



Bawtry Heritage Group

Preserving our Past for the Future

Registered Charity No. 1188945

12th DONCASTER (BAWTRY) SCOUT GROUP

1967 to 1977

FORWARD

Scouting is part of our national heritage having laid down very strong roots over the last 115 years. Bawtry has been part of that story for 56 years.

This piece was inspired by a visit in May 2022 to the current 12th Doncaster (Bawtry) Scout Group. It was an encounter that took me back to the 1990's when my family were very much involved with all aspects of the group, something we recall with great fondness. My visit in May was the first engagement with the group in over 20 years and the environment was not what I remembered. A new venue, as many girls as there were boys and a uniform far more casual in appearance. There was however, the same lively interest from the youngsters and a strong sense of dedicated commitment conveyed by the leaders.

In the first instance this paper's aim was to explore how the group came to be, who the main players were and what they achieved in the first decade of operation. However, on reflection the research opened up far more than my limited and rather superficial motives expected. I was surprised that delving into the recent history of one small aspect of community life in the late 1960's and early 1970's , would open up images of how we were back then and how that contrasts with today, along with the challenges social development has laid down for an institution such as scouting to negotiate. The basic values and aims of scouting remain the same, not just for the young people involved but for those leading them. The manner in which scouting has continually adapted, to remain relevant is most definitely brought into clear focus by analysis of its past.

Looking back, this lack of vision for the study's potential was naive given that making a Scout Group successful goes way beyond the young people who populate the sharp end.

Notwithstanding there is a national organisation, local success has to bring together a variety of sections within a community to ensure all the main pillars required to support that success remain stable and the purpose of the group remains viable. It is this breadth of involvement that reveals echoes into the recent past revealing social attitudes, aspirations, etiquette, language and accepted convention, in a manner that provides a clear indication of how things were not so very long ago, compared to how we might consider them to be today.

Such insight, I guess, would be reflected through most retrospective studies of a local Scout Group during the early 1970's but in all I suspect, there are unique links with the immediate surroundings and the local heroes that emerge. This is certainly true of Bawtry.

56 years after life was given to the group it remains strong and purposeful, continuing to provide the opportunity for our young to forge their own sense of identity and values beyond those engendered through institutions such as family, or school. If nothing else, the kids go away with some great memories, of that I am sure. Bawtry without a Scout Group would be less of a place.

If you are reading this piece I invite you to take from it what you wish, but I would ask that if nothing else a grateful nod to those who have engaged in making sure it has remained sustainable thus far, is the least you should do.

PREPARATION

"Be Prepared" (Worldwide Scout motto since 1907).

The absence of recreation for boys was the reason for a meeting of concerned parents and other interested parties called in Bawtry during the latter half of 1967. The venue for this event, held on 12th November, was the upstairs dining room of the Three Counties Restaurant. This establishment is no longer a feature of Bawtry's hospitality trade, although Indian cuisine continues to be served from those same premises, identifiable by the two bay windows framing its entrance on the eastern side of the High Street. Having discussed the issue at some length, on that autumn evening, the majority agreed that the solution to the town's young boys having too much idle time on their hands was to be the formation of a Scout Troop!

Scouting had already been around for 60 plus years when Bawtry's local community decided to enter the brotherhood.¹ Attracted perhaps, to the core values espoused by the movement in which, trust, loyalty, consideration, courageousness and respect, were all centre stage. Values to inspire and develop all youngsters one would think.

An organisation with 67 years of history behind it and with the virtuous array of values declared for all its members in the "Scouts Law", can not be joined overnight. It requires planning, resources and a team of enthusiastic problem solvers, to ensure the requirements for acceptance into the movement are met. So, although that November meeting had discovered what it believed to be an ideal solution, it was not necessarily a quick fix.

¹ There is evidence in the Doncaster Scouting District Archive of a Bawtry Troop registering in 1951.

In Doncaster at this time there were four Scouting Districts. Bawtry was to be the latest addition to Doncaster South, joining two groups in Bessacarr and one each in Hallgate, Finningley, Christchurch and Tickhill.

Any new group required, as a minimum, a Group Scout Leader, Scout Leaders and if the demand was there, Cub Leaders. Supporting the operational energy, each group required a committee led by a Chairman², a Secretary and a Treasurer, the latter being a very important role as access to funds would be a necessity. By the end of the year Bawtry had these main components in place with Brian Wraith, described as, "a man with no scouting experience, but a lot of enthusiasm"³ becoming Bawtry's first Group Scout Leader (GSL), Geoffery Holder and Roy Trevaskis taking up the Scout Leader roles. The key non-operational positions were occupied by Mr D Alcott as Chairman, with Mr Thiebe and Mr Povey filling the Treasurer and Secretary roles respectively. S E Richardson reported in a 1977 essay on the group that the District Commissioner Brian Cox had been available from the very start to lend a hand and give his support.

Follow up meetings were held at the Crown Hotel during the dark months of late 1967 and early 1968. The thorny issues of staffing, a place to meet, equipment, finance and formal recognition, being the core topics of discussion. All had to be resolved before any boy could make the Scout Promise, tie a knot, or get close to nature on camp.

Somewhere to hold troop meetings was a critical issue and Richardson once again recognises Brian Cox who "did a lot of work obtaining a building".⁴ This reference is referred to again

² Chairperson was not commonly a term in use at this time

³ Taken from the research document "The Formation of Bawtry Scout Troop" written by S E Richardson (1977)

⁴ Taken from the research document "The Formation of Bawtry Scout Troop" written by S E Richardson (1977)

in what is best described as an urgent letter from Mr Povey, the group's secretary, to the Group Scout Leader in mid February 1968. It stated as its final item of business, "The next meeting at the Crown Hotel to include all interested persons will be on the 21st of March 1968 at 8pm when Mr Cox the District Commissioner will be in attendance. It is hoped that a firm date will then be known when the promised building will be available for full activities to commence".⁵

It is around this time that not only was there a clamour of organisational activity but also evidence that public expectation was beginning to mount. Mrs Thorpe wrote to Brian Cox on the 21st March 1968. "We have only recently moved into Bawtry.....I have a nine year old son who would very much like to partake of the amenities of the Cub movement.....I understand a Cub troupe may soon be formed in the Bawtry area".⁶ Mr Cox replied swiftly, three days later, explaining that the group "had not yet started.....we hope to open the Scouts in about two weeks time and the cubs shortly afterwards". His letter went on to invite Mrs Thorpe and her husband to an event at the infant school set for the 4th April where other interested parties and the selected leaders could be met. A warm and friendly reply to potential group participants, motivated, to some degree, I suspect, by the group's need for support from parents, which was vital. Encouraging their involvement early was, I imagine, a tried and tested strategy for those scout executives who had experience in startups. I think we can also deduce with some confidence that this event was a fundraiser, money along with premises, and keen participants were always a daily consideration in the establishment and maintenance of a local Scout Group.

⁵ Taken from the research document "The Formation of Bawtry Scout Troop" written by S E Richardson (1977) (Appendices).

⁶ Taken from the research document "The Formation of Bawtry Scout Troop" written by S E Richardson (1977) (Appendices).

