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## A forgotten 'Good Turn' – and other scouting stuff from the 1st Woodside Troop

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I found this forgotten true story of a WW1 'good turn' in the Addiscombe Parish Magazine. Probably many of its readers in 1918 would have known Mr R C May. He was the acting scoutmaster of the 1st Woodside Scouts and he regularly contributed news of his troop. The Mays lived at 77 Woodside Green and it was also listed as the troop's headquarters. In about 1918 the troop became associated with the 'St Mary Magdalene Chapel of Ease' in Bingham Road and it held a Scout Parade service there on the last Sunday evening of each month. This chapel became St Mildred's in 1922 and the following three extracts from the Addiscombe Parish Magazine give an outline of the chapel's history:

1. 1st December 1912: It was announced under the heading 'The Ashburton Estate' that *'the vicar has appointed the Revd Thomas Bentham to take charge of the eastern portion of the parish and he will commence his duties on December 1st. He hopes that the new residents in this part of the parish will give Mr Bentham a warm welcome when he visits amongst them'*.
2. 8th January 1914: It was recorded that *'we of the eastern part of the parish are proud and happy that our hopes and prayers have been realised and with the opening of our new chapel we now have a House of God of our own in which to worship'*. This was the purpose built chapel of ease which was opened by the Lord Bishop of Croydon. The report also mentioned the St Mary's (1st Addiscombe Troop). *'A contingent of Boy Scouts formed up outside as a guard of honour and did good service in lighting the footpath for the large congregation who came to the service'*.
3. 5th August 1922: It was reported under the heading 'New Parish of St Mildred's' that the chapel *'rose to the dignity of a separate parish on Saturday August 5th when the Revd Thomas Bentham MA, formerly curate-in-charge, was admitted to 'the cure of souls' by the Lord Bishop of Croydon and he became the first vicar of the parish'*. (It published its own Parish Magazine from 1924).

I was very moved whilst I was tracing the history of St Mildred's in 2004, to read a letter from Mr May dated 19 October 1918, with the modest heading '*A Good Turn*'. During my research sufficient material came to light to enable me to produce several illustrated talks followed by a book telling the story of the church. It was only possible to make a brief reference to the 1st Woodside Scouts, but I decided to return to the subject at a later date. So in autumn 2007, armed with copies of the relevant pages from the magazine, I set about piecing together the story of the 1st Woodside Scouts from 1911 to 1922.

Nationally the scouting movement received an enormous boost in January 1908, when Sir Arthur Pearson started publishing Baden-Powell's '*Scouting for Boys*' in fortnightly instalments. Sir Arthur provided some financial assistance and also helped by lending some office space to the 'Manager of Boy Scout Troops' (Apparently the Manager was considered to be none other than B-P himself).

Locally a group of Addiscombe lads were so impressed with '*Scouting for Boys*' that they asked Mr H C Simmons, the Postmaster for Addiscombe and a local bookseller, if he would consider forming a troop. He agreed and sent off a letter to the said 'Manager' who replied on 16 June 1908, '*Dear Sir, I am very glad to hear that a scout troop has been started in Croydon, and have duly registered your troop as 1st Croydon, Yours faithfully, The Manager*'. The troop's full title was the 1st Croydon (1st Addiscombe) BP Scouts and it was associated with St Mary Magdalene Church.

In 1910 Baden-Powell appointed Colonel J F Worlledge as the first District Commissioner for the Croydon District Scout Association. By 1912 the district had 31 troops and a total membership of 1,154 scouts. Details from the Croydon Scouting District [CSD] Archives show that Major G W G May founded the 25th Croydon (1st Woodside) Troop on 13 October 1911. He was on active service throughout WW1 and Mr R C May was the acting scoutmaster. It has been possible to piece together the troop's story from details in the CSD Archive and the *Addiscombe Parish Magazine*.

Focussing next on Mr R C May, I found that *Ward's Street Directory* gave his full name as Richard Cooke May, which made for an easy check on the Ancestry website. From this I found that his birth was registered in 1849 at St George's Southwark. He became a stockbroker and married Emma Bradley (aged 22) in 1881. They were listed in the 1891 Census as residing with their three children (Gerald William aged 9, Dorothy aged 7 and Harold Clears aged 3) plus three servants (cook, nurse and parlour maid) at Tudor Cottage, Duppas Hill Terrace, Croydon. They were listed at 77 Woodside

Green in 1909, moved to 51 Blenheim Park Road in 1925 and Richard died in 1930.

