

The Patrol Books.....No. 15

MORE PATROL ACTIVITIES

by
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Illustrated by the Author.

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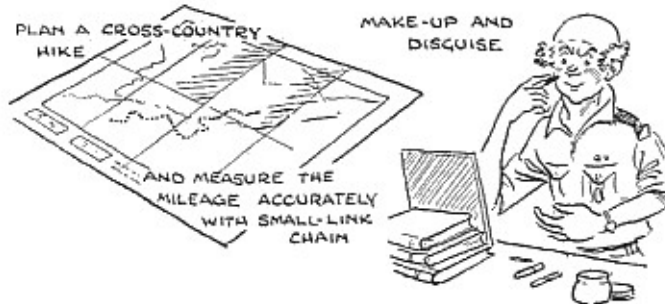
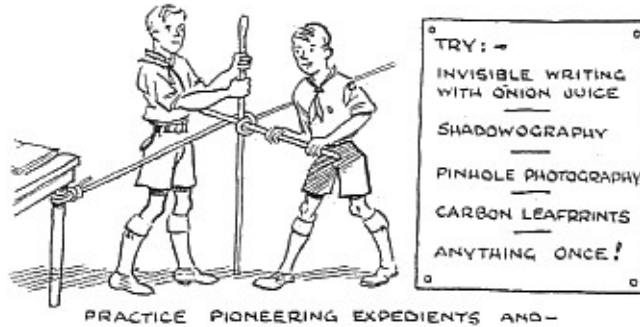


Editor's Note:

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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CHAPTER ONE

BACK TO BROWNSEA ISLAND

Scouting means a lot of things to a lot of people, but unless it has what you might call "the Brownsea Island Touch" it can only be a poor substitute for the real thing.

It was on that island in Poole Harbour, you remember, that the Founder ran his first experimental camp, when he proved beyond doubt that the Patrol System really worked. Up till then it had just been an idea in his head. At that island camp, as if by magic, the idea came to life.

Every Patrol must have its Brownsea Island! Sooner or later in its existence B.-P.'s idea must come to life once more *in the life of the Patrol*.

It might happen at any odd time. You might be sheltering in a barn from a sudden downpour, or squatting round your camp fire on a starry night. It could happen to-morrow in the Den - or to-day. Suddenly you stop being just a collection of individuals. You're in step! You're a team! You're a Patrol!

Speaking for myself, the Brownsea Island of a certain Woodpigeon Patrol was celebrated in a little birchwood near the village of Newton-on-the-Moor in Northumberland one frosty November night many years ago.

Nothing much happened that night - nothing exciting – except –

Well, let me tell you.

What gave us the idea I can't recall. All I remember is that after Troop Meeting on Friday we suddenly decided that if the following day was reasonably fine, we would take the train to Accrington (or some such place) and try one of those beeline hikes across country in the direction of the North Sea. The proviso about the weather was necessary because in those days lightweight tents were practically unknown and we had to rely on barns and cartsheds for shelter.

I can't remember a thing about the journey until we piled out of the train at Accrington (if that was the place).

It was all rather like a scene from "The Ghost Train" the empty station platform with the single oil-lamp shining yellow against the lingering daylight in the west; the line of gaunt pine-trees along the edge of the track with their branches blowing back from the sea; the old porter waiting silently at the gate to take our tickets as the train drew out. That remains as a vivid memory, and then there is a blank until, an hour or so later, I suppose, we stopped for a late tea on the edge of our birchwood a couple of miles from the sea. We were able to judge the distance because we could see the Coquet Light winking to the eastward and the steady beam of another Trinity House light further to the North.

It was a still, cold night, and the little fire under our teabillies burnt like a candleflame. As we waited for the pot to boil we sang "The Holly and the Ivy" and "We Three Kings of Orient Are," and Dictus produced his home-made recorder and tootled "Greensleeves"; and I never hear that old tune nowadays without seeing the faces of my five pals in the firelight. There was a sort of shimmer along the skyline to the north which puzzled us a lot at the time - a sort of dancing, glancing radiance through which the stars, brilliant overhead, shone pale and dim, as though through a curtain of light. Later we read in the papers that a fine display of the Aurora Borealis had been seen in the Lowlands that night, and we often wondered whether we were the only people south of the Border to see it too.

Well, there you have it. Nothing much happened. We had our tea standing in a close bunch round the fire, each with his hands clasped round his enamel mug to keep the frost out of his fingers. We were all a bit excited, and more than a little anxious about where we were going to bed down on such a frosty night; but we felt fine.

There was a feud on between Joe Muckle and me at the time. True, I was Patrol Leader and Joe was only Number Three, but unfortunately we were in the same form at school, and Joe had come out second in the term-end exams while I was nineteenth. I don't say that this had made Joe uppish with me, but it had certainly made me a bit downish with him - you know how it is - and relations were a little strained.

But there we were, drinking hot tea as matey as you please.