Richardson's essay states, "£15 was borrowed from the District and it was arranged to give the troop relief from capitation for one year".⁷ This must have been welcome breathing space for the small executive committee who had been working tirelessly behind the scenes for over four months at this point. One has to assume that the infant school event was a roaring success as Mr Povey reported to the GSL Brian Wraith on 16th April 1968 that £50.00 had been made, £45 being profit, approximately.⁸ It was not time however, for the District's finance officer to feel too comfortable about recouping his generous loan, as Mr Povey's report goes on to state in a later section that the leaders had "already made several purchases from group funds to enable the scout troop to operate". Mr Povey also made the urgent statement, "a second fundraising event is required". This most revealing document has as its headline the fact that the Scout Troop was up and running with 21 enrolled scouts and that all seem happy with the accommodation for troop nights, the timing of which had been set for every Friday, 7pm until 9pm. In fact, the Group had been formally recognised six days before, the registration with the Scout Association becoming official on 10th April 1968, the allocated registration number being 38767.⁹ The records show that the address for the Group was RAF Bawtry. Brian Cox's efforts had clearly paid off securing a hut in the camp for the group rent free. That being on the condition that the troop kept "it clean and paint the interior regularly up to RAF standards"¹⁰ This was no small commitment the troop was making, the RAF did inspect the accommodation on a regular basis and the GSL reported inspection findings to the committee whenever a check was undertaken. However, toil for the troop will have been cheap, much better than having to part with hard raised cash.

⁷ Taken from the research document "The Formation of Bawtry Scout Troop" written by S E Richardson (1977). These fees are a yearly subscription to the Association for each boy.

⁸ Taken from the research document "The Formation of Bawtry Scout Troop" written by S E Richardson (1977) (Appendices).

⁹ Courtesy of Martin Johnson, Doncaster District Archive, June 2022.

¹⁰ The Formation of Bawtry Scout Troop written by S E Richardson (1977)

We might speculate that Mrs Thorpe and her son ended up celebrating rather earlier than they expected as the District archive also reveals that the Cub Pack was formed around the same time as the Scout Troop, meeting on Thursdays between 6pm and 7.30pm.¹¹

District archive material shows, for the record, that Bawtry established an "Open Group", one independent of any overseeing sponsor. sponsored groups were largely associated, but not exclusively, with church organisations at this time. The records show the following details regarding the designations of such across the District at the point the 12th Doncaster (Bawtry) came on board. In 1969 the District had 12 Open groups, 17 Church sponsored groups and 2 others. By 1977 the picture had shifted to 22 Open groups, 18 Church groups and 1 other.

Mr Povey's April 1968 letter had not quite finished revealing that things were coming together. He announced that he would now be standing down as Group Secretary, primarily because it was time to hand the reins to a "civilian resident of Bawtry", given that all the issues relating to the RAF accommodation had been resolved. Mr Povey was clearly part of the RAF and there from the beginning to support the potential for siting the new venture in amongst the comings and goings of RAF Bawtry. Not a set of circumstances one could imagine happening so readily today perhaps. As he tendered his resignation he did commit to supporting the new incumbent, until his new overseas posting had been finalised later in the year.

April 10th 1968 and Bawtry Scouting hit the ground running!
Now what do we do?

¹¹ Doncaster District Scout HQ archive.



District Commissioner Brian Cox taking a parade salute.
Courtesy of the 12th Doncaster (Bawtry) Photo Archive.

HELPING OTHERS

"I promise.....to help others" (Part of the current Scout Promise)

Brian Wraith, with the exception of Brian Cox the District Commissioner, was the only man to attend the community meeting called at the Three Counties Restaurant in November 1967. Given that Scouting at this time was very much a male orientated activity, led by men, the two Brians were somewhat caught in the headlights when the subject of active leadership arose.

Men having to lead a Scout Troop, was the norm and accepted without question in 1967. S E Richardson's quote in 1977 that a "woman can be a GSL but not a scout leader",¹² was an expression of the view that the movement was beginning to change by the time the Bawtry Group was nearing its tenth year. Perhaps not an impressive speed of change by today's standards?

Was this male only thing a myth, something that had become stuck in the subconscious beliefs of the day? Scouting Heritage reports that in 1909 there were over "6,000 girls registered with scouting".¹³ The Scout Collecting website presents a letter written in 1908 by Baden-Powell, no less, responding to a letter from a Miss May Jones in which he encouraged her proposed endeavour.

"I am glad to hear you are taking up scouting. I think there can be girl scouts just as well as boy scouts, and hope you will form a patrol, and let us know as yours will be the first girl scout patrol".¹⁴

It would be a mistake to interpret this reply to the enthusiastic Miss Jones as Baden-Powell envisaging or endorsing mixed

¹² The Formation of Bawtry Scout Troop written by S E Richardson (1977)

¹³ Scouting Heritage - Scout.Heritage.org 2022.

¹⁴ Scouting Collecting - scoutcollecting.org.uk 2022.

scout troops, or scout troops with boys being led by women. But Scouting being something that wasn't for girls does not appear to be his thinking. In any event 1910 saw the emergence of the Girl Guides and the direction of travel for girls led towards a separate pathway to that of boys and remained as such for most of the twentieth century. It would be another 56 years before girls joined boys as Venture Scouts and we would not see the official emergence of girls in Scouts or Cubs until 1992 and then only on a voluntary basis¹⁵. It was not until 2007 that the option to opt out of recruiting girls into scout troops and cub packs was withdrawn. In 1968 the Bawtry Scout Group was for boys.

Whatever the journey of gender equality in scouting during the last century, on that November evening in 1967 there were only two men available to lead the 12th Doncaster (Bawtry). It could not be Brian Cox as he already had an official senior role in the District. This left only Brian Wraith. His position as Group Scout Leader was therefore confirmed at the next planning meeting held at the Crown Hotel when Brian Wraith became "Skip".



Skip (At the beginning) Courtesy of 12th Doncaster (Bawtry).Photo Archive.

¹⁵ Girls came officially to the Bawtry Group in 1998 with Frances Baker, Hannah Beckett, Victoria Winter, Kimberly Wattam, Rebecca Lee, and Francesca Morton all being invested.

Skip had stepped up to help the cause and hit the ground running if his letter dated the 9th April 1968, the eve of the group's formal registration, to the Doncaster District's Badge Secretary Mr Thornhill, is anything to go by. It "urgently" requested an array of badges for leaders and scouts, "required to complete equipment in preparation of enrollment". The letter also revealed that the newly formed troop would have three patrols Peewit, Owl and Raven.¹⁶



"SKIP" By J S Maguire 1997 (At retirement)

An article written for the October/November 1991 edition of the Bawtry News described "Skip" as being, "ultimately responsible" and someone who "carried the burden associated with the development of young men and women" all of which is driven by "his enthusiasm".¹⁷ Whilst these kind accolades are well founded and must fill his family with pride they fall a little short of what is truly required to launch such a venture from scratch, make it successful and stick with it for 30 years.¹⁸ When it came to scouting those who knew Brian Wraith would describe him as selfless, enthusiastic, reliable, and true to his word. I would suggest at the heart of all that was a man who really wanted to help others. In 1967 those looking for help

¹⁶ Taken from the research document "The Formation of Bawtry Scout Troop" written by S E Richardson (1977) (Appendices).

¹⁷ Bawtry News Magazine - "The Man They Call Skip" October/November 1991 edition.

¹⁸ Brian retired in 1997 as Scout Regulations demanded at the time.

were not only the mothers and fathers of Bawtry's young boy's, but ultimately Bawtry as a community. By not running from the challenge that November evening in 1967 Brian embraced a promise to help others. He never wavered. One of his key strengths was, I believe, captured in the words of a speech given on his retirement from being Group Scout Leader in 1997. The passage sought to capture the scene as he returned home following that first meeting in 1967, telling his wife Reece, that as far as he could see it "scouting was only about promoting common country skills".¹⁹ Although Brian could see the challenge before him, he wasn't a man to be overawed, the task for him was quite simple at heart.

