

Having dealt, in fair length, with the founding of the Company and of the men and boys who were associated with, one becomes a little curious to know more of the "Company"; of the activities that were bound up with it, and of the manner in which they were applied. One will not expect to find recorded a list of activities which will compare with those which are practiced today, and therefore the fact that at the early outset, "Bible Class", "Drill", and "Rooms" appear to be the only three activities with which the Company was concerned should not occasion surprise. To the lads of Bush Hill Park the interest provided by just these three mediums must surely have been a boon, particularly so, one would imagine, that of the "Rooms" giving as it did scope for a measure of recreation and sociability the like of which had not previously existed.

"The Boys' Rooms at the Headquarters are open for the use of Members of the Company on Tuesday and Friday evenings from 7.30 to 9.0. They are supplied with games, books, papers and periodicals, so that the Boys may spend the long winter evenings in a pleasant and profitable way."

That extract from an early Company Card tempts us to supplement the earlier hint of a "boon" with the more likely representation of a "blessing".

Both Drill and Bible Class were well attended. Drill, of course, was a more strenuous affair in those times than it is now, for the use of rifles called for a larger scope in the general practice of Drill. It was, perhaps, only to be expected that a modified form of military drill would be practiced in those early days, for, to speak in a general way, they were the times of a Victorian discipline, a discipline - as we view it in retrospect - that does appear to have been heavy and ponderous in its nature. But the purpose for which Drill was practiced was well served, and Discipline - the fostering of which was, and still is, the great reason for the appearance and practice of Drill in B.B. work - soon became to be recognised as a good (though irksome) thing, and was accepted as such.

The fruits resulting from attendance at Bible Class can, perhaps, be better judged by taking a general view of the type of citizen that an old boy of the B.B. becomes, for the Bible Class has always been considered the most important of the many and varied activities practiced by the Movement. Therefore, it is obvious that attendance at these Bible classes must have some effect on the characters and personalities of those who attend them. The amount of effect is, of course, dependant on the receptive nature of the individual concerned, but high above all question there does stand this decisive fact, that many among the outstanding citizens of today, among the benefactors and among those who render fine work in public service are those who, as boys and youths, served with the Boys' Brigade, and who - as they will readily admit - were enabled, by that attendance, to lay hold of the qualities that have stood them - and us - in such good stead, and which have played no small part in the furtherance of Christ's Kingdom.

Research has shown, however, that little time was lost before the activities of the Company began to expand. Passing reference has already been made of the Drum and Fife Band which was formed under the charge of Mr. Ridge. A noteworthy enterprise this, and one calling for our high commendation, particularly when we call to mind the manner in which a similar, one belonging to a contemporary Company, had been treated by the hooligans of the district. It is unfortunate that fuller details of this, the first Band of the Company, are not available, or rather, have not been discovered by the writer, but, nevertheless, one can well imagine the enthusiasm that such an innovation must have brought forth, and one feels sure that there was no lack of competition among the boys of that time for places and participation in the Band.

As regards another of the activities that made early appearance - one concerned with the work of Ambulance - we are able to garnish our reference with fuller and more satisfying details. This work was commenced and carried on under the direction of Capt. Hardman, who, some time after the formation of the Company, had passed the examination of the St. John's Ambulance Society, and was therefore well-fitted to have charge of this interesting and useful work. Stretcher Drill was also practiced in conjunction with this class, and proof of the proficiency attained comes in the recording of the fact that in the year 1897 the 2nd Enfield Company had the honour and distinction of putting on an Ambulance show at the B.B. London District Display, held that year in the Queen's Hall, London.

A Company Drill Card of an early date refers to, "Classes for Instruction in Fretwork" held under the auspices of the Middlesex County Council and "open to members of this Company, but only those who have left school".

There is also a reference on this same Drill Card to the effect that "A Savings Bank is conducted in connection with this Company. Deposits of one Penny and upwards will be received on Fridays before 8 p.m. Interest will be allowed at the rate of one Penny upon every half-crown per annum." (Just in passing, did you notice the Friday night touch!?)