There were other complications in the Patrol, too - the sort of clashes of personality that are liable to occur anywhere, I suppose. Bob Martin and "Daisy" Harrison, I remember, had been hitting it off even worse than usual on the train journey, chiefly because of Bob's habit of using words he couldn't pronounce, and Daisy's delight in correcting him in a loud and pitying voice so that everyone could hear. (We never succeeded in curing Daisy of that, and he is probably doing it to this day.) But there was Bob airing his views about what he called "corporation with the Guides" and Daisy contradicting him without a trace of rancour as he helped himself to the teaspoon that was sticking out of Bob's mug so that he could dredge the sugar from the bottom of his own.

Even Dictus, who combined musical ability with a positive genius for binding about everything and everybody, seemed comparatively cheerful.

And as I stood among them under the birches - one of the gang, and the leader of it at that - I suddenly realized for the first time just what B.-P. meant by Scouting and by that wonderful word "Patrol".

It was Brownsea Island for me all right - the coming to life of an idea. It was what the Founder had intended when he sat in that windmill of his on Wimbledon Common writing *Scouting for Boys*. It must have happened a thousand times before and since. It must be happening at this moment and will happen again - perhaps for *you* - to-morrow. In camp, in the Den, on the hike; as you lie on the clifftop after the bathe; as you bend to the drag-ropes to take the old trek-cart up the steep, or haul in the slack as your monkey bridge becomes airborne ... suddenly you will know that your Patrol is really alive, and it will give you a thrill you will never forget.

But it can only happen if your Patrol is active, if it *does* things, if it has an identity of its own. To turn up regularly and punctually for the weekly Troop Meeting is grand, and I'm not denying that a lot of chaps have had a lot of fun and won a lot of badges by doing just that. But there is more in Scouting than fun and badge-hunting. Scouting is a *Patrol* activity. The Troop is there to pave the way and to coordinate all our efforts. Scouters are there to help and advise. But it is the Patrol and the Patrol Leader who carry B.-P.'s plan into action and make it come to life.

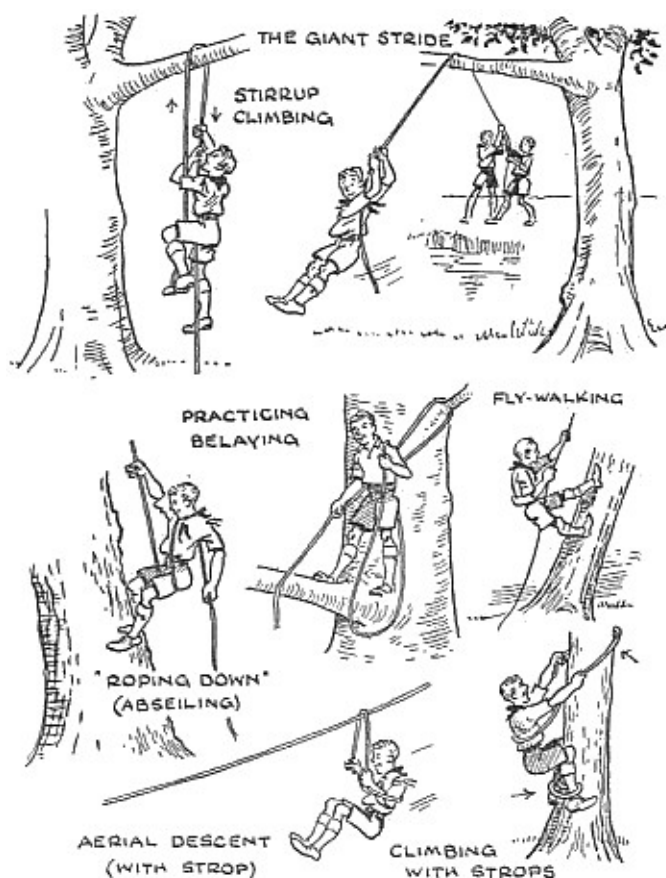
Your own Brownsea Island might be just round the bend in the river. A few energetic strokes of the paddle NOW will bring you to your landfall.

It's worth the effort.

Try getting your Patrol out on a few little adventures and see what happens.

Take them on a Beeline Hike across country for a kick-off. It's an old idea but a good one. Choose a moonlit night for it. Pack a few biscuits and sardine sandwiches (the Patrol Funds will stand it) and boil up a billy of cocoa at the end.

Or if you live in hilly country, have a go at a Contour Hike. For this interesting little caper, you select a contour line on the map and try to follow it for a couple of miles or so with the least possible deviation.



Obtain permission to climb to the top of the church tower and take compass bearings with a prismatic on other landmarks in the neighbourhood. From your readings prepare a Radiation Diagram on tracing paper, and test the accuracy of your bearings by placing the tracing over a large-scale map.

Try a Sunday Morning Breakfast Expedition: *i.e.*, leave home at 5 a.m., hike (or bike) to some suitable spot near a village, prepare breakfast, attend morning service at the local church or chapel (according to denomination) and return home for lunch.

Build a tree-shelter, complete with rope-ladder.