In February 1918 Mr R C May wrote that *'of the members of our troop (who attend our church) 24 are serving in HM Forces (17 Army, 5 Navy and 2 RFC) and 3 have made the Great Sacrifice'*. His list included one 2nd Lieutenant H C May. This was Harold, the Mays' younger son and we learn from the Roll of Honour in the CSD Archives that he was an Assistant Scoutmaster with the 1st Woodside Troop. He served in the 3rd Dorset Regiment and died of his wounds at St. Eloi in March 1915.

The absence of any references to the 1st Woodside Scouts in 1917, followed by five entries from Mr May in the 1918 magazines, suggests to me that the troop may have become associated with the chapel in late 1917. Mr May was good at keeping in touch with the scouts on active service and in November he quoted this reply from Private Robinson: *'the happy faces in the photo you sent me, makes me proud to know that I was and am one of the troop...it is splendid that you have been able to keep our dear old troop together...through this terrible war'*. The Woodside troop had been founded by Major Gerald May, the Mays' older son, and from the CSD Archives we learn he was the District Scoutmaster for Croydon in 1914. He served in the 3rd Cheshire Regiment and was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel. Mr May wrote in July 1920 that the Lt-Col had *'been appointed General Secretary to the Manchester Boy Scouts Association...noting that...the irreparable loss to the few will be the gain to the many'*.

The titular *'Good Turn'* was described by Mr May in a sequence of three letters. His first was dated 19 October 1918 and he referred to *'the great honour and pleasure of being able to do a good turn to (a) the Shirley Military Hospital (b) a blinded soldier from St Dunstan's and (c) to ourselves. Four of our patrol leaders have undertaken to guide Mr Lloyd, from his house in Addiscombe to the Shirley Military Hospital...every morning and evening during the coming winter...each boy takes on this job for a week at a time...it would be impossible for Mr Lloyd to continue his job as a masseur if these guides were not available...Colonel Worledge, our District Commissioner...tells me that our troop is setting an example that could well be followed by other troops'*.

At this point, it is helpful to note that Sir Arthur Pearson was also the owner and publisher of the *Daily Express* and the *Evening Standard*. However with the onset of blindness in 1909/10 he sold his newspaper holdings in order to turn his attention to the welfare of the blind. He became the president of the National Institute for the Blind in 1912. Many soldiers were blinded during the Great War, and

this led Sir Arthur to establish the St Dunstan's Regent's Park Hostel in 1915, and to pioneer a new policy of re-educating and re-adjusting the blinded soldiers back into society. The employment and guiding arrangements made for Mr Lloyd are a very clear demonstration of this policy in action.

The work of St Dunstan's was supported by the chapel of ease. At its Harvest Festival in 1918 *'the evening service was so crowded ... many had to stand along its walls...many others were unable to gain admission ...and the offertory for St Dunstan's realised £8.2.5d'*. Mr May's second reference to a 'Good Turn' came in his letter about the Scout Parade on 23 February 1919. This was attended by Colonel Worledge, who *'after an impressive service...inspected the Troop...thanked Mr Bentham for his address...noted the attentive behaviour of the scouts...and made a fitting finish with the suggestion that the four Patrol Leaders...doing a 'Good Turn'...be given Special War Badges'*.

In his third letter Mr May described the presentation ceremony held at his house on 12 June 1919. *'The Commissioner, Colonel Worledge, came to present War Service badges to four of our Patrol Leaders, Sarter, Edwards, Thomas, and George Gould. The 'good turn' done by them was taking Mr Lloyd to and from the Shirley Military Hospital daily for eight months thus enabling him to carry on the useful job of a masseur to wounded soldiers. Mr Lloyd, his wife and their boy of 7 months were at the presentation and also the parents of the four patrol leaders and of course the whole of our troop. The Commissioner in a very hearty speech touched on the usefulness of service. This was exemplified by the reading out of a letter from the four patrol leaders to Mr Lloyd thanking him for the pleasure and good advice given during those 8 months. 550 miles of walks gave the plucky blind man and his devoted 'leaders' much opportunity for mutual benefit and our Troop rejoices at that'*.