The holding of Company Sports soon became established, and from the showing of their form in the various events a team of boys was selected to represent the Company at the Annual Inspection and Sports meeting held by the combined Enfield Companies each Whit-Monday (of which more anon). The announcement on the Drill Card of this event mentions the usual routine instructions, such as "full dress parade at 2.30, etc." and concludes with these words, "In the evening a Tea will be provided". That little phrase struck the writer as having some significance, and after thinking it over - a survey which included personal recollections of practical and active participation in past Company Teas coupled to impressions gathered in later years by a still practical (but not quite so active) attendance at similar Company functions - he was led to the belief that perhaps there is yet another tradition that has been handed on, unimpaired, from one generation to another!

However, to get back to the main theme of this chapter, it does become apparent how were gradually introduced activities that were at once interesting and beneficial to those who participated in them. The Bible Class, where the lads were instilled with the habit of reverence and with spiritual understanding. The Drill nights and the special parades which encouraged the lads' punctuality, discipline and self-respect. The classes for Ambulance and Fretwork, and the Band, all three of which sought to give scope and to allow for the development of such talent as the boys possessed. The "Rooms" which permitted the indulgence in sociability and recreation, and which also provided an important outlet for the somewhat stifled and sometimes mis-directed high spirits of the boys. The Savings Bank with its great lesson, and its practical encouragement, in the ways of sensible thrift. The Athletic Sports, the football and the cricket, important sidelines which aided in the development of the mind as well as of the body, as did also the practice of Physical Exercises, in the use of which the 2nd Enfield became the first of the Enfield Companies to adopt such practice.

So much then for the early activities; and as one reviews them in the light of the circumstances that existed in the early years there is drawn from one a ready admittance that those who held that early charge showed enterprise and resource, and one can clearly see in all those varied branches of the Company's early work how that great object of the B.B. was ever kept in mind, and slowly, yet very surely, brought home to and developed among the boys of Bush Hill Park.

A little tale that has been passed on to the writer by Mr. Jenkins shows in striking fashion how deeply instilled had become the enthusiasm for this new movement. The tale concerns two senior members of the Company, Fred Rose and Henry Zela, and the incident had its effect at a time when they were serving as Staff-Sergeants with the Company. It appears that two

lads who were privates in the Company moved away from Bush Hill Park to settle and live at Leyton. Fred Rose and Henry Zala, having an interest in the welfare of these lads, made it their business to journey across to Leyton to renew contact with the lads, and, one thing leading to another, they eventually became acquainted with the Officers who were in charge of a B.B. Company that was attached to the Leyton Parish Church. So intense was the enthusiasm of these two young men - still in their 'teens - that they made a practice of visiting this Company at Leyton to give practical help and assistance in the management of it. An additional point of interest comes in a reference to the fact that the Captain of that Company at that time was the Rev. F.H. Gillingham, the noted Essex County cricketer and one of the famous cricketing brothers. He is now, Canon Gillingham, working, it is believed, somewhere in the South of London.

There was yet another feature that made an early appearance, one that quickly established itself, and, it is safe to say, one that can now lay qualified claim to its being the most popular of all of the Company's many activities, which, being spread over a period of fifty years, can rightly be considered numerous. (And Company "Tea-fights" are not excluded from the list!) Such a statement might well be challenged as being rather sweeping and just a little bold, and yet what old boy is there who, having experienced "Camp", will seek to deny the title bestowed on it.

Camp! That simple word, yet holding such a wealth in meaning that the very mention of it can cause to be conjured up a thousand and one incidents, set in as many varied settings. What tales could... nay, what tales are told of those glorious hours spent in joyous freedom (excepting, of course, "Orderly", "Fatigue", and - dare we mention it - "Picket" duties!) among pleasant places, often with the tang of the sea in our faces and the sound of its rhythm in our ears, and forever the whole prospect enriched with a fraternal display of Esprit-de-corps so often enlivened with that keen, yet ever friendly, inter-tent or maybe inter-Company rivalry which offered itself - and was eagerly accepted - as an outlet for and the means wherewith we could (and did!) indulge in those lively escapades that have played such a great part in the fashioning of glorious Camp Tradition!