Hold weekly Patrol visits to the local swimming-baths till every member of the Patrol can swim at least fifty yards.

As a Patrol, visit another Troop in a neighbouring district and take part in their weekly Troop Meeting.

Try a Patrol Clam-bake - every man must bring a contribution to the larder and be prepared to cook it independently without pots of any kind.

Practise rope stunts in trees-roping down (abseiling), belaying, stirrup and stop climbing, fly-walking, and so on. Ask your Scouter to arrange for a Patrol visit to a Forge or Foundry.

Practise rope-spinning as a Patrol speciality. Try lariat throwing, stockwhip cracking, etc.

Invent and rehearse in secret an *original* camp fire item, and perform it at the next District Camp Fire.

Obtain permission to spend a night in a Dutch Barn, or in the Headquarters of a country or seaside Troop (or, if you happen to live in the country or at the seaside, in the H.Q. of a town Troop).

Ask the Group Committee for the use of a couple of cars (it *has* been done) and arrange to have your Patrol "taken for a ride and bumped off". This is a grand Saturday afternoon stunt. The Scouts are blindfolded and dropped off in pairs at different points on a circular route with instructions to return like homing pigeons to the Den, performing at least one good turn on the way.

These are just suggestions to set you thinking. *What* you do is of secondary importance: the fact that you do it *as a Patrol* is everything.

Don't be discouraged if your carefully hatched plot misfires. Misfortune and misadventure can be grand Patrol morale raisers, and it goes without saying that if you make your landfall in the teeth of a storm your Brownsea Island will certainly mean more to you when you get there! Listen to any group of Old Scouts chatting about the good old days and you will find that it is always the things that went wrong that they remember and laugh about.

Easy on the paddles! Touch her, Bow! Off we go.

CHAPTER TWO

IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE A GAME

"Patrol Meetings," a P.L. wrote not long ago," are all very well in theory, but I don't see how you can run them without proper discipline, and the trouble with my lot is that they don't *like* discipline. It's hard enough to keep them busy in Patrol Corners on Troop Night with the S.M. and two A.S.M.s hovering about. When I've got them on my own it's murder. Anyhow, they don't turn up."

Yes, it's difficult.

But it's not as difficult as all that.

The mistake some Patrol Leaders make is in regarding their Patrol Meeting as a sort of Troop Meeting on a reduced scale. They expect a Troop Room standard of behaviour and orderliness, and think there is something wrong when they don't get it.

It's as if the captain of a football team expected his men to show the same match-winning keenness in a friendly kickabout as in a cup-tie, or the bosun insisted on quarterdeck discipline in the fo'c'sle.

Probably the writer of the letter quoted above was taking his job too seriously. It's easily done - especially when you are keen. Perhaps he was thinking more of "being in charge" and "keeping everything under control" than of the sheer interest and enjoyment of the Patrol Meeting. This is not an argument against discipline and good order, but just a reminder that the happy relationship between a P.L. and his Scouts is of the first importance.

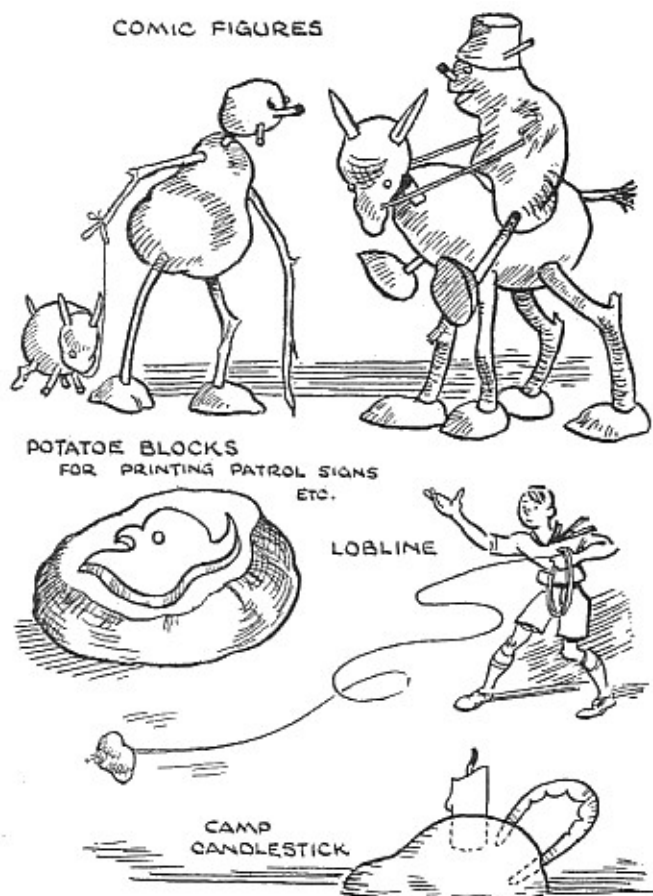
Patrol Meetings must be good fun. If they aren't, sooner or later some bright boy is going to pep them up by introducing a bit of fun on his own account - and that's where the trouble starts!