Unfortunately this ceremony was not reported in either the local or the scouting papers; however the archivist at Scout Headquarters was able to send me details of the 'A' War Service Badge, shown below, which was embroidered yellow on red. The rules that applied to the four patrol leaders stated that the badge was to be granted on the recommendation of the Scoutmaster and approved by the Commissioner. It was awarded to scouts who had performed Fifty Days Special Voluntary Service for the Military Authorities of at least



three hours per day. The Shirley Military Hospital was set up by the Royal Flying Corps by requisitioning the Shirley Park Hotel in November 1917; this hotel had opened in 1914. It was acquired by Trinity School in 1959, closed as a hotel and demolished in 1962. The new school was built there, opening in 1966.

Here next from the magazine are some examples showing the close relationship which developed between the scouts and the chapel. The funeral service for William Morris Gower on 1 March 1919 *'was turned into a joyous thanksgiving...by the presence of the choirboys and scouts...the coffin rested in the chancel guarded by four scouts with bowed heads and leaning on their poles...the Scoutmaster read the lesson...after the last hymn...the scouts and the choirboys formed a double line through which the coffin was carried to the hearse'*. Six months later a new flag was dedicated *'to God's service in memory of our friend William Morris Gower...to be used and honoured by the 1st Woodside Troop of Scouts'*. Early in 1920, the Revd Thomas Bentham announced from the pulpit that he was honoured to accept the post of Chaplain to the 1st Woodside Scouts.

The scout troop regularly distributed leaflets and collected sales of work items for the chapel. They also contributed to the fund for building a permanent church, set up as a thank-offering for peace and in memory of the fallen. Harvest Festival Services were a major event and from 1918-22 the chapel was reported being so crowded that *'some people were unable to gain admission'*. Each year the scouts used their trek cart to collect extra chairs for the service and to deliver the chapel's gifts of fruit, vegetable and flowers to Croydon General Hospital. In 1921 Mr May reported that *'the load was out and out the biggest taken...our trek cart drawn by eight scouts got to the hospital right enough...but the return journey was in a deluge...at 8.40 I had to congratulate the three big scouts who brought back five small ones in the cart...covered with a tarpaulin...and as dry as a bone!'*

It is clear from Mr May's letters that camping was a very popular activity with his scouts. They went to Mr Still's Farm at Addington for 8 days in summer 1918 and then returned for a few days each spring. A typical picture of peacetime summer camps at Orchard Farm, Reigate has been compiled from his letters 1919-22. *'Lorries to take the [20+] scouts to Reigate were ordered for 7.30am on Friday...the scouts were brim full of determination to enjoy themselves and to be loyal and courteous...the farm was ideal...a delightful spot ... given over to us by the generous owner Mr Mordan...our host and his wife showed real country hospitality and kindness...very pleasant memories of happy summers there before*

*the war...I wish that all the kind subscribers to our camp fund could have seen our scouts in camp...they would realise how grateful we all feel for all their generosity.'* Each year the younger choirboys were taken for a day trip to the camp and they said that '*it was a ripping time*'.

In June 1920 Mr May answered the chaplain's question '*how is the troop getting on?*' by writing '*we are going strong...we have 23 loyal and orderly scouts...my six years experience of scout work... shows me that the troop goes on from year to year...with some ups and downs...what we want now is a scoutmaster to take my place...but it's difficult to find the right man...perhaps our chaplain can help us find one*'. Mr May's last letter about the scouts was printed in November 1922, then nothing. Nothing in the short-lived Addiscombe Monthly News in which St Mildred's took a page or two during 1923, nothing in St Mildred's own Parish Magazine which was launched in 1924 and nothing in any other publication. My hunch is that a new scoutmaster was found to replace Mr May (by then in his seventies) sometime after 1922, and the 1st Woodside Scouts moved, but to where?

**Alan F Barber**

## Sources

1. The annual bound editions of the *Addiscombe Parish Magazine, chapel-of-ease section* (later St Mildred's) as surviving for 1912, 1914-15 & 1918-22, by kind permission of the vicar Rev Richard Williams.
2. The entry for Sir Arthur Pearson in the Dictionary of National Biography.
3. '*Seventy Years of Croydon Scouting*' by Edward Wood (1978)
4. Details gratefully received from Donald Johnston, Archivist for the Croydon Scouting District.
5. My book '*From Gordon Hall to Halls4All ...the continuing story of St Mildred's Addiscombe*' (2005).