In praising him, Skip would have been the first to call out that he was not alone in the endeavour and as the Bawtry News article pointed out he was quick to recognise the contributions of his leadership team and the management committee and the parents of the youngsters who help provide the necessary energy and generosity required. Secretary Povey's letter to all parents on the 16th May 1968 in which parents/volunteers Mrs Lowery, Mrs Coe, Mrs Burke, and Mrs Thorpe (the Mrs Thorpe we might speculate?), all get a mention as they put the finishing touches to a Jumble Sale earmarked for the 24th.²⁰ A willingness to help others was clearly one of the main foundation blocks in any sustainable Scout Group. It wasn't always plain sailing. With the Cub Pack barely in existence a month, the same letter heralding the jumble ladies had a plea for cub leaders stating that the pack "is in danger of complete collapse".²¹

In addition to Brian, and the uniform and official committee members already recognised, S E Richardson's work highlights

¹⁹ Taken from the original copy of the speech given at Skip's retirement evening at the New Hall, Bawtry in 1997.

²⁰ Taken from the research document "The Formation of Bawtry Scout Troop" written by S E Richardson (1977)

²¹ Taken from the research document "The Formation of Bawtry Scout Troop" written by S E Richardson (1977)

others worthy of mention. In the appendices of his piece a document entitled "Camping Permit" is presented and signed by the then Cub Scout Leader Mrs K J B Stalker, along with her leadership partner Dennis Duffield.²² Amongst an array of information it does reveal that the fee for processing the application for a permit was paid via a postal order submitted with the application. Interestingly the date of submission is shown as April 30th 1960? I suspect this was a slip of the pen, and that 1969 or 1970 might be more accurate? However, taking on the leadership responsibility for the cubs in these early days, remember, only a year after the pack's collapse was feared imminent, is not to be dismissed lightly and Mrs Stalker and Mr Duffield, I guess, equally embodied the personal drive, like Skip, to help others and make this new venture work.

The activities of the group in those very early days also engendered the value of helping others. S E Richardson recalls the troop engaged with the community, making itself available for good deeds. Such as, tidying St Nicholas' Church Yard, which was plagued by long grass, weeds and litter. According to reports they made a "great improvement". The troop also formed positive links with the local elderly, doing gardens and running errands. I ponder as I write, is this a window into a lost age when fear of the young was less, and the barriers that might now make such endeavours less realistic did not exist? Health and safety bureaucracy and the complications of safeguarding legislation, modern day necessities, whilst seeking to improve our society, have an impact on it in ways we never imagined or perhaps intended? I am sure this simple spirit of collective endeavour to help others is captured in new and creative ways today but there is something of the Enid Blyton spirit reflected in the archive of Bawtry Scout Group. Reminding those of us old enough to recall an innocence that provokes a pining for simpler times.

²² Taken from the research document "The Formation of Bawtry Scout Troop" written by S E Richardson (1977)

The drive to help others oozed out of every corner of the new group, inspired by those leading and setting the examples.

ONES BEST

"I Promise.....I will do my best". (Part of the current Scout Promise)

Leaders encouraged the troop to "dyb, dyb, dyb", not "dib,dib, dib". The troops collective response, as always being, "We'll dob dob dob". This recollection by columnist Keith Waterhouse, reminisces that this was never a meaningless campfire chant, even if it was often ridiculed by those ignorant of its true meaning. He pointed out in his uplifting 2008 article about a surge in scouting, that the relevance of prompting and encouraging youngsters to "Do Your Best!" and motivating them to respond with enthusiasm "We'll Do Our Best!" remains at the heart of young people identifying with and building upon their self worth. Waterhouse muses that for over 100 years this principle has been rooted at the heart of the Scouting Promise, and "in this modern age, when fear and suspicion has a tendency to be restrictive, stifling and risk averse, Baden-Powell's movement remains relevant and a welcome outlet for the adventurous young".²³

One's best is evident in all aspects of the start up that was the Bawtry Group in 1968 and onward through its first decade. Nowhere is that better illustrated in the painstaking detail given to the ceremonial formalities and participation in the public parades at the heart of scouting's public face. When looking at the early meetings and briefings for the new Bawtry group the sense of desire from those leading to present the very best of the youngsters in their charge and promote a lasting respect for oneself and one's community and country leaps out. As early as the 16th April 1969 preparation and briefings regarding the expectations for events such as the Presentation of Flags, St Georges Day Parade (practice and on the day), and the planning of Church Parades and the monthly "Youth Movements Services", were full of detail to ensure the very best

²³ "Dyb, Dyb, Dyb, or how Baden-Powell got it right". Keith Waterhouse, Mail Online 2008

of the movement was on display. Meticulous detail covering the initial assembly, to dismissal, with special notes about dress were circulated. "Hats or berets will be worn". "No sheath knives".²⁴ One gets the impression, perhaps not surprisingly, that cajoling was constant to ensure the very best standards were maintained. It was not easy or always successful. Monday the 15th February 1971 Council minutes recorded. "The turn out for Church Parade on Feb 14th was very disappointing".

Personal achievement is always high on the agenda within the scouting philosophy. Doncaster District Archive records that Bawtry Scout Troop and Cub Scout Pack had achieved 138 and 99 badges respectively between 1969 and 1973, including 3 Chief Scout awards. The successes were reported constantly in council minutes.

David Burke and Neil Wilkinson achieving the the Advanced Scout Standard 6/9/1971,

4 Cubs (unfortunately not named) achieved Explorers badges 2/7/1974,

Another Advanced Scout Standard and another Scout Standard (again unnamed), 3/9/1974

P Wraith, P Binns, and M Wilkinson attending a Camper and Camp Warden's Course 2/9/1975,

2 Scouts gain the Jobsman badge and 6 the Collectors and Small Holders Badge 2/9/1975,

2 unnamed boys pass the fencing section of the Chief Scouts Award 23/10/1973,

²⁴ Bawtry (Special) GSL meeting notes 16/4/1969

4 boys, unnamed, pass a mechanics course and receive a Pursuits Badge 2/4/1974

July 1974 a Cub Camp report declares 4 unnamed cubs achieving the Explorers Badge

"Since the end of August 30 proficiency badges had been achieved in the Scout Troop and Peter Wraith would receive his Chief Scout Award at a special ceremony in Rotherham in November". 7/10/1975

"Akela reported one boy achieving both his Swimmers and Explores Badges at the same time". This same meeting also recorded one unnamed boy being banned from Cubs because of his "disruptive influence", no further details are given. The latter highlighting, I guess, that not everything in the scouting world ran smoothly and not everyone performed to their best. 1/10/1974.

Scout Sean Kirby was presented with a silver trophy for being the scout who had made the most progress in the training programme since August 1975. 6/1/1976.

Outstanding Cub of 1974, Simon Lodge. AGM 6/5/1974

In addition the minutes are laden with group achievements at sporting events, joint camps and knock out competitions. Doing one's best was always a clear priority on the agenda.

This praise is not only for the successes of the boys. Bawtry's GSL also gets recognition gaining, "all his scouting badges including his wood badge which took a week at Guilwell to achieve"²⁵

²⁵ Gilwell Park is the national training centre for scout leaders..



Scout Mick Jones receives his Chief Scout Award. Mick went on to be Bawtry's first Queen's Scout. Courtesy of 12th Doncaster (Bawtry) Photo Archive.