But before we plunge deep into Camp reminiscence let us, remembering that this is a Company History, give prominence to historical fact. It appears that the first Camp with which the Company was concerned was in the summer of 1893 when a party of boys from this Company took part in a Camp held by the North London Battalion. But perhaps real Camp history for this Company commences in the year 1897 when the first Camp exclusive to boys of the united Enfield Companies was held at Hayling Island. The Camp was so successful that it was repeated the next year and also the year following on that, but for the next year the venue was changed and the Camp, still run by the united Companies of Enfield, was held at Lowestoft.

And as the years have gone by so has the Company each year held its Camp. Sometimes it has gone its solitary way as a Company Camp; at other times it has joined with the other Companies of Enfield in forming huge and always stimulating Battalion Camps. In later years an even more interesting combination has been formed when the Company has joined and shared Camp with other Companies who have belonged to Battalions other than that of the Enfield unit. And as the style of the Camps has varied so have the surroundings in which the Camps have been set up. Among the places where successful Camps have been held are, Lowestoft, Whitstable, Felixstowe, Hayling Island, Clacton, Gurnard Bay (Isle of Wight) and at Southwold. Of late years the Camp has made for itself a more or less permanent place at Whitecliff Bay, near Bembridge, in the beautiful Isle of Wight: but whatever has been the style of the Camp - Company, Battalion, or otherwise - and wherever has been its situation - East Coast, with its invigorating and bracing air, or South, to the soft warm winds and scenic beauty of the famous Island - there has ever remained, unchanged and undimmed, that great spirit which has always animated the Camps of the Enfield B.B.

There will still be found that glorious chaos which resulted most mornings from our endeavours to coax, and, perhaps, to assist (?) the slackers to rise from their beds; a chaos which, in some amazing way, was transformed into that uniform and orderly tidiness required from every tent by the time of Tent Inspection. There will still be found that hectic rush to the Cook-house by the tent orderlys, each to receive his tent's rations; and there can still be heard - fundamentally the same though coloured in modern jargon - the caustic comments passed by impatient tent-mates to an aforementioned orderly should he make a belated return and bearing - to his awful shame! - rations which his critical colleagues imply - for the most part unjustly so - are short in weight! There can still be seen the queue which twice daily forms at the Camp Bank, a queue that becomes noticeably and pathetically smaller as the days of Camp pass, all too quickly by; and one can hear again, as in days past, lads discussing, rather anxiously, the weakening state of their finances. "First-timers" to Camp still make the error - as perhaps you and I did - of stuffing the palliasse so tightly with straw that one cannot help but roll off during the hours of sleep! Again will be heard the chaff and quick-witted sallies that pass between the Orderly Squad, as it marches off to attend its duties, and those who - perishing the thought that their turn must surely come - have the time to themselves.

Look around, and one will see again those groups of varying size, made up - quite naturally, and just as spontaneously - of Officers and boys, clad, almost without exception, in shirts and shorts of varying colour and style, meandering along towards the sea, with swimming costume and towel slung over the shoulder or swinging in the hand; and if one chooses to wait upon their return there will be seen, as was of old, those dampened costumes and towels slung out to dry over the guy ropes or some such other improvised clothes line. There will be seen the pleasure that is brought by a letter from home, and if perchance it should be that in that letter is found an unexpected Postal Order we shall see the thrill of its receipt made just as manifest as was the case when, in days past, such pleasure was our own.

Football and Cricket? They still are there. Basket Ball (special B.B. code!) and that exclusive Camp sport of "Puddocks"? Yes, both are still ever present, just as are the Bugle Calls, and Earwig Killing, Sun and Sea-bathing, the "pull" of warm blankets at the time of Reveille, and the grotesque shadows that move on the canvas of the tents as the inmates bed down for the night. Visit the Canteen and you will find the stuff that you and I ate, drank, and made merry with satisfying again the demands and preferences of lively, healthy lads. You will find, as you go about, that there still abides sympathy and consideration for a tent-mate who, feeling a bit under the weather, is constrained to keep his bed, and that there is still that self-same delight in hearing the sudden and indignant exclamation that comes from the worthy Tent commander as his toe finds the mallet surreptitiously planted between his blankets!