A good P.L. gets his own bit of fun in first.

I remember once taking my Patrol out to do tracking stunts in a sandpit not far from the village. They were interested for about twenty minutes, then someone pointed out that if you took a flying leap over the edge of the sandpit so that your feet struck the loose sand halfway down the slope at a certain angle, it ought to be possible to do a glorious glissade right down to the bottom. That, I need hardly tell you, was curtains for my tracking session. However, sand-skating proved grand sport. Furthermore, towards the end, when we'd all had about enough of it, someone (I think it was me) hit on the idea of a "mountain rescue" stunt. This involved strapping an injured man on an improvised stretcher and lowering him down the steep slope. All we had in the way of cordage was a hank of sisal and a 12-ft. length of rusty chain we'd fished out of the hedge. In the end the rescue became more like a toboggan ride for our injured man, who nearly

became a real casualty in the process, but it was interesting and exciting, and we all learnt something.

"Keep it flexible" was the advice B.-P. often gave his followers. There is much to be said for having a plan and sticking to it, but the plans you make for your Patrol are just little plans inside the much bigger plan of Scouting as a whole; and so long as you stick to *that* you can tack and turn, and shift and change to your heart's content.



What about the chaps who don't turn up to Patrol Meetings?

Well, in the first place I do not think myself that attendance at Patrol Meetings should be in any way obligatory. Your chaps should come because they want to come - not because they'll be "tipped the Black Spot" if they don't.

We once tried this "Black Spot" idea in the Woodpigeons, with extraordinary results. The idea was that every member of the Patrol should declare in advance whether or not he intended to come to the next Patrol Meeting. If he said "No" - okay; but if he said "Yes" then failed to turn up, two members of the Patrol were supposed to call at his house and solemnly present him with a postcard bearing the dreaded Black Spot. If he received two spots he was hauled before the

Patrol-in-Council; and if he persisted in his villainous conduct, his case was referred to the Court of Honour.

That was the plan.

Of course it didn't work. One or two Black Spots were handed out, then the chaps discovered that if you said, "Sorry, I don't think I'll be able to come on Thursday," nobody could Black Spot you for not coming if you didn't feel like it at the time, and nobody could stop you coming if you did.

There is only one way of getting a good attendance at Patrol Meetings, and that is to make them enjoyable. Once your absentees begin to feel that they are missing something, sheer curiosity will bring them along to find out what it is.

But numbers aren't everything. Very often you can put in more useful work with two or three than you can with half a dozen. I can tell you of at least one occasion when my Second and I had the time of our lives *because* the rest of the Patrol had let us down. We had planned a visit to the Lifeboat Station, but as only two of us had turned up the coxswain took us for a sail round the battery instead. This led to an early morning trip to sea on the Norwegian mailboat with the compass-adjuster. Naturally, when we met the rest of the Patrol later we did not fail to rub in what they had missed.

Some time after this, when Patrol spirit showed signs of flagging again, my Second thought of a good interest-arouser. Every night for a week he and I turned out in Scout uniform and were to be seen pedalling importantly about the village as if engaged on some highly important mission. Naturally, everyone wanted to know what we were up to - and naturally we did not enlighten them. By the Wednesday night two of the chaps had been round to ask if there was anything they could do to help. We thanked them politely, but explained that what we were busy with could only be done by the two of us. This, of course, made them more curious than ever. On the following night we were shadowed, and had an exciting time shaking off our fellow 'Pigeons before they tumbled to it that we were merely leading them up the garden. What they'd have said if they'd discovered the real nature of our "secret mission" I tremble to think. Actually, we spent the time, when not engaged cycling from one point to another, in mucking about with an old motor-cycle in Bob's uncle's garage.



A NOISY PATROL THAT'S HAPPY —

The thing you've got to avoid is monotony. A good P.L. must be an opportunist. One of the best Patrol Meetings we ever had in the Woodpigeons started as a tree-spotting ramble and ended as a rat-hunt on Clavering's Farm. On another occasion (this was in Sam Browne's day) we abandoned a perfectly good Wide Game on Gallow's Hill when we found that Johnny Clavering had put the wood platforms from his stackyard to steep in Dead Dog Pond. Punt-poling was much better fun.

Quite recently I have heard of a Patrol of Senior Scouts (of the Bishop's Own Troop, Wrexham) who built themselves a raft, had it okayed as riverworthy by the Local Association, and did a five-mile

Kon-Tiki down the River Dee. Another Senior Scout Patrol (from Thurrock, Essex) paid an early morning visit to Brentwood to discover what it was like to see a country market town waking up in the early morning. In 1951 the Portmadoc Seniors carried out a detailed survey of a precipitous gorge in the Welsh Mountains. A Sea Scout Patrol in the Northcountry spent a day on a dredger and worked their passage by hosing down the deck and maintaining a constant brew of tea for the crew. Nothing dull or monotonous about any of these activities. I don't imagine the P.L.s worried much about "discipline", either.