BROTHERHOOD

“A Scout belongs to the worldwide family of Scouts” - (4th of the 7 current Scout Laws)

“The uniform means that you are now one of a big brotherhood. It goes all over the world. People think a great lot of a boy who is dressed in this uniform, because they know he is not an ordinary boy, but that he can be clean and smart and active, and that he can be trusted to do his best, to obey orders or to do good turns for other people”. Wolf Cubs Handbook, 55

Placing some context on the scouting philosophy into which the Bawtry Group entered is useful in understanding the importance of engendering and maintaining a worldwide sense of common brotherhood, relevant for the time and always willing to adjust and develop. Waterhouse writing in 2008 inferred that this was the cornerstone of what Baden-Powell’s philosophy got right, allowing it to thrive and be relevant for well over a century. “What the Scout Association has on offer is freedom - a rare commodity these days. No wonder they’re queuing up for it”.²⁶ More on sustainability later, but what did the worldwide view of the scouting brotherhood have in store for the fledgling Bawtry Group? The Bawtry group found itself taking its first steps into the brotherhood at a time of great change following the publication of the Chief Scout’s Advance Party Report which had been commissioned in 1966.

The values that underpin the Scouting Brotherhood are best defined via the Scout Promise and Scout Law. In 1968 this was formally encapsulated via the newly introduced Common Membership Badge, as a result of the Advance Party Report, to be worn on the left breast by all boys from all branches of

²⁶ “Dyb, Dyb, Dyb, or how Baden-Powell got it right”. Keith Waterhouse, Mail Online 2008

scouting, worldwide.²⁷ The badge encapsulated through its purple colour, adopted across all sections in 1972, “leadership and service” and within the image displayed the following values.²⁸



Common membership Badge Chief Scout's Advanced Party Report 1966
Recommendation 259.

1. High point of the Fleur de ley - "Duty to God"²⁹
2. The encircling rope - Unity of the world scout movement
3. Right hand branch of the Fleur de ley - Obedience to the Scout Law
4. Left hand branch of the Fleur de ley - Service to others
5. "The Bond" circle binding the base of the Fleur de Ley - Representing the scouting family
6. The two stars - Represent truth and knowledge
7. The ten points of the stars - Represent the ten points of the original scout law.
8. The Reef Knot - Symbolising strength and unity.

²⁷ And girls from their inclusion in the late twentieth century.

²⁸ Initially the badge had a different background colour for the individual sections.

²⁹ A Christian perspective most probably in 1968 but today a sentiment that covers the wide range of diversity. See Scouts website Faith and Beliefs/The Promise.



Early to mid 1970's the Troop altogether.
Courtesy of 12th Doncaster (Bawtry)
Photo Archive.

What we know.³⁰

Back Row (LtoR) D Mothersdale, Paul Johson, ? Hartley, Mike Barker, Brian Johnson, Martin ?, Philip Binns Brian Wraith

Middle Row (LtoR) U/K, Peter Wraith. David Gregory, Mark Wilkinson, U/K

Front Row (LtoR) Steven James? U/K, James McNulty, U/K, Peter Wilkinson, U/K

In 1968 the Bawtry Group began its life at the exact moment recommendations from the "Chief Scout's Advanced Party 66" were being implemented. Prominent in that review, which covered all aspects of scouting, were the concepts of brotherhood and modernisation. Central to that was the

³⁰ Name recalls here are thanks to Peter Wraith. To the very best of his memory via facebook.

uniform and adornments. As already seen, the Common Membership badge was about reinforcing worldwide togetherness. Bawtry boys wore it along with their counterparts across the globe. The 1966 report also introduced changes to the uniforms, moving with fashion, shifts in young people's attitude and a nod to pragmatism. None of this was designed to diminish the role the uniform played in defining personal membership to a wider audience and all that it was meant to project as a first impression. The collective sense of belonging engendered once the right to wear the uniform had been achieved also remained central to the Association's thinking. That right came from investiture and the rituals undergone by the boys enrolling into not only the local pack or troop, but the wider family³¹.

Pre 1966 Cubs were known as "Wolf Cubs". The Advanced Party report changed that to "Cub Scouts". Bawtry therefore never had a Wolf Cub Pack³². The rationale for this change was linked to development and transition. The idea that all section titles should reflect a planned progression. At this same time the word "boy" was dropped from the scout section title, the new moniker being "Scout Troop", and a new section "Venture Scout Units" came into being.³³

In 1968 the traditional "flag break" ceremony opened Bawtry Scout Troop nights, with the noisy and energetic Pack "Grand Howl" commencing the Cub Scout evenings. Both ceremonies espoused the association's aim to begin with order and a coming together for collective endeavour.³⁴

Brotherhood on the ground was fostered at troop nights, pack nights, ceremonial and competitive events and of course camp.

³¹ Full modern breakdowns of troop/pack investiture ceremonies are presented on the Scouts website

³² Unless of course new evidence emerges of the 1951 registration record.

³³ Recommendations 25, 64 and 103 of the Chief Scouts Advanced Party 1966

³⁴ Opening troop/pack night ceremonies are presented in full script on the Scouts website and the Online Scoutmaster "OSM" website. The traditional Scout "Flag Break" is less rigidly presented today but the sense of order and coming together remain important.



Brotherhood in Action
Courtesy of 12th Doncaster (Bawtry)
Photo Archive.

Brotherhood brought not only a sense of camaraderie but happy memories. Sometimes for those on the periphery. In researching the early days of the Bawtry group memories were shared by Jayne Mothersdale who, as a young girl accompanied her father Don, who was a leader in the early/mid seventies, as he led troop nights. More of this later.

By the end of the first full year of operation the Bawtry's official Brotherhood, according to the annual census return completed for the National Association stood at 45. 24 cub scouts and 21 scouts.³⁵

³⁵ Taken from the research document "The Formation of Bawtry Scout Troop" written by S E Richardson (1977) (Appendices).

Sustainability

"By 2025 we'll have prepared more young people with skills for life, supported by amazing leaders delivering an inspiring programme". - (Scout Vision. Scouts Website 2022).

The Scout Association Vision for the first quarter of this century is not about looking back. Its bold ambition is worthy of an organisation that has endured for 115 years and counting. That level of sustainability in any field does not come without a high degree of endeavour, from an organisation that has been tested in its ability to adapt its approach, remaining relevant and of the moment. This is no small feat when we consider that the underpinning principles of scouting have remained largely the same.

Remaining sustainable at a strategic level is however, only one side of the equation, translating the vision and its values on the ground at the point of delivery presents an equal variety of challenges. In Bawtry we do not need to delve too deep into the archive to discover that sustainable success is not a given. Remember, Bawtry had registered a group in 1951. To date we have been unable to expand on that fact. We are left having to assume that some of what is required to get beyond the act of registering was unable to gather the necessary momentum in 1951, therefore the efforts of those involved never blossomed as they did in 1967. Getting started is not the same as staying the distance. What are those challenges and how is success achieved?

Access to a wide range of Bawtry Scout Group Council/Committee minutes between 1969 and 1976 provide a useful insight into this question. Whilst this archive is not complete it is sufficient to give a flavour of the day to day requirements and considerations needed to keep the ship afloat.

In the thick of it four things seem to present constant challenges when keeping a local Scout Group open and moving forward. Money, Volunteers, Physical Resources and Boys Joining, Boys Staying. It is these areas of continuous challenge that are most common in the pages of minutes that have survived.