For the sentimentalist there is still the glory of the setting sun, and the hush that settles on the Camp as the "retreat" is sounded: for him, maybe, there is the ever present view of a distant Light-ship, the beauty of the moonlight on the water, the flash from buoy and Lighthouse through the dark of the night, the measured flow of restless waves seeking the shore, and the ceaseless boom as, finding what they seek, they spend themselves in a last and final frenzy: for him, the distant twinkle of far-away ships passing in the night, or perhaps, the peace and quiet of a Camp at rest.

But for all who wish it there is still to be had that sense of freshness and that invigoration, when, stripped to the waist, and with the wind whipping round his ribs, a fellow washes and towels himself with a thoroughness and a vigour which, could she but witness it, would arouse doubts in a mother's mind as to the mental well-being of her off-spring! There is still the smell of good cooking, still those

impromptu sing-songs around the twangy Camp piano, and still the same fun to be had from a portable gramophone: there still are held those unlawful feasts which bring the proof that Potatoe Crisps, Chocolate biscuits, Turkish Delight, Marzipan and Cracknel Bars, taste never so well as when feasted upon at the hour of midnight and washed down with Ginger Beer, Lemon Squash, Tizer, or some such other choice and favoured nectar! Each tent - so it seems, from tales that are told - is still blessed with at least one member who can bring into play those so useful of "arts" (?) "scrounging" and "wangling"; and yet, alas, cursed with another member who is obsessed with the insistence of talking after "Lights Out" (a practice oft-times culminating in results so dire that the whole of his unfortunate and - more or less - innocent tent-mates are embraced in the punishment meted out by an exasperated Officer of the Day!) The Tent-commander still goes through his nightly ritual of "slackening off" the guy ropes. There will still be found a wretched tent-peg that, throughout the whole period of Camp, seems to have no other purpose than to trip a fellow over!

There still are held those rather wonderful "high teas" when, with the end of Camp in sight, one joins with one's colleagues in doing oneself proud, a pleasure enhanced by the attendance at the laden table - in the capacity of honoured guests - of Officers who have found favour with us. There is still the hearty laughter to be heard when, at supper time, the latest edition of the popular Camp "Rag" pokes - without prejudice, fear or favour - its good honest fun at the many personalities always to be found in Camp.

And there is still that reverence when, at the close of day, and in the soft light that spreads from the winking lanterns throughout the Marquee, the young and earnest voices are lifted up in an evening hymn of Praise to God: and there follows on (who can forget it?) that stillness and that hallowedness when young heads are bowed in prayer.

And, just as was the case with you and I, fellows still retire to bed with the determination to be up in the morning and - with Spartan like courage - to brave an early morning bathe ( and, just as with you and I, they funk it when the morning comes!)

Then, for sure, when Camp is "struck" there can still be seen those tell-tale, well-worn circular patches which remain to tell of the tent that once rose up and stood there. But Nature, in her jealousy, loses no time to have removed those scars which offend her dignity and mock her pride: Time, and those who are attached to his Court - Toil, Worry, and Care - they too, take their toll; and so our memories become dimmed. Dimmed, maybe! but never effaced! So it is - and praise be for it! - that a casual glance at a faded 'snapshot', and lo!, the floodgates of memory are opened! A chance remark of a fellow old boy, and away do we plunge into an orgy of reminiscence!

How then shall we end this story? How shall we leave it, that we may pass on to the further telling of our Company's History?

What better than that we take again the B.B. Hymn Book, and, turning its pages, to light on, and quote, the opening lines of that beautiful hymn which has been set apart as "An Evening Hymn in Camp",

We thank thee, O Our Father,  
Before the memories fade,  
For all Thy love around us,  
And for The Boys' Brigade.

Amen, be to that.