To sum up on all this, here are a few points you might like to bear in mind.

Discipline is important – but not so important as good fellowship. A noisy Patrol that's happy is to be preferred to a well-behaved one that isn't.

Don't try to stuff the Troop Room into the Patrol Den. It won't go.

A wise Patrol Leader trims his sails to the wind. You can often get there quicker by tacking and wearing than sailing a direct course.

"Troublesome Tenderfeet make good P.L.s." Perhaps the trouble-maker in your Patrol is just getting himself measured for a pair of white stripes in three or four years' time!

Motto for Patrol Meeting planners: "It may be good training - but is it good fun?"

And finally Take it easy. IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE A GAME.

CHAPTER THREE

IT ALL ADDS UP

Granted that Patrol Meetings should give your Scouts the chance of having a good time together, it follows that most Patrol Meetings will be held in the open. Why? Because it is much easier to have a good time out than in.

Very often you will find that a single activity will keep the Patrol happy for the full period of an outdoor meeting, whereas indoors frequent changes of programme will be needed to keep their interest alive.

The timing of these changes is a matter of great importance. If you imagine a sort of "interest graph" on the lines of a temperature chart, with the curve rising gradually as the interest in the activity grows, then dropping rather more steeply as it wanes, the moment to switch off on

to some other activity should be just after the curve has passed its zenith. By this device you will ensure that, when you return to the activity at a later Patrol Meeting, your Scouts will remember that they enjoyed it last time, not that they were beginning to feel bored.

Fine, you will say, but some chaps get bored quicker than others.

In this case the safe rule is to set your pace by the quickest. This means that in considering joint activities for the Patrol you should if possible avoid those with only a specialist appeal. Your signalling expert, for instance, might be content to go on morse-tapping all night, but it would bore the rest of the Patrol to tears. By all means allow your morse maniac plenty of scope to practise on his own if that is what he enjoys; but if you want to put signalling across *as a Patrol Activity* to people who aren't particularly interested in signalling, then the pill will have to be a small one and the sugar-coating will have to be thick. This does not mean that signalling can be mastered by means of tricks and dodges, or that present-day Scouts must be treated like kids who will only take their medicine if it is heavily disguised. What it does mean is that the purpose of the Patrol Activity in Scouting is, firstly, to arouse interest in a subject, and, secondly, to keep the interest going. "Little and often" is another safe rule. The amount of actual training you put over in any one activity may be small, but *it all adds up*.

Here are a few specimen "interest-arousers"; and since signalling has been mentioned – a dull enough subject for many people – let us take that as our theme.

Notice that several of these stunts require no previous signalling experience whatsoever; also that, in the longer stunts particularly, it is well wrapped up in other activities.

Start with a very simple one.

“BUSH TELEGRAPH” Send the Patrol out in pairs to discover by actual experiment whether it is possible to signal by Morse along the central-heating system of a large building. That's all.

“INDIAN SMOKE SIGNALS, VARIATIONS ON.” On a still, clear night try sending Indian smoke signals, using electric torches to light up the smoke. (The story might be that the enemy would at once spot the direct beam of a signalling lamp but might not notice a reflected light).

“TAPPING THE WIRE” Try sending Morse messages over the telephone *by tapping only* - no words at all to be uttered on pain of death! This could easily be worked into a little Patrol Wide Game; one half of the Patrol, on cycles, mount guard over all the callboxes in one section of the town while the other half, on foot, try to get their message through without being captured.

“LIGHT V. FLIGHT” If there are two signalling experts in the Patrol, let them exchange a fairly long Morse message over a fairly long distance, say a mile or more, whilst the rest of the Patrol carry it verbally in relay formation between the two signalling stations. Compare results for speed and accuracy.

“SECRET AGENTS” Send the Patrol out in pairs to invent as many different methods as they can of signalling to each other unobtrusively in public places - in a busy street, from opposite sides of a bus or tube, in a cinema queue and so on. For instance, it might be possible for

one Scout walking down a busy street a few paces in front of his confederate to signal dots and dashes to him merely by opening and closing his hand behind his back - or by dropping spent matches, a whole one for a dash and a broken one for a dot. You could easily signal to your pal across the road by rattling a stick along the iron railings as you saunter along. And what are the possibilities of making use of your own reflection in a shop window to signal to your accomplice behind you?