Money

Raising funds was a constant obsession aired at every meeting and the ideas were many and varied. Tramps and Vamps nights, Jumble sales, raffles, dance evenings, wine and cheese parties, sponsored walks, whist drives, paper and bottle recycling, bingo, pie and peas nights, and of course "Job Week" (or pre decimalisation "Bob a Job Week")³⁶. The boys and their uniformed leaders engaged in many fundraising activities and as examples show they were praised for their efforts. March 4th 1975 "The Committee wish to go on record that they very much appreciate the time and effort put in by Group Scout Leader Brian Wraith on the bottle collection" April 8th 1975, "scouts had distributed 2000 copies of Thompson News, on behalf of Thomson's the Vauxhall car distributors and expect to receive £13 towards job week". However, a large bulk of the fundraising during this period seems to have fallen to a loyal band of women collecting jumble, conducting coffee mornings, running raffles, organising dances and other evening time soirées. All part of the effort to keep the group's coffers replenished and meet the needs of a constant flow of demands from the sharp end of scouting. The small band of volunteers pitching in to keep these fundraising wheels well oiled included Mrs Naylor, Mrs Wilkinson, Mrs Burke, Mrs Richardson, Mrs Johnson, Mrs Mothersdale, Mrs Stalker and Mrs Wraith.³⁷ One of the events worthy of note that catches the eye when reading

³⁶ This ended in 1992 amongst fears of youngsters being exposed to unjustifiable risks. Relaunched as "Community Week" in May 2012.

³⁷ There are likely to have been many more, apologies if anyone is missed out.

the Group Council Minutes is the monthly Whist Drive run by Mrs Burke. From the documents available it would appear that Mrs Burke started this monthly fundraising event around July 1970 and provided constant organisational leadership of the event every month without a break until July 1975, when Brian Wraith stood in whilst she was on holiday. Mrs Burke was also successful in securing development funds for this activity from the Council as the minutes of the 8th of April 1975 recorded, "whist score cards had become very expensive" on top of which Whist Drive prizes were required. The documents go on to reveal that Mrs Burke declared her intention to step back from her outstanding commitment in October 1975 stating that "she would be unable to give the time.....owing to other commitments". One has to say that this recorded effort has at its core the fortitude required to not only get any new venture started but also to see that it is sustained. Unfortunately we have no record of the monies raised via the Whist drive evenings, but nevertheless, BRAVO! Mrs Burke.

More fundamental accountancy practices required creative thought and challenging decisions for the Group Council and one might speculate on the underlying tensions that played out during the meeting debates that led to achieving consensus.

The importance of income generation is indicated in the minutes of what appears to have been an epic Council Meeting on 5th March 1973 when a sub-committee was established to coordinate fundraising activities. Seizing opportunity was always a factor and the group demonstrated this in the early seventies by looking to gain from the recycling of paper and glass bottles. The latter was more successful than the former which was suspended after a very short period in July 1974 and the Group's surplus collection of paper was donated to the Bircotes Group who were having more joy with this venture. Again, brotherhood in action.

The committee, especially the uniform leaders, were less keen in February 1971 to capitalise off the back of the nation's move to a decimalised monetary system and increase the weekly attendance subscription.³⁸ Perhaps the leaders, who would have had to implement the revised charge, felt this was taking advantage of a moment of confusion to gain a financial benefit? Cheesing off the parents of boys attending pack and troop nights with a strategy to uplift income that might look opportunistic or worse sneaky, was perhaps considered inappropriate? Prudent perhaps, as we will see later, the reliance on positive parent engagement was crucial to group sustainability. As a point of interest the subscription fees were not altered by the Council until the 16th January 1976. By this time they had remained at the same rate since 1968.

There is a hint in the minutes that squeezing every last drop of monetary value was a standard approach. Why spend on something new if the one we have can be repaired. No issue seems to define this more clearly than the running saga about the value of reproofing old tents for camp and recycling them year on year, versus cutting the losses and investing in new kit. Interestingly, the argument for new on this occasion eventually won the day as efforts to reproof turned out to be wasteful, described as being "unsatisfactory". The debate over this issue was not an easy road if one reads between the lines. It began in earnest in January 1973 and concluded "in principle" in November 1974 when the committee agreed that a new ridge tent should be purchased from funds every year for the next 3 years. If cash was hard earned it was equally difficult to get the approval to spend it.

The Council did see the value of maximising what they had and a decision was taken on 4/12/73 to open a savings account, given that fundraising had built up a reserve. Council minutes

³⁸ In 1971 the UK introduced a decimalised monetary system and at a stroke 2/- (24 old pence) became 10 new pence, 1/- (12 old pence became 5 new pence).

reported that the Current Account only generated 0.25% interest. A Savings Account was opened, the level of interest is not revealed, £100 was the first deposit. A further £100 pounds was reported as being deposited in the February meeting of 1974 and £211 was in this pot on 8/11/75.

When governed by an overseeing National Association and its hierarchical infrastructure there will inevitably be times when there is an air of rebellion to fight one's parochial corner. Issues of finance often produce such sparks and the minutes of 4/2/75 indicate such an ignition for the Bawtry Group. It was regarding an increase in District Capitation fees. An increase of 65p in a 12 month period was seen as extortionate by the committee, a rise of over 80% per boy. The chairman proposed that payment be withheld "until a satisfactory explanation was given, or a reduction". It is fuzzy as to whether this decision was agreed as the minute concluded that the GSL and the Chairman should seek a private meeting with the District Commissioner. One might speculate that outright rebellion was postponed? A full retreat seems to be recorded in the meeting 4th March 1975, when it was reported that, "no contact had been made with the DC regarding capitation fees". The committee decided that, "a letter expressing feelings should be sent with the fees". The matter was not reported again until June 3rd when the record showed that the fees had been paid. It does not say whether it was in full, but it is fair to suspect it was. Local Scout Committees seem to have prompted strongly voiced views, but carrying through insurrection was a step too far I suspect.³⁹

It is surprising to find in the early days of the Group what appears to be a proposal to invest for the future. On the 5th March 1973 Scout Leader Don Mothersdale presented an opportunity offered by British Rail which included tenancy of Kings Wood for £100 per annum and the use of an alternative hut for meetings free of charge. The Council minutes concerning

³⁹ The chain of minutes Feb to June 1975 do not record an outcome to the initial disapproval.

this issue betray a hesitancy and maybe a lack of confidence, not through what is recorded, which is very scant, but with the one line comment that the scheme seemed a "little too ambitious". However, the Council rather than dealing with it head on at the time, deferred exploration of the opportunity and any final decision, continuing to do so until the issue seems to peter out.⁴⁰ This episode does bring into focus the challenges facing what at this time was very much a hand to mouth affair when it came to financial stability, in a climate where those engaged in this aspect of the group's management were often transient and operating in their spare time. Being risk averse is perhaps to be expected. I do however find myself wondering whether this was an opportunity missed and whether the cautiousness displayed at this moment was a sign of the times and would it be the same today? What potential could the tenancy have provided for the group to open up other income generation plans by offering the space to other scout groups and interested parties? The space on offer does seem to fit with Brian Wraith's maxim that scouting is ultimately about promoting common country skills and given the venue saga that unfolded due to heating (see later), a new venue would surely have seemed attractive. We shall never know whether this was an opportunity missed or a potential faux pas successfully avoided.

The subject of new premises under the Group's ownership had been debated two years earlier at the Annual General Meeting of 1973. The discussion centred on a proposed community centre and perhaps an annex off that building? The subject was left without conclusion and there is no record of it resurfacing.

