by the Scouters and was really troop training. Sometimes it would be an outdoor game as exciting as possible.

(5) *Troop meetings always ended with a short talk from “Skipper”, prayers and flag-down.* Once a month we had a camp-fire, often with guests from other troops. And let’s not forget to encourage our boys to bring along ideas for games. Running a troop is an all-in job, with everyone in the picture, from Skipper to the rawest Tenderfoot.

So we can spend tonight on thinking about the next Scout year, and we can safely leave the details to the valiant Court of Honour.

And that's about all for now.., but before you put this little book away please read the Preface again. Then you will see that it does not tell you how to run a Scout troop .

.. it aims to help you to do so.

Good Luck, and Good Scouting!