



LINGFIELD & DORMANSLAND SCOUTS IN THE GREAT WAR

On 2nd August 1914 the Sussex Association of Boy Scouts called for 1,000 Boy Scouts to guard the telegraph lines and culverts, to run messages between the police and military forces, and to look out for spies, “a duty which their local knowledge and natural inquisitiveness makes them perfectly fit to render.” So the Boy Scouts were mobilised as an active National Force, and were ordered to wear their uniform...

The Lingfield scouts were at Summer Camp at Rye Harbour when war broke out and the Troop offered their services to the Chief Constable of Sussex for patrolling watch duties and signalling before a hurried return home after they were relieved by the 25th City of London Cyclists Regiment.

Writing in 1939 one of the scouts, Jim Huggett, recalled standing on the quay at Rye Harbour “waiting for a spy to pop up.” He pondered whether it would be more effective to hit him with a scout pole or poke him in the stomach. Fortunately he wasn’t called upon to make a decision. Jim Huggett enlisted in the Army Service Corps in 1915 and was awarded the Military Medal. He eventually took over the troop after the war.

Once home Lingfield scouts were enlisted to guard the Railway Viaduct over Cooks Pond at Dormans Park night and day. Writing in 1935 Arthur Potter remembered being on watch by himself at the Viaduct in the early hours and being scared by a rustling in the bracken when a large rat popped out and ran across the road. He was more than glad when his two hour shift ended.

After being relieved by the National Guard the scouts were then sent to guard the Dry Hill Reservoirs during the day – the night duty being undertaken by the Ford Manor employees and the East Surrey Water Company.

In November 1914 the scouts from Lingfield and Dormansland competed against the Oxted and Limpsfield scouts in a shooting match. Several of the scouts taking part went on to enlist: assistant scoutmaster Harry Cox went on to be a gunner in the Royal Artillery and

became a prisoner of war; Arthur Potter and Albert Friend joined the Royal West Kent regiment and George Skinner joined the Queen's Regiment.

By 18th December 1914, 19 Lingfield scouts (past and present) had joined up. By the end of the war the majority of senior scouts had joined the Allied forces; most scouts had joined the army and six had joined the Navy: Fred Baker, Nelson Cox, Fred Comber, William Dart, John Luckhurst and Hugh Vincent. See RH7 factsheet *Lingfield & Dormansland Scouts in the Battle of Jutland* for more information.

The scoutmaster for the 1st Lingfield and Dormansland troop, Captain Henry Lloyd Martin was later to be killed at the Battle of the Somme on 28th September 1916. Talking to the boys before he left for the Front he told them "it will be after the war, when our moral strength and courage will be needed." On 26th July 1915, before sailing for Boulogne, he wrote a poignant letter to the scouts to be read out in the event of his death. He appears to have been held in high esteem by the boys. See RH7 factsheet *The Somme* for more information.

Later in 1914 several more of the boys joined up including four lads who, after being refused at Lingfield for being under age, went to Edenbridge where they were not known and enlisted in the Royal West Kent Regiment. All of the boys were 17 but said that they were 19. It is fairly certain that three of the boys were Ernest Faulkner, Albert Friend and Norman Funnell. The name of the 4th boy as not yet been discovered.

Ernest Faulkner, one of the boys who enlisted when he was underage, transferred to the Machine Gun Corps and was discharged in 1917 with severe shell shock, suffering from headaches, sleeplessness, tremor and fear of noise. He was just 19 years old.

Two brothers, Ernest and Jack Caush enlisted on the same day 10th November 1914 at Guildford in the Queen's (Royal West Surrey) Regiment along with 5 others from Dormansland. Jack was only 17 but said he was 19. Both boys were to die on the Somme aged 20 and 17 respectively. See RH7 factsheet *Brothers in Arms* for more information.

Another scout, Edward Bysh, of 6 Ormuz Cottages, Newchapel Road, Lingfield, travelled to Guildford and enlisted in the Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment, 7th Battalion on 25th August 1914 along with five other local young men (Alick Stoner, Frank Woolgar, Frederick Longley, Victor Galloway and Victor's brother Charles, who was only 15 but gave his age as 19).

Alick Stoner of Dormansland and Edward Bysh were both killed on the same day at the Somme, 18th November 1916. Both are buried at Stump Road cemetery, near Albert in France. Edward and Private Frank Woolgar may have known each other as they have consecutive service numbers. Frank had been working at Ford Manor, but was working at Goodwood when he volunteered. Frank was killed on 8th May 1916, aged 26.

Victor Galloway died on the 3rd day of the battle of the Somme, 3rd July 1916, aged 20. Frederick Longley of Goldhards Farm, Newchapel survived the war.

The War Diaries of the 7th Battalion record that on 13th November 1916 they marched to Albert (Somme, France) and went into billets there. On the 14th, they moved into 'hutments' near Ovillers-la-Boisselle and on 17th moved into battle position, completing the move about 2.30 am on the 18th. At 6.10 am on the 18th, two companies of the 7th battalion attacked the German Desire Trench - that may have been the action in which they were killed. There is a separate record from a Canadian engagement in the area that snow fell on the battlefield that day.

On 14 April 1917, the East Grinstead Observer reported: "Mrs Bysh of Ormuz Cottages, Newchapel Road, has learned that her son Edward who was serving in the R. W. Surrey Regt was killed as long ago as November 16 in last year. James Martin, Hon. Sec, Lingfield Recruiting at the Mutual Help Committee writes to Mrs Bysh: May I personally add how deeply I sympathise with you...My dear son and he were greatly attached. They were not only fellow Scouts but they arrived afterwards in the same battalion in which they both lost their lives."

James Martin's son, Henry Lloyd, was the scoutmaster of the 1st Lingfield & Dormansland Scouts, of which Edward Bysh was a member.

In the early Spring of 1915 Lingfield Scouts went on camp to Pett Level on the south coast to help the Coastguards and Coast Watchers looking for enemy aircraft and submarines. They were there for three months before many more left the troop to join up.

Out of over 60 scouts who joined up some were not to return:

Jack Caush – missing September 1915 on the Somme, aged 17

Henry Lloyd Martin, Scoutmaster – killed 28th September 1916, Somme, aged 36

Ernest Caush – killed October 1916, Somme aged 21

Edward Bysh – killed 18th November 1916, Somme aged 20

Fred Faulkner – died of sickness whilst on active service July 1918 aged 19

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Sources

Ian Blackford, 1st Lingfield & Dormansland Scouts

Boy Scouts Newsletters *Our Vinculum* dated 1935 and 1939

Surrey Mirror archives

East Grinstead Observer archives

Edward Heron-Allen's Journal of the Great War