There is no doubt that for a Scout Group back in the 70's to make sure it was financially viable consumed a considerable amount of energy, encroaching on many a good person's spare

⁴⁰ Caution should be taken here, although there is continuity of minutes for this period, there remains the possibility that this issue was fully debated at a meeting for which the record is lost.

time. Cautious prudence does seem to be the order of the day from the start and this approach never seems to wane. It is not always clear from the documents what the key priorities are for raising funds. It seems that most of the time the Council's focus is about dealing with whatever is immediately in front of them and getting through. There seems no doubt however that a great deal of fun and happy memories were secured by many of those involved in supporting the efforts to make the money needed and it is perhaps noteworthy that this enjoyment spread beyond the cub pack and scout troop.

S E Richardson towards the end of the 1977 essay does present that a sound financial position in the Bawtry group had been achieved as it entered its tenth year even though caption fees had increased by 125% without rebellion!

Volunteers

Nobody involved at the sharp end of scouting gets paid. Everyone is a volunteer. Some people devote a lifetime of service, others dip in and out often driven by the age and involvement of their children.

Like all new Scout Groups Bawtry was no different in 1967, needing to ensure a minimum foundation of frontline leaders were in place: without whom the group could not exist. When asked in March 1973 what were the main qualities required of a uniformed leader Skip replied "ability to cope with boys en masse and patience".⁴¹ Beyond the first days the challenge was to retain those leader numbers to ensure the group could be sustained. Doncaster District archive indicates that between 1968 and 1977 Bawtry maintained a reasonably healthy supply of uniformed leaders, people willing to go through training and be on hand to present a world of scouting that was attractive to Bawtry's youngsters. S E Richardson's essay in 1977

⁴¹ Group Council Minutes 5/3/73, Bawtry Group Archive.

recognised the domestic challenges of that time. Summarising a section of his reported interview with the then Doncaster District Secretary Mr Watson, who stated. "Being able to keep a Scout leader is a major problem, some leave because they are not willing to go on church parades, but the main reason is because it is very time consuming; a leader may have to spend two or three evenings a week and Saturday afternoon. They must attend scout camps and weekend camps". He expands indicating that the challenge goes beyond the leader and recognises how this might be a thorny issue in any scout leader's domestic environment, stating, "the scout leader must have a very loving, patient and understanding wife at home" citing the hours of loneliness that, "wives will not tolerate".⁴²

Jayne Mothersdale was a young girl in the 1970's. She reports joyous memories of her father, Don, as a leader in Bawtry during this period. It is difficult to be precise about the dates of his active involvement, but the Bawtry archive of Group Council minutes clearly show him as an active player by September 1971, with his resignation from the group being recorded, along with the group's appreciation for his service, on the 5th March 1975. From discussion with Jayne it would appear that the challenge of time and domestic harmony were overcome by making Don's involvement a family event. She recalls being very involved in camps and the general rough and tumble of scouting and loved it. She remembers her mother making the claim a number of times that she was the first girl scout in Bawtry, if only unofficially.

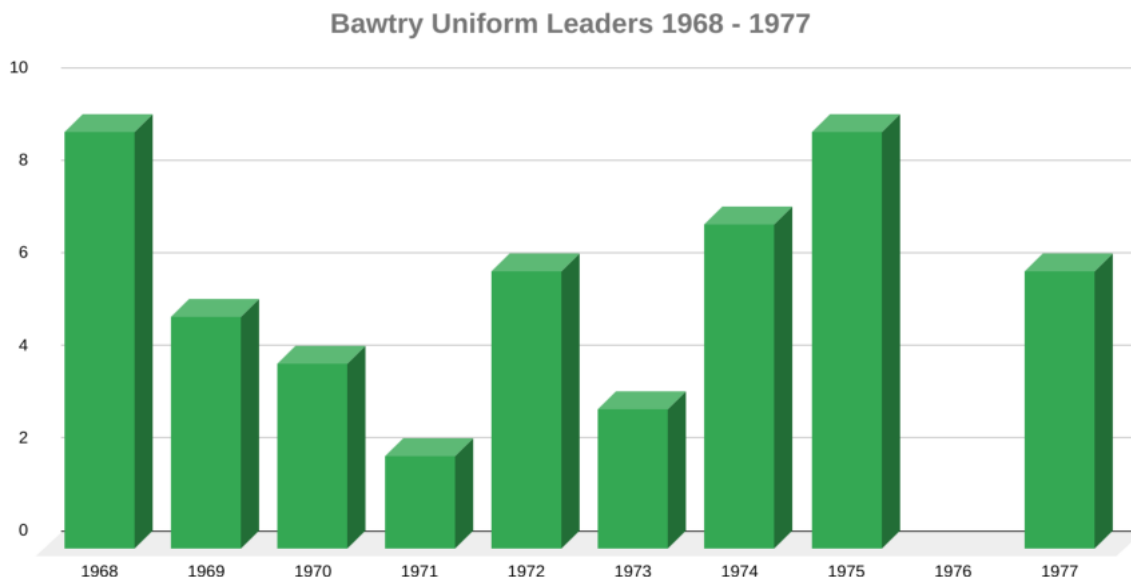
The graph below prepared with records stored within the Doncaster District HQ archive portray a Scout Group in Bawtry maintaining an adequate foundation of uniformed volunteers throughout its first decade, with some years such as 1974 and

⁴² Taken from the research document "The Formation of Bawtry Scout Troop" written by S E Richardson (1977) (Appendices).

1975 a little more flush than say 1971 and 1973. The Group's 1968 application declares a stupendous start with, in addition to Brian Wraith as Group Scout Leader, the Scout section having 7 declared uniform staff and the Cub Scout Section 2. The opening role call of this intrepid band is as follows,

SCOUTS- Geoffery Homer, Roy Trevakis, Charles Trevor Hoe, Brian Coe, Angela Trelford, John Berry, Brian Lawson.

CUBS- Denis Duffield, Mary Seward



Statistics Courtesy of the Doncaster District Scout HQ Archive⁴³

Maintaining a sustainable flow of volunteers, not just leaders in uniform, is a constant challenge required to ensure the business administration of the group is maintained within the boundaries of the regulations governing every nationally registered Scout Group and also to support the constant requirements to plan, prepare and deliver the raft of fundraising activities required to keep the enterprise financially afloat. Bawtry's Group Council minutes from September 1970

⁴³ Note the archive was missing a census return for South Doncaster for 1976.

to April 1976⁴⁴ testify to this ever present challenge and on occasions you can feel the frustrations and anxiety. Earlier in this tale we acknowledge the reverberation of Mr Povey's May 1968 letter indicating that the fledgling Cub Pack was on the brink. The minutes covering most of the period 1970 to 1976 regularly record ardent discussion of the need for more volunteers, it is to the great credit of all those involved that the extreme faced in May 1968 does not seem to have been replayed.

We might speculate that the underlying strength of the Bawtry Group in this matter is its genesis. The call for a Scout Group came from the community, in particular the mothers of Bawtry, concerned for the wellbeing of their sons. It might be argued that they chose well. We have no record of what other options were discussed. But as we have explored, scouting had already proved its long term appeal by 1967 and was an organisation steeped then, as now, in the common and generically held values of the day. A precious thing to lose, we might dare to think. Is it not feasible that this rather ethereal strength is the foundation that draws parent after parent, family after family to the cause, as the next age group comes forward?

⁴⁴ The full records do not survive. However, more than enough does to allow us the fun of drawing conclusions

Gallery of Committee Fundraisers



Photographs courtesy of the 12th Doncaster (Bawtry) photo archive.

This is the front end of keeping a scout group financially viable. Tough work. Are you there? Do you know someone who is?

