

church, when he attended church at what was then known as the Tin Church in Upper End, he could not resist the temptation to tweak the bell cord at the moment of deepest prayerful silence.

When George was ten the family moved from Blenheim Cottages to a three bedroom house in the Swinbrook Road. Arthur Rainbow's horse and cart was hired to do the removal. Shortly after the move George began cultivating an allotment, and was soon asked to keep more allotments. He decided to buy a saddle-back sow and raise pigs. The sow was so amorous that she no sooner finished weaning one litter of piglets than she would escape from her pen in pursuit of the boar belonging to a neighbouring farmer.

George remembers spending a great deal of time attempting to separate the pair.

His first job was at the Till Factory (8s 1d per week), now the Old Till House near the Lamb Inn. Soon he was hired by Jackie Kethroe, the baker across the road from the Till Factory, for the princely sum of 12s 6d per week. A plain lardy was 10d, a fruit lardy was a shilling, a dough cake a shilling, a small white loaf 2d, and a small brown loaf 3d. That was the beginning of George's career in Shipton which continues to this day. Early to bed, early to rise, George still has the impish twinkle in his eye, and must be one of the fittest men in the village.

He is a tremendous credit to the community.

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## FIRST WYCHWOOD GUIDES

Despite our wet experience last year it was not long before we were thinking about camping again in 1999. We decided to tempt fate and return to the same site at Wilcote where we were washed out last year: after all lightning never strikes twice!

We settled on the May bank holiday weekend as this coincides with half-term for the children and means that the adults do not have to take precious holiday from work. All the initial planning was completed and we were ready to load the lorries and head off.

Now that our tents are stored under the stage at Shipton Village Hall it is relatively easy to take out what is needed – a surprisingly large load however many campers we have.

This year we had to be in and out of the hall early on the Friday afternoon as a wedding was taking place on Saturday and the hall was being prepared. From there we went to Milton Post Office where John and Edna still kindly store our less tidy equipment in their old bakehouse and put up with us taking over their back garden for a while as we sort and load what we need.

By the time the children arrived we had everything unloaded and several tents already pitched, but they still had their own patrol and toilet tents to deal with. Once they were up the girls take great delight in organising their tents and cannot wait to spread out their ground-sheets and bedding rolls. By this time everyone is beginning to feel hungry and thirsty so the fire is lit and kettles boiled to make a well earned

cup of tea. It has become a tradition that we have a fish and chip supper on the first night of camp, always greatly appreciated by adults and Guides alike.

It is hard for the girls to settle down and sleep on the first night, particularly if it is their first camp. This year we were not helped by another camp several fields away which kept up the singing and shouting until 4 a.m., it being a fine, mild night so you can imagine how delighted we were when the girls started waking up at 5 a.m.

Saturday was devoted to on-site activities, the first being hunting for breakfast, lighting fires and cooking it. Tents had to be tidied for inspection, washing-up done to adult standards and everything made neat and tidy. Camping, whilst being great fun is also a good discipline for children who have to learn to do things for themselves and at the same time learn to work together within the Patrol system.

All was going well until late afternoon, perfect weather, happy contented children, no bother from the sheep sharing our field. Cast your mind back to that afternoon if you can, as the clouds banked up, the thunder started rolling and the lightning started flashing. By chance as the rain started, Tracy, Sally, Karen and I had gathered in our new, large store tent to sort out something while the children were occupied across the site in the mess tent. Within seconds the rain was torrential, one of our number declared herself frightened of thunder and we were wondering how to get the children back with us.

Not a problem, as one by one they dashed across the site and burst in to join us. This seemed the perfect time to start preparing the food for the evening meal which the girls were to cook for themselves as part of their badge work. All was going well between chopping, stirring, mixing, cuddling the frightened amongst us and generally reassuring everyone, when we noticed that the rubberised roof of the tent was bulging with the weight of water on it. Necessity being the mother of invention we found that broom handles are perfect for raising the roof sufficiently to whoosh off the water.

Eventually the rain cleared and we were able to get back outside to light fires and cook our meals. For some reason the children were very tired (could it be the early start) and were very happy to settle down for the night, although we are sure that the midnight feast went on for hours, judging by the mounds of sweet papers lying around the next morning. It never ceases to amaze me how much tuck can be squeezed into boxes by anxious mums, certainly enough for a week away, despite camp only lasting three nights. We were just grateful for a peaceful night, as the noisy crowd across the field seemed to have packed up and gone home.

Sunday morning started with the usual airing of sleeping bags, tying of bed-rolls and tidying of tents – hiding the evidence of midnight feasts before the adults spotted them. After breakfast the girls planned their 'Guides Own' – an open air thanksgiving with songs and prayers chosen by themselves. It is lovely to stand in a field, enjoying the

sunshine and saying thank you for all the good things in life, but also remembering those not so lucky.

We set off on a circular walk around Finstock with a packed lunch to eat along the way. You should hear the moans when we mention that terrible word 'WALK', but everyone seems to enjoy themselves in the end. We found a playground for our lunch stop and a shop selling ice-cream – just what we needed on such a hot day.

Back at the camp-site we collapsed into 'Rest-hour', that magical time when the girls rest quietly and the adults try to snatch forty winks. Sally painted faces on the Guides and then they devised circus acts to entertain us all later that evening.



Gathered together in the Big Top we enjoyed party games and food. By bed-time everyone was very tired and happy to settle down, knowing there would be an early start in the morning.

All too soon it was morning and we were up and striking camp. The weather did not look too encouraging at first but it did dry sufficiently and we were able to pack up all the tents.

A certain desperation sets in as we try to beat the weather and the deadline of parents arriving, so we were happy to let Karen run a mini Olympics, complete with a medal presentation, while we finished off the last packing.

We hope that the girls all enjoyed themselves and will be back for more next year. It is hard work for everyone but once we have put everything back in store, soaked away the aches in a hot bath and sipped a well earned drink it is not long before we are thinking of the next event

Next year Oxfordshire Guides will be holding a County Camp (held every five years) at Blackwell Park, a Scout site in Worcestershire. This will be a really memorable event, with Guides from overseas as well as from all over the county. Although the cost may seem expensive it is a once in a lifetime chance for most Guides and is highly recommended. Think about it for your daughters when the information arrives home!

Christine Halliday.