



It's FAB!

The Newsletter for Friends of Ayr Battalion Issue 79 March 2020

Coronavirus and The Boys' Brigade

As many of you will be aware the current pandemic of coronavirus has had a major impact on the work of the Brigade throughout the country. All Companies have been instructed to cease operating and all activities cancelled. This has curtailed the proposed competition calendar organised by the Battalion and it is not clear at the moment how the Battalion Championships for this current session will be decided or if they will be cancelled. Once the present situation has stabilised and the Executive have had a chance to meet I will communicate what decisions have been made. Until then I can only reiterate the advice being given and ask everyone to continue to wash your hands and avoid any unnecessary contact with other people. I hope that you all stay fit and well and that good news is not too long in coming.

Battalion let down by South Ayrshire Council

The Company Section Committee had planned to hold a Basketball and Volley Ball Competition this session on Sunday 2nd February and had booked Marr College with South Ayrshire Council for the event. Unfortunately the School Janitor failed to log this in his diary and then to compound things went off sick on the day of the event. Although cleaners were working at the time the absence of a janitor meant that the over 50 Boys who turned up were not allowed access to the school premises. South Ayrshire Council has subsequently apologised for this failure and offered alternative dates for the competition but unfortunately due to the current situation with coronavirus the school was closed before the competition could be held.

Battalion Council Update

The latest Council Meeting which was to have been held on Monday 23rd March also fell foul of the coronavirus pandemic and had to be cancelled. The Battalion Secretary is currently trying to pull together reports from each Section Committee to let everyone know what the current position is within the Battalion. More news about revised dates will be issued once the present situation has eased. In addition it does not look likely that the Battalion Church Parade will take place this year.

Anchor Boys

I can, however, report some good news in that the Anchor Boys Games Afternoon went ahead on Saturday 15th February and all the Boys present had a great time. During the afternoon prizes were presented for the Anchor Boy Colouring In Competition and the winner this year was Cameron Bruce from 1st Troon with Taylor Easton of 17th Ayr second and Charlie Boyce of 2nd/4th Prestwick third. In the Highly commended section were Deacon Pendlebury 1st Troon, Benjamin Woods 7th Ayr, Lucas Fong 2/4 Prestwick, Oscar Yip 1st Alloway, Charlie Little 17th Ayr, Lucas McMillan 1st Alloway, Jack McLeod 7th Ayr, Logan Menev 1st Prestwick, Lauchlan Dodd 17th Ayr, Cameron Hall 1st Troon, Yugveer Rathore 1st Coylton and Atticus Yip 1st Alloway. Well done to all who took part in this competition.

My thanks go to Gillian Hay for supplying some pictures of the Games Afternoon for FAB readers to let us all see the Anchor Boys having a good time.



Activity Corner



Anchor Boy Beetle



A Group Picture of all the Anchor Boys

Junior Section

Safety and Bible Quizzes: The Junior Section held their Safety Quiz on 9th December in St. Andrews Church Halls and the results were first 1st Troon, second 17th Ayr and third 1st Prestwick. That same day the Bible Quiz was held in the same venue and the results for it were first 1st Alloway, second 1st Prestwick and third a combined team from 4th Ayr and 1st Troon. The next competitions should have been Figure Marching and the Outdoor Day in Fullarton Woods, Troon but both of these have had to be cancelled.

Smith Memorial Museum Update

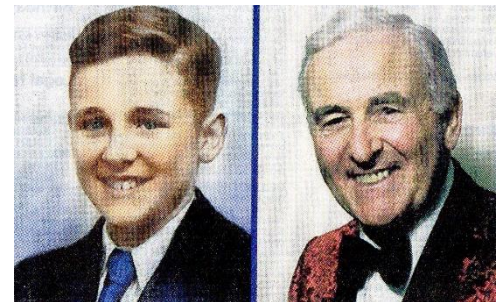
As I mentioned in the previous issue of the newsletter we have completed the digitisation of all the photographs received from John Russell in Poole. With the delivery of the former table belonging to the 1st London Company (see item in previous issue) we now currently hold the bulk of John's Archive Collection of Memorabilia in the museum in Thurso. The remaining elements of his collection are currently held by Brigade Vice President David Aubrey at his home in Wales and we are hopeful that these will be able to be delivered to Thurso in the not too distant future. David is currently researching material for a book about the Founder and his intention is to take the remainder of John's archives north with him when he goes to Thurso. We look forward to seeing John's collection being reunited in the Thurso Museum.