Contributors on facebook presented us with the following findings.⁴⁵

Top image, left to right:

1. Don Binns. Lived next door to the Wedgewood's from the bottom image
2. Yet to be named?
3. Mrs Wilkinson
4. Stan Wilkinson
5. Mr Naylor
6. Mrs Naylor
7. Cathie Binns (Wife of Don). Teacher at Bawtry Mayflower.

Middle image, left to right:

1. Anna Burke
2. Yet to be named
3. Yet to be named
4. Margaret Aucott.

Bottom image, left to right:

1. Ray Booth (Husband of Glenda)
2. Janet Wedgewood (Wife of Graham)
3. Glenda Booth. Appeared on an episode of 'Ask the Family' with Ray.
4. Glenys Birch (Nee Haycock), teacher at Bawtry Mayflower.
5. Ray Birch (husband of Glenys). Ran Haycock's ironmongery shop on Swan Street.
6. Graham Wedgewood.

⁴⁵ Collated by Iain Hill. BHG facebook coordinator October 2022

Physical Resources

You could say that the 12th Bawtry got lucky. They were gifted a venue in a location which one could never imagine being viable today. It is true a venue was provided by the RAF. However, it was not free, they had to maintain it and keep it spick and span to military standards or run the risk of losing it. We did reveal earlier that other options were presented and discussed. There is insufficient detail within the minutes, but we might speculate that a keen desire to explore a better venue was a key driver. Maintaining the RAF Scout hut to the standard set was an ever present challenge. The most dominant issue throughout the first 10 years of the group's life was that of inadequate heating. So severe was this issue that pack and troop nights were cancelled because it was too cold for boys and leaders. The first surviving record of this issue is September 28th 1970 when the Group minutes state, "There was unanimous agreement about the necessity to provide heating for the Scout hut". The issue was still running hot, forgive the pun, on December 2nd 1975. "We are still experiencing the difficulty of heating the building during the winter months' ".⁴⁶

A venue was only the beginning and the appetite for more stuff was constant as Bawtry's Group Council minutes testify. We followed the issue of tents earlier but the clamour for kit to meet the needs of the programme and I suspect, retain the engagement of the youngsters was continuous and varied.

What other exciting resources did the Bawtry group grapple with in the early days? In January 1974 the scouts and leaders were exploring the "possibility of making their own indoor goal posts".⁴⁷ We might conclude that this item was subject to some protracted financial debate as the issue began in December

⁴⁶ Bawtry Group Council Minute Archive 1970-1976

⁴⁷ Meeting 8/1/74. Bawtry Group Council Minute Archive 1970-1976

1973 when a request was made to buy posts. The minutes record, "it was suggested that it would be cheaper to have a set made". It was agreed that Hayfield school be contacted to assist, with the Group paying costs. It appears that the school suggestion did not fly and the project by January had come back in-house?⁴⁸ In that very same meeting assistant leader Don Mothersdale asked for permission to buy materials for the boys to make a fibreglass canoe. Under instruction of course. He was successful and a sum of £11 was granted. We may well assume that the canoe translated into canoes if the March 1974 minutes are considered. It was at this meeting the potential for the Group to purchase a rowing boat for £5 was discussed. The stumbling block was not, unusually, the outlay, but was on this occasion the logistics of transporting the boat and canoes. The problem was deferred to another meeting and does not appear as a discussion again. That said, we once again might assume positive progress as the November 1974 minutes refer to the Group holding a sponsored paddle which "was expected to make about £35".⁴⁹

Ancillary camping equipment appears to make big demands on the need for physical resources if the July 1975 minutes are considered. Interestingly, financial logistics for a Group camp demanded a declared treasurer. The camp planned for that summer was in immediate need of, "a replacement cooker, ground sheet, tent pegs, calor refills, water carriers and toilet".⁵⁰ All this for the sum of £20.

One could go on, the Group Council minutes for the first decade are littered with physical resource needs and demands, all crucial if the group was to be viable and attractive at the time and into the future.

⁴⁸ 4/12/72. Bawtry Group Council Minute Archive 1970-1976

⁴⁹ 12/11/74. Bawtry Group Council Minute Archive 1970-1976

⁵⁰ 1/7/75. Bawtry Group Council Minute Archive 1970-1976

Boys Joining, Boys Staying.

Brain Wraith always considered headquarters functions and some of the back office activity as "scouting without lads". That aside, Brian did recognise the need for the backroom activity and the vital support it gave to such a wide and varied global youth organisation. However, his one liner did and still does focus one's attention on what is perhaps the most important element of sustainability.

To meet the primary objective of the meeting held on 12th November 1967, engaging with and retaining the interest of Bawtry's young boys was the difference between success and failure. The graph at the end of this section sets out the facts for the group in its first decade of operation. The group could, I believe, claim their endeavours in this area were reasonably consistent. It is not possible to give an accurate set of figures for the number of individual youngsters that engaged with the group at Bawtry in its first ten years. The figures are taken from the Doncaster South Scout Census Returns which do not distinguish between boys who engaged for one year or those that were around for part of a year, or the whole ten. The numbers are also incomplete given the loss of the 1976 census return, for reasons unknown. However, concluding that the group was consistent in maintaining viable numbers in its first ten years is valid.

On the issue of retention there were challenges and complacency was never allowed to take root. The Scout Troop leader in his report to the Annual General meeting in May 1974 gave praise to one of his uniformed assistants and touched on the recruitment and retention issue countrywide. The minutes capture the report as follows. "The Scout Leader thanked Mr Mothersdale for the tremendous effort he had made in trying to introduce new activities in an effort to keep the interest of the

older boys, the loss of boys in the older age group is general throughout the movement and caused some concern".⁵¹

For Bawtry September 1971 did result in the need for the troop to introduce a fourth patrol unit, "Woodpecker"⁵². The census graph shows a slight surge from 1970 through to 1972 when scout numbers recovered to their 1969 levels. However, the AGM 1974 comments are in keeping with the steady decline from 1972 and into 1975. The Group Council minutes for the 4th of February 1975 capture the then chairman throwing down a challenge to the uniform leadership as he expressed "concern at the number of boys wanting to leave the scout section in the 13 yr plus age group. It would appear that a number of boys are not satisfied with the present training programme and that some improvement should be made, to make scouting a bigger challenge".⁵³ Ouch! It is not recorded in follow up minutes what his comments energised or how the debate around this topic was conducted save for the statement, "enthusiasm for scouting was much improved" recorded in the Group Council minutes 7th October 1975. An additional indicator that a corner had been turned is recorded in the 6th January 1976 minutes, when it was reported that Woodpecker Patrol, the last to be formed and the one that seems to have had a precarious existence, "would be reinstated on Friday 9th January 1976".⁵⁴ There is no record of when it dropped out of existence, but we might guess it was in the lean period between late 1974 and 1975.

The cub scout pack seemed to have fared better, although their numbers fluctuated, there is no record of concern or impending crisis when it comes to attendance during the period 1968-1977. In fact the only reference to cub numbers was recorded in the minutes of 1st October 1973 "Kath reported the

⁵¹ Bawtry AGM Minute Archive May 10th 1974.

⁵² Bawtry Group Council Minute Archive 1970-1976

⁵³ Bawtry Group Council Minute Archive 1970-1976.