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|-------|--------|--------|--------|-------|---------|-------|
| | • | •• | ••• | — | — — | — — — |
| • | WE | ORDERS | WARN | ZERO | AT | BY |
| •• | IN | TAKE | SHALL | GO | DO | TO |
| ••• | YOU | AND | ARE | THE | WAIT | FOR |
| — | ENEMY | C.I.D | WHAT | COVER | OFF | HOUR |
| — — | CAMP | BEING | DEN | H.Q | MORNING | YES |
| — — — | PATROL | TROOP | REPEAT | END | WATCHED | NO |

“CODE SIGNALS” Obtain the use of a pair of daylight signalling lamps. Invent a simple code on the grid system (see diagram) so that a knowledge of the Morse Code is not essential. Divide the Patrol into two teams and carry on a conversation from signalling stations at least a mile apart. Distance is important. If the stations are rather interesting and adventurous in themselves - for instance, the top of a Scots Pine on Gallow's Hill for one, and the roof of the Science Block at the Grammar School for another - so much the better. And don't say it can't be done. *It has!*

“LAND, SEA AND AIR.” In preparation for this rather more elaborate stunt the following gear is issued to the Patrol. The Second is handed a sky-rocket, an empty pop bottle, one match, a slip of paper, and a pencil. (That ought to set him guessing!) No. 3 is given a stirrup-pump and a bucket of water.. No. 4 – a flag or lamp. No. 5 – a whistle. No. 6 and the P.L.– a reel of cotton and two toilet roll empties with one end covered with several layers of gumstrip. The Scouts are spread at intervals along a half-mile course. A brief Morse message (half a dozen letters would be quite sufficient for the purpose of this exercise) must be transmitted along the line.

The Second must write it on a slip of paper and send it by air, No. 3 must signal it by water (preferably from behind some fairly high obstacle), No. 4 by lamp or flag, No. 5 by sound, and No. 6 and the P.L. by improvising a field-telephone with the materials provided. No knowledge of the Morse Code is necessary for this. It is just an exercise in transmitting groups of dots and dashes by novel means.

. . . .

Now, whatever you may say about these little stunts, nobody could very well call them dull, and with any luck it is just possible that your Scouts would get a reasonable amount of fun out of them. At the same time, it might occur to them that they would have enjoyed them even more so if they'd had even an elementary knowledge of the Morse Code. Once your Patrol activities have had this happy result you may say you are half-way home.

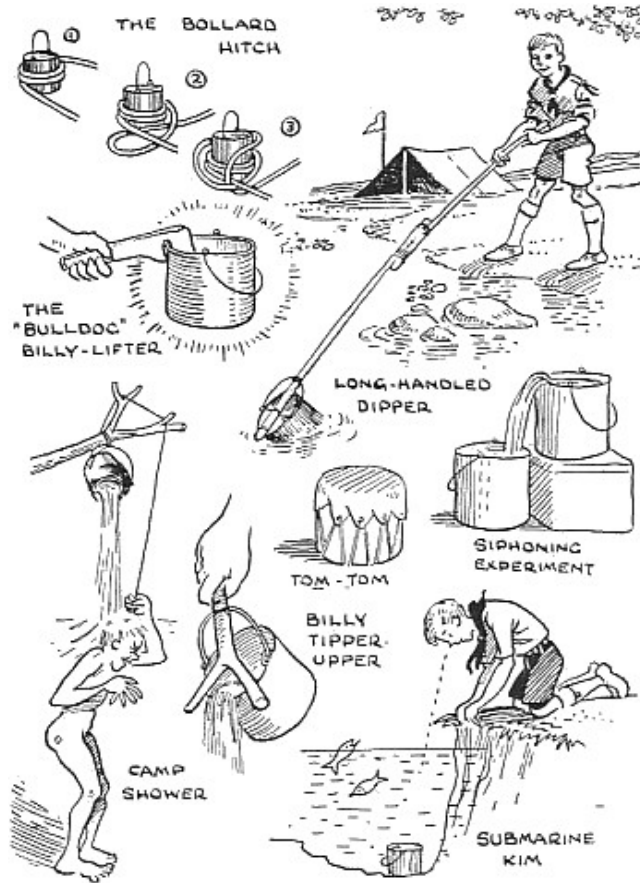
However, there is no need why you should limit yourself to activities which have what you might call a particular bias. Now and then a diversion with no special training value might help to brighten up the programme.

Ask your chaps to imagine that they are stormbound in the loft of a lonely farmhouse, with a plentiful supply of potatoes but very little else in the way of gear. The problem is to devise ways and means, probable and improbable, of making use of the spuds - not as mere fodder, but for purposes of utility and amusement. The sort of things that spring to the mind are camp candlesticks, comic figures, potatoes cut in slices to demonstrate the principle of contour lines, potato-blocks for printing the Patrol sign, etc. on the lino-cut principle, and so on. But your job is merely to provide the spuds. The chaps will soon produce their own ideas.

Try this one. Divide the Patrol into pairs, give each pair some articles of equipment - a mallet, a billycan, a tent bag, a blanket-line - and ask them to draw up a list of activities in which the article would play an important part.