With scanning work on the photographs received from Poole being completed it seemed logical to broaden the scope of the photographic material held in the museum. To that end we are currently digitising photographs of Battalion and Company Events for the museum's archive. This will mean

that in addition to the London area and international photographs received from John Russell the museum will hold photographs for Caithness, Inverness and now Ayr Battalion. Can I ask, therefore, that if you have any old photographs of Company or Battalion events that you would like to see incorporated in this exercise then please let me know and I can arrange to have them scanned and returned to you. The filing system being utilised for this work will be able to accommodate photographs from areas other than Ayr so if you have photographs relating to Glasgow, Edinburgh or anywhere else for that matter and would like to have them included then once again please let me know. The Captain and staff of the 1st Thurso work very hard in maintaining the Smith Memorial Museum as an important Heritage Centre to preserve the work of Sir William and the Boys' Brigade and it is pleasing that when visitors from abroad travel to Thurso to visit the museum that the name of Ayr Battalion is evident in many of the displays.

Did You Know

Although possibly not so well reported in Scotland the Times newspaper on Saturday 15th February carried an obituary following the death of Derek Mann Barsham at the age of 89. Most of us will know his name from the record he released in 1947 featuring two well-known Boys' Brigade hymns. Derek was born in October 1930 in Enfield, North London and began his career on Christmas morning 1943 as the boy soprano for the BBC. He was almost certainly the last surviving boy soprano of the 1940s and sang with all the top stars of the day. In February 1947 he recorded his last record which contained the two Boys' Brigade hymns. Also of note is the fact that his recording of "I'll walk beside you" was chosen as a wedding gift to the then Princess Elizabeth from the Brigade in 1947. In 2001 Derek gave his last performance in the UK in front of 2,000 people in St Paul's Cathedral at a Boys' Brigade service to celebrate the London Stedfast Association. His widow is set to return to England from the United States with Derek's ashes so that his remains are interred in his family plot in Norfolk.



Derek Barsham (1930-2020)

Some pictures from the Archives

Just to give you some idea of the range of pictures from the John Russell Collection which are now held in the Thurso Museum I have selected two for your interest and these show Boys from the 6th Enfield Company in the uniform of BB Scouts. Although not so common in Scotland a number of English Companies embraced the idea of BB Scouts. As I have mentioned earlier if you have any pictures which you would like to see included in the current project which is attempting to collate as large a collection of Scottish photographs as possible then please get in touch and I will arrange to have them scanned and returned to you.



6th Enfield BB Scouts 1909

Thought for the Day

Sadly I recently had occasion to attend the funeral of Robert McCarrison, a long-time supporter of the 2nd Prestwick Company and an ex BB Boy himself. Inside the order of service was a poem written by Will Allen Dromgoole and I thought that I would like to share his words with you.

The Bridge Builder **By Will Allen Dromgoole**

*An old man going on a lone highway,
Came, at the evening cold and grey,
To a chasm vast and deep and wide
Through which was flowing a sullen tide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim,
The sullen stream had no fear for him;
But he turned when safe on the other side
And built a bridge to span the tide.*

*"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim near,
"You are wasting your strength with building here;
Your journey will end with the ending day,
You never again will pass this way;
You've crossed the chasm, deep and wide,
Why build this bridge at evening tide?"*

*The builder lifted his old grey head;
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,
"There follows after me today
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm that has been as naught to me
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be;
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building this bridge for him!"*

As I left the crematorium I couldn't help but ask myself if I had managed to build any bridges during my life and thinking back over my career in the Brigade I like to think that I have managed to build a few. However I now leave the question with all our readers "How many bridges have you managed to build?" If the answer is none or not many then it is never too late to start building!"

A Final Note from the Editor.

I am always looking out for pictures or stories about Company events and if you have any material available please pass it to me at the E Mail address below. Thanks.

Your points of contact for all the information you would like to see included in, or deleted from this newsletter or any comments about it are as follows:

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