⁵⁴ Bawtry Group Council Minute Archive 1970-1976

cub pack at full strength".⁵⁵ It is perhaps not surprising that attendance was almost always greater in the young cub scout section given that other social distractions tend to be less for that age group and parental influence is often stronger. However, the figures for scouts in 1977 were the best ever and for the first time the troop boys outnumbered the pack boys. Influencing those figures in 1977 were, for the first time, recorded indications that Bawtry had a Venture Scout Unit.

Venture Scouts emerged as a direct consequence of the National Association's Chief Scout Advanced Party Report 1966. To be precise recommendation 103 of that document declared "this new section be named the "Venture Scout Unit" and recommendation 104 that the individual participants would be known as "Venture Scouts". The report consigned the old terms "Senior Scouts" and "Rover Scouts" to history. Ventures would herald the dawning of a new concept encapsulating virility, activity, and forward progression. The training purpose was to be very much adult focussed with the core emphasis on self-reliance and responsibility. In 1966 the focus was still very much male orientated, as the rationale for recommendation 106, about the target audience, emphasises "16 to 20 age range is that it is the age of becoming a man. The boy wants to try on and test adult roles".⁵⁶

Bawtry recorded 7 Venture Scouts in the 1977 census return. This declaration in the surviving records actually raises more questions than it delivers answers. Were there any girls? Recommendation 108 of the Advanced Party had argued that a viable Venture Unit required a minimum of 12, why was Bawtry seemingly ignoring this? Perhaps more importantly, when did venture scouting start in Bawtry? We cannot reliably claim that it began in 1977 especially as the census returns for 1976 are

⁵⁵ Bawtry Group Council Minute Archive 1970-1976

⁵⁶ Girls could officially become Venture Scouts in 1976 although Ventures and Ranger Guides could and did hold mixed events prior to that date.

not available for scrutiny. The 1975 census for Bawtry made no mention of a venture unit. It is reasonable to suggest that the unit emerged sometime during 1976 and the census survey for 1977 but certainty is elusive⁵⁷. There is evidence within the Group Council minutes that the potential for a group had been on the agenda for sometime. As early as the 23rd October 1973. "Skip is to enquire if there are enough boys from 16-20 yrs of age to start a venture unit".⁵⁸ Nothing further is mentioned on this issue until January 7th 1975 when it was recorded that the scouts were "looking for somewhere suitable for a venture unit".⁵⁹ The minute goes on to reveal that the "old Gas Showroom and the Station Waiting Rooms" were likely contenders. However, a follow up meeting in February revealed the Gas Showroom had been sold some six years previously. The pace towards the realisation of a Bawtry venture unit accelerated later in the year: when the June minutes declared that someone called "Alison" was on a "Ranger, Venture instructors course".⁶⁰ There are no AGM minutes for 1975, 1976, or 1977 to ascertain exactly when the unit came into being, so for now that will have to remain a mystery. S E Richardson's hints that 1977 might have been the launch year, stating towards the end of his essay written in that year. "A venture troop has been opened".⁶¹ His statement albeit tantalising cannot be substantiated and the essay reveals no more on the subject.

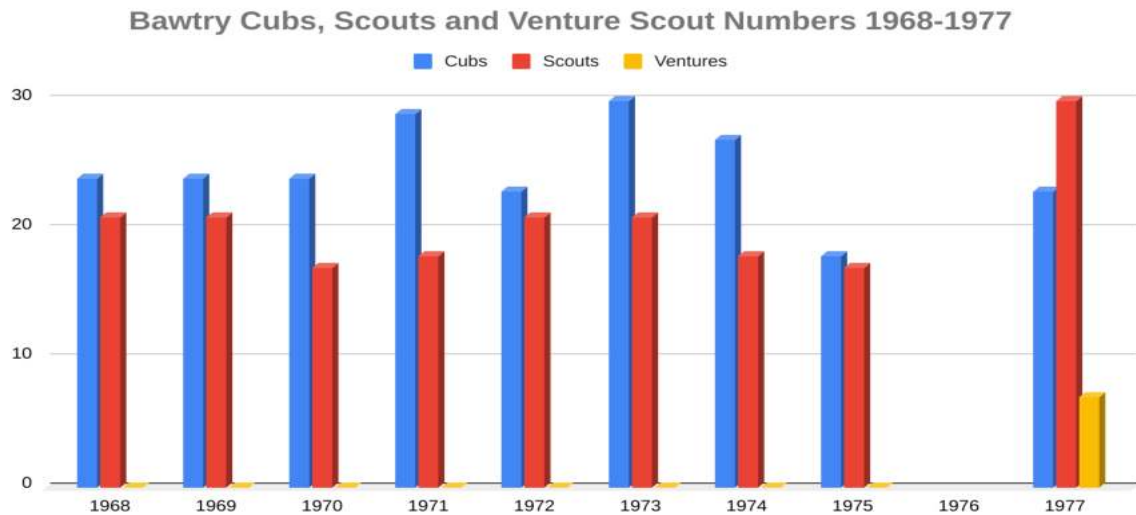
⁵⁷ An entry in the group minutes for October 1973 agrees on a wedding gift to be presented to "Paul Finley the Venture Scout". Adds further intrigue. Bawtry Group Council Minute Archive.

⁵⁸ Bawtry Group Council Minute Archive 1970-1976

⁵⁹ Bawtry Group Council Minute Archive 1970-1976

⁶⁰ Bawtry Group Council Minute Archive 1970-1976

⁶¹ Taken from the research document "The Formation of Bawtry Scout Troop" written by S E Richardson (1977)



Statistics Courtesy of the Doncaster District Scout HQ Archive⁶²

Progressive and Forward Looking

Both concepts at the heart of the Chief Scouts - Advanced Party 1966.

This retrospective review of Bawtry Town's Scout Group has been primarily driven because, after more than 20 years since I was personally engaged with it, a visit to the group provided the motivation to explore its origin and play some part in preserving its historical record. This piece has grown beyond that to demonstrate how a youth organisation embedded in the community can have not only a lasting impact on its location and the people who engage with it, but also be a reflection of real life, as it was, how it evolved and how it might be compared with now. Old ways and values become refined and adapted over time and new attitudes and behaviours reflected through the institution's approach to its business, helps us understand how communities change and thrive. Looking back provides reminders of the journey of change we are all on, and makes history/heritage a useful tool in helping us understand and maintain a sense of balance with regard to how we adapt and cope to that change. Scouting has been around long enough, not only nationally, but also in Bawtry, to be

⁶² Note the archive was missing a census return for South Doncaster for 1976.

considered a sufficiently solid institution, credible in reflecting our wider journey.

Keeping it 'real' and current is why the National Scout Association still exists and remains relevant in the development of many of our young people, as well as being a social outlet for others. It is simply a positive ambassador for what is good in society.

Bawtry is better for having a Scout Group and many many people have benefited from its existence. We should salute all those who have kept it alive and all those who will continue to keep it going. BRAVO TO YOU ALL!

Remember 2027 will be a diamond jubilee year!

M P Maguire
Bawtry Heritage Group
November 2022

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Special Acknowledgements

The following people have engaged with this project to varying degrees.

Kay Beckett - 12th Doncaster (Bawtry). The current GSL.

Christine Rogerson - Former leader.

Martin Johson - Doncaster Scouting District HQ Archive.

Jayne Mothersdale (and indirectly her mum and dad).

John Hall. Ex Bawtry Scout Leader

Peter Wraith (Facebook)

Nigel Turton (Facebook)

Iain Hill (Facebook) - Coordinated submissions from the Bawtry Residents Facebook.

Christine Gamble (Facebook)

Keith Stalker. (Facebook)

I would like to thank them for their input which has assisted in keeping the story on track as well as adding valuable information.