Here, for instance, is such a list based on the billycan:

- (1) Practise the Bollard Hitch.
- (2) Make a "Bulldog Grip" billy-lifter for removing overheated billies from the fire.
- (3) Make a billy-tipper-upper, for pouring out from a hot billy.
- (4) Make a camp billy-cosy-perhaps on the haybox principle or merely on the lines of a tea-cosy.
- (5) Try siphoning water from one billy into another with a wet tea-towel. Is it possible to do this with other materials? - for instance, screwed up newspaper, teased-out rope, etc.? Would it work using a roller bandage to siphon water from a billy in a treetop to another at ground level?
- (6) Try "Submarine Kim." Place twenty small articles in the billy and submerge it in a deep pool under a bank. Scouts must try to spot the articles from above or by dipping their heads into the water. Alternatively, place the articles in a billy of water and agitate the surface by blowing through a tube while Scouts try to spot the articles.
- (7) Try the Girl Guide method of keeping cooking-pots bright. Clean off all soot, etc. and paint the outside of the billy with a thick coating of whitewash or blanco. After use scrape off the soot and the whitewash together, and the billy (so they say) will come up bright and shining.



- (8) Convert billy into a long-handled dipper for scooping water from a pool. Sheer-lash two staffs together to make the handle. The billy and the handle must be quite rigid (not so simple as it sounds).
- (9) Convert old billycan into toilet-paper container for camp.
- (10) Fill with muddy water and use for estimating heights by the “dirty water” method.
- (11) Rig up camp shower-bath.
- (12) Convert into tomtom by lacing a square of old groundsheet over the top.

The completed lists should be submitted to the Patrol-in-Council who allocate to each pair a task from their own list. You will certainly get some very odd ideas and some even odder results, but who cares if the chaps enjoy it.

It all adds up.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PATROL BY NIGHT

In the dead of winter most of your Patrol Meetings will probably be held indoors. No harm in that. There are lots of jobs waiting for you there - things to make and things to do. On the other hand, there is absolutely no reason why you shouldn't get the Patrol out occasionally for a night in the open.

Now that inter-planetary travel is something more than idle speculation you will probably find that your chaps already have a growing interest in the stars. Choose a clear night and take them out constellation spotting. Beg, borrow, or buy a copy of "The Chichester Star Compass" and in preparation for a night out with the boys, take your Second out with you for a trial canter through the starry firmament. Or get hold of someone who knows a lot about the subject and invite him to join the Patrol on a star-gazing ramble.

Try estimating heights and distances by night. Most of the approved triangulation methods can be applied after dark by the ingenious use of electric torches. If it does nothing else it will at least give you a new angle on this commonplace activity.

Have you ever tried hiking across broken country with a hurricane lamp? Or on a misty night? Did you know that a whifflepoof trail is easier to spot with a torch by night than during broad daylight? Or that by the use of what the C.I.D. call "oblique lighting", sand-tracking stunts are much better fun after dark?

Kabobs taste better, too, if cooked by moonlight! These, as you know, are merely thin slices of potato, bacon, onion; spam, etc. spiked on a thin stick and grilled over hot embers. And remember you don't need to go into the backwoods to do backwoods cookery. The bottom of somebody's garden (your own for choice!) or the vacant plot at the end of the road will do just as well.

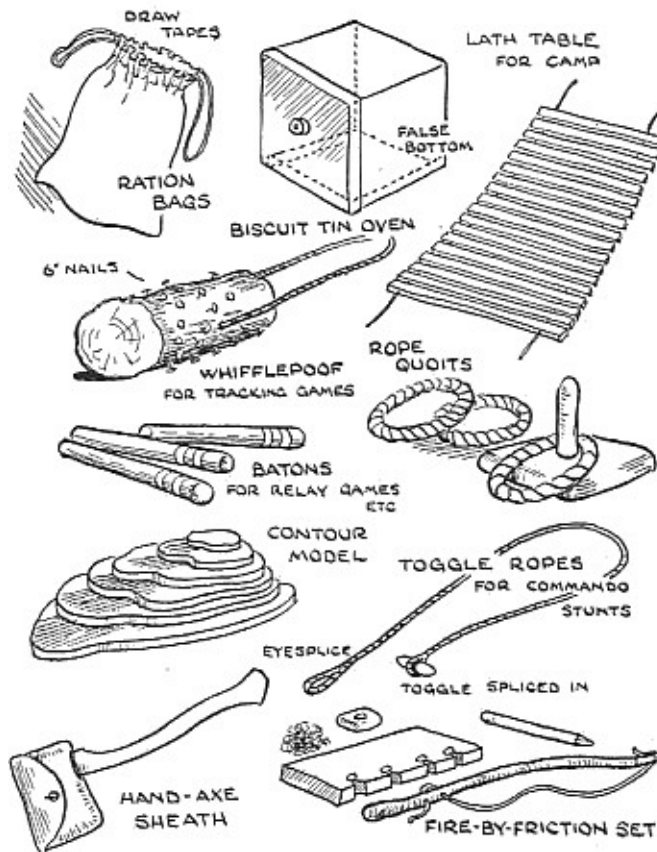
By the way, I hope and expect that you normally use open fires for all Scouting purposes - but you *do* know how to operate a pressure stove, don't you? This comes under the heading of Being Prepared. You never know when you may be called upon to operate one of the things and it creates a poor impression if you have to begin by reading the instructions on the label!

You will find that most Scouting activities take on an added interest by night, but none more so perhaps than stalking and tracking.