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## Accessions at Croydon Archives Service in 2007

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Every year, Croydon Archives Service compiles a list of recent acquisitions for the National Archives as part of a survey of acquisitions to archive repositories in the UK. This year was no exception and the return for 2007 was submitted just before we closed for Christmas. There were 54 archival accessions in 2007 ranging from the very large to the extremely small. The full list will appear at: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/searches/locresult\\_details.asp?LR=352](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/searches/locresult_details.asp?LR=352) in due course.

A source of great pride is the strength of our collections of school records and this year has seen a great deal of material deposited thanks to the continuing and unstinting efforts of Dr Ron Cox, Consultant Archivist to the Education Department. These include records from schools that are being reorganised (Gilbert Scott Infant A911) and, in one case, a school that has now closed (the short lived Tollgate Primary A913). An excellent collection from Ashburton Junior School (A925) also included, for reasons unknown, two items from the former South Norwood Congregational Church.

Tollgate Primary was opened in 1976, a year after the Croydon Society was formed. Its dissolution in the summer, after 32 years, resulted in a large deposit of records as well as the research notes of one of its long standing members, Hugh Byford, who died in 2005. (A915 and A916).

By far the largest accession of the year was the transfer by the renowned local estate agent and auctioneers Stiles Harold Williams of over 70 bound volumes of auction and sales particulars which was brought about by a move to new premises. In remarkably good condition, they form an unbroken record from 1830 – 1968.

There were a number of collections received which had connections with music or the performing arts. These varied from two 1839 posters for the Theatre in Croydon (A936) to records of the Wellesley Singers (A937) which was a choir formed in 1974 by civil servants at the Property Services Agency and which disbanded in 2001. Material was received from two recorded music societies: the Sanderstead and Purley Gramophone Society (A884) and the Shirley and Addington Recorded Music Society (A934). A large collection of material was received from the estate of the late Mr Geoffrey Killick (1927 – 2007, A889) which consisted in large part of a beautifully maintained collection of material relating to his time with the Croydon Stagers and other local amateur theatre companies. The Croydon

Stagers are still very active of course, as are the Croydon Philharmonic Choir who also transferred their records (A885).

A large collection was received from the estate of the late Marjorie Mather of Shirley. This included material from her father Leonard Evans Parr (d.1973, A918) who was for many years the band master at the former Shirley Oaks Children's Homes and included a great many interesting photographs of the band which had a very good reputation.

We are always on the look out for new accessions either as deposits or gifts and we are usually approached directly. Sometimes though it is just a matter of spotting the possibility as in the case of the now defunct White House Horticultural Society of Sanderstead (A926) with whom I made contact after spotting a letter about their closure in the local press.

For more information about any of the collections mentioned above or any of our other collections, please feel free to contact me.

**Chris Bennett**

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## Three medals

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Recently, John Gent presented the Society's museum with various items that he had acquired over the years. Amongst these were three medals, described below, each associated with Croydon in the 19th and early 20th centuries. However, they differ in the degree of available detail as to the original holder of the medal and how they came to hold it.

### Treachery avenged

The most substantial of the three is a bronze medallion of 59mm diameter and a rim thickness of 4mm, though relief on the medal stands proud of the rim. An inscription identifies it as the Pollock prize, associated with the military seminary at Addiscombe and awarded by the court of directors of the East India Company to the most distinguished cadet of the season.

The cost of striking the medal was funded by the British inhabitants of Calcutta in gratitude for the eminent services of Major-General Sir George Pollock GCB, Bengal Artillery who had undertaken a successful campaign in Afghanistan in 1842 which relieved British India of the threat of invasion from there. Details of the campaign and the life of Sir George, including the reasons for the withdrawal and the losses incurred by some divisions not under his command, can be found on the web in an article written by a Pollock descendant, with images of the two faces of the medal,<sup>1</sup> or in the Dictionary of National Biography.<sup>2</sup> A rather jingoistic summary is inscribed on the medal: *'Treachery avenged – British honor vindicated – Disasters retrieved – British captives delivered – Kyber Pass forced – Jelallabad relieved – Victories of Mamoo Khail – Jugdulluck – Tezeen – Istalif*. However, his Afghan campaign was considered to be a model of mountain warfare.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, we have no indication as to who was awarded the medal that we hold. He might not even have been an East India Company cadet as apparently the award of the medal was passed to the Royal Military College at Woolwich with the closure of the Addiscombe seminary.<sup>1,2</sup>

### **A Charity School medal**

The second medal has a particular interest as it appears to be in its original box. However, neither do we know for what it was awarded, nor who was the recipient.