For a real thrill there is nothing to touch a really good Night Wide Game. A moonless night, a starry sky, an acre or so of the English countryside to prowl in - what more could you want?

Mind you, it has got to be done intelligently. If you go at a Night Stunt like a bull at a gate it is hardly to be expected that you will get much out of it. Stalking under any conditions is a

highly scientific business: after dark it ceases to be a mere science and becomes an art of the highest order.



What you need, of course, is training, and like all other Scouting activities your training should be progressive. Here are one or two simple night ops. you might like to try by way of introduction.

“TELEPHONE TAPPING” Stick two Scout staffs in the ground about 12 yards apart and sling a sisal line between them at least three feet from the ground. One Scout then ties one end of a knotting rope to his belt and passes the free end over the “telephone line” to his companion, who follows suit. The two arm themselves with rolled-up newspaper batons and patrol the line between the two staffs.



The rest of the Patrol, one in each pair carrying a short length of cord, are scattered about the field. When the signal is given they scout in and try to tap the wire by putting a rolling-hitch round it without being bludgeoned by the guard. Scouts should work in pairs from opposite sides of the wire, one in each pair acting as a decoy for the other. When a man is clouted he should retire 100 paces and try again.

“MOUSE-HOLING” In a long, quiet street, two Scouts conceal themselves in a gateway or other cover. The rest of the Patrol, roped together like mountaineers in threes, mousehole towards them from opposite ends of the street, making quick darts from one doorway to another, only one Scout moving at a time. Hidden Scouts watch, and when they consider a favourable moment has arrived, break cover and try to reach either end of the road. The mouse-holers try to intercept. Great sport, this, particularly if played in dead silence. But please don't attempt it in a busy thoroughfare.

“TORCHLIGHT TATTOO” For this game the Patrol is divided into two parts, one under the P.L. and one under the Second. Each section sets up its headquarters about 200 yards apart. The leaders build and light a small fire, and some distance in front rig up a string as for a string-burning contest - merely a length of sisal slung between two sticks about 18 inches from the ground.

When the fires are burning, the Scouts on each side set to work to manufacture torches from any materials they can lay hands on, light them at their own fire and try to reach the opposing H.Q. and burn through the string. It is permissible to work on the relay principle by lighting one torch from another. Scouts may hamper the opposition by bumping and barging, but - this is important - only those carrying a lighted torch may do so. If the torch goes out, the bearer must return to his own fire or obtain a light from a torch carried by one of his own side. The first side to burn the string is the winner.

“PRISON BREAK” P.L. with powerful electric torch in treetop or other suitable vantage point. Two hefty Scouts (warders) concealed below. All other players (convicts) concealed some distance away. At regular intervals of five seconds or so the searchlight sweeps round the prison yard. Convicts move cautiously forward between the flashes. If caught by the beam while on the move, the searchlight remains focussed on the offender who retires hotfoot to his starting point pursued by a warder armed with a knotted towel or other weapon. Others continue. First to reach a given point (the prison gates) yells "Breakaway!" and all make a dash. Warders try to intercept.

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You will find that your Scouts get very keen on stalking as their proficiency grows, and when you have sharpened their appetites with one or two stunts of this sort - *but not before* - you might consider it safe to give them a short yarn in the den on the theory of the thing, with demonstrations of the approved stalking movements - the upright crouch, the pussycat crawl, the feline flat crawl, the seal crawl and so on. (No earthly use *beginning* with talk, of course: that would just kill their interest stone dead!)

Having completed your preliminary training, you might set to work with your Second to plan a pukka night wide game with the idea of challenging another Patrol to mortal combat; and your planning must be thorough. Here are one or two practical points to be borne in mind.



(1) Set a definite limit both on time and the area to be covered. Don't spread your wide game too far at night. As a beginning 45 minutes is ample.

(2) Arrange beforehand some simple code of sound signals to be used in an emergency or if the stunt seems to be going astray (which is highly probable).

(3) Avoid too much violent action. In night scouting you have the ideal opportunity for practising the finer points of the stalker's art. This does not mean that your stunt should be slow or tame. By all means introduce a certain amount of rough stuff, but let it occur fairly late in the stunt when the climax is impending. Otherwise your stunt may develop into a mere rag. Have the first-aid kit handy.

(4) The rules should be simple but emphatic.

(5) The action should be continuous. A certain amount of hanging about in cover is unavoidable, but as far as possible everyone should be kept on the move.

(6) Prepare in advance. Go over the ground carefully in daylight with your Second and plan your stunt on the spot. The more spadework you put in beforehand, the more likely you are to succeed.

(7) After the game, hold a brief inquest. Let each man tell his own story, then sum up briefly.

(8) Finish with the traditional three cheers for the winner and a noggin of cocoa in the den.

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To sum up on all this -

It may be that your great opportunity as a Patrol Leader will come by night. Don't neglect it by stewing indoors. Remember that B.-P. found his inspiration round the camp fire and passed it on to us in a series of camp fire yarns. Your Patrol might discover its own Brownsea Island by starlight too! You never know.