This bronze medal, of 29mm diameter, has on the reverse a belt joined in a circle and bearing the name of the Warehousemen Clerks & Drapers Schools and on the front the interlaced initials WCDS within a wreath of oak leaves and acorns and, in a scroll underneath, the motto *'non sibi sed omnibus'*. The medal is attached to a ribbon with two vertical stripes, possibly white originally, either side of a red/magenta stripe. The ribbon is supported by a clasp which has been pinned into the lining material of the box. The lid of the box bears on the outside a repeat of the belt and school name motif in gilt. The inside of the lid has the name of the maker 'Vaughton & Son' enclosed in two undecipherable characters, then there is the address, Gothic Works, [Bi]rmingham. The name Vaughton is also on the medal itself.

The Warehousemen Clerks & Drapers School was located at Russell Hill, Purley from 1853. However, the medal itself may date from the 20th century as a webpage on the manufacturers of medals and badges indicates that Vaughtons moved to the Gothic Works from elsewhere in Birmingham in 1903.<sup>3</sup>

## Five Japanese chrysanthemums

Finally, there is a white metal medallion of 45mm diameter for which we know the nature of the award and to whom it was awarded. One face has the '*sanitate crescamus*' crest of Croydon and the other has an inscription around the outside indicating that the medal was awarded by the Borough of Croydon Chrysanthemum Society. The society had been founded in 1888 but the award for a display of '5 Japanese' was made in October 1912 to L. White (these details have been engraved in an area intended for this purpose). Does anyone have any knowledge of this person?

**John B Greig**

## References

1. Pollock, David, *Field Marshal Sir George Pollock Bart., GCB, GCSI, Constable of the Tower of London, 4.6.1786 - 6.10.1872*,  
<http://www.david-pollock.me.uk/docs/FM%20Sir%20George.htm>. [Visited March 2008]
2. Vetch, R.H., Sir George Pollock in *Dictionary of National Biography*, 2nd edition, Lee, S. (ed.), Vol 16, pp 63-68; London: Smith Elder & Co. (1909).
3. The Badge Collectors Circle – *Manufacturers*;  
<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/f.setchfield/BCC%20WEBSITE/manufacturers.htm>. [Visited March 2008]

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## News and Notices

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There has not been space to reproduce the News and Notices items in both issues of the Bulletin this year. They can be found on the last page of the accompanying Issue 131, after the Accountant's Report.

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## Ornithology group

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The species identified on two winter field trips of the group.

At Bough Beech on 19 December 2007 (winter visitors in capitals), 40 species in all:

Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Geese (unidentified as to whether greylag or Canada, due to the sun being in our eyes and the geese distant), Mandarin duck, Mallard duck, Teal duck, Shovellor duck, Pochard duck, Tufted duck, GOOSANDER DUCK, Pheasant, Moorhen, Coot, Black-headed gull, Common gull, Woodpigeon, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Grey Wagtail, Pied Wagtail, Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird, FIELDFARE, Song thrush, Long-tailed tit, Blue tit, Great tit, Nuthatch, Jay, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Carrion Crow, Starling, Chaffinch, BRAMBLING, Greenfinch, Goldfinch.

At Sevenoaks on 8 February 2008 some 41 species in all (some only heard):

Crow, Rook, Jackdaw, Magpie, Heron, Teal Gadwall, Pochard, Lapwing, Tufted Duck, Shelduck, Mallard, Coot, Moorhen, Cormorant, Blackheaded Gull, Herring Gull, Common Gull, Great Crested Grebe, Little Grebe, Canada Geese, Greylag Geese, Egyptian Geese, Robin, Wren, Treecreeper, Blackbird, Missal Thrush, Song Thrush (heard only), Fieldfare, Goldcrest (heard only), Redwing, Dunnock, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Chaffinch, Siskin, Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, Snipe, Peregrin.

**Mavis Barber**