

# THESE ARE THE TIMES

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## *London Gang Show Fellowship* *Founder: Ralph Reader CBE* *Autumn 2019*

### **CHAIRMAN'S AUTUMN MESSAGE**

#### **Annual summer camp**

"It's been Treeific" – to badly misquote Ralph! Thanks to Pete Bessell, still at the top of the tree (or, perhaps, out of his tree) for organising another very enjoyable weekend. He even influenced the weather gods again.

Although I say weekend it was great to see so many more people arriving early and turning it into a week long reunion.

The committee continued the task of cataloguing the Gordon Blackburn archive, which will be a lengthy operation.

Thanks to Brenda and Brian for organising the raffle in aid of the Ralph Reader Memorial Fund. Thank you to everyone who gave prizes and bought tickets.

Book next year's date, the last FULL weekend in June.

#### **The Promise Path**

We are agreeing the detail of our paving stone, designed by Johnny B, with the team at Gilwell. Grateful thanks to everyone who has donated to the cost and special thanks to one member who agreed to make a substantial donation to give us the final sum needed.

As the Promise Pathway will trail through Gilwell Park it will create a lasting memory of Ralph and our donation will help build a brighter future for Scouting.

We hope to arrange a small celebration event when the stone is laid and will issue details once everything has been agreed.

#### **Ralph Reader Memorial Fund**

Thanks to Iain Waddell we are producing a banner to advertise the fund and invite donations. We plan to make it available to anyone to help raise awareness of the Ralph Reader Memorial Fund.

#### **Website**

Remember to send ideas for the website to Mike Hoffman.  
[mikeh25@waitrose.com](mailto:mikeh25@waitrose.com).

If you have not viewed it lately have a peep now!  
[www.lgsf.org.uk](http://www.lgsf.org.uk)

#### **AGM**

Our next event is the AGM on Sunday 27 October, The Anchor, Church Square, Shepperton - book the date now, details in this issue. Light refreshments at 12 meeting 1pm with business dealt with promptly so plenty of time for catching up with friends.

## Reunion

Another date to book Saturday 25 January 2020 The Ship Hotel, Weybridge.  
Details in the Winter edition of TATTS

David Clay

## FELLOWSHIP CAMP WEEKEND 2019



What an occasion this year! A brand new flag to fly and a repaired flag pole. We stayed for two weeks this year with many others having an extended time, the weather was very kind and again I had a swim in The Thames.



I would like to say a big thank you to all those friends who stayed over until the Monday after the official weekend and the day visitors who helped me celebrate my birthday. It made it a very special day.

So you see if you didn't make it you missed another wonderful time with old friends and family. It really is a relaxing way to have a chat with people that perhaps you don't get the chance to catch up with at the AGM or dinner. Come along for the day, I'm sure someone will take pity on you and make a cup of tea with a snack. More of course if you let Peter Bessell know once the reminder appears in TATTS. Coffee hour on Saturday brought the camp together as usual and the raffle was successful thanks to all the donations and generosity of members.

See you next year?

Brenda

### \*\*\*FUTURE EVENTS\*\*\*

**AGM** Sunday 27th October 2019

**ANNUAL DINNER AND DANCE** Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2020

**ANNUAL CAMP** Friday 26<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2020, Hurley, Berkshire



### **Edinburgh Gang Show 2019 - Edinburgh's 60<sup>th</sup> show**

19 to 23 November 2019 Kings Theatre Edinburgh Why not take a trip north of the border!?

<https://www.edinburghgangshow.co.uk>

### **Interesting recollections from a former member of the show which I'm sure will prompt some conversations:**

I was in my first Gang Show in 1942, just 12 years of age and it was so exciting. The songs we sang! Naturally there was 'Crest of a Wave' but one other that remains in my mind is 'Riding Down To Rio'. Obviously we had rehearsals but the show was on for four nights and we all went home each night with the make-up still on. I swear that some of The Gang did not wash it off until the next morning. Oh, and we had an Air Raid Alarm

sounded each night, but took no notice because, had a bomb had hit us we would all have been together with family and friends. How all of this came together was like this:-

At the age of seven my mate, Geoff Reynolds, and I discussed the relative merits of two organisations of which we knew, Life Boys and Cubs. They both met on the same night at the same time so we concluded that the only way to sort this out was to each go to one and compare afterwards. I drew the Life Boys and duly attended while Geoff went to Cubs. After two weeks we did our comparisons and on week three (you can't make a decision on just one week) I went with Geoff to Cubs. Week four and I went back to Life Boys – to get back the money I had paid in for a Uniform! Week five and I joined Cubs.

When I had asked my Dad if I could go to Life Boys his response puzzled me for he said, "You'll be learning to form fours soon enough Lad, but go on then." And so I became a member of the 123<sup>rd</sup> North London Cub Pack. What a Pack! There was Akela in charge and Baloo, Harty, Baghera and Shere Khan. It was the answer to a small boy's dream – Absolute Mayhem. But I rose to be Secunder of Red Six! Thus began a membership of Scouting that lasted for the next thirty five years. However, my Dad's response made no sense to me then but this was 1937. Two years later, when Geoff and I went to Cubs at the end of August 1939 we were greeted by the Group Scout Master with the news that, "There will be no more Scouts or Cubs until all this is over because all the Scouters have been 'called up' and I cannot do it on my own. Sorry Lads." Which meant that they were now all in the Armed Services, Lady Scouters as well! There was despair and dismay among the assembled Cubs but little time to talk about it for we were all then involved in evacuation, some with their schools and some privately. Geoff went with the school and his Mother to March in Cambridgeshire while my Sister and I were taken to Maidenhead in Berkshire to be with my Aunt, Uncle and two cousins. Cousin Brian was about the same age as my Sister (four year older than me) while Cousin Brenda was two months younger than me. We travelled there on the 2nd of September 1939, we had to listen to the broadcast by Neville Chamberlain (Prime Minister) at eleven o'clock the next morning, which finished with the memorable words, "... so, as of eleven o'clock this morning Great Britain is at war with Germany."

At the beginning of October Mother arrived in Maidenhead to collect her two children and took us back to Tottenham. Back home I discovered that Geoff was already back (he'd only been away a week) and our friendship was consolidated anew. We eventually joined the nearest Scouts, the 106<sup>th</sup> North London, which was growing in numbers because other Groups were closing and their Scouts were coming as well. The 106<sup>th</sup> was fortunate in having two Scouters who would never be 'called up' because Skip, John Leone, was beyond the age and Homer, Charlie Last, was a Glass Blower by trade. While this pair of very good Scouters kept the movement going, they had another vital attribute, they had been in the London Gang Show before the war. Which is why the 106<sup>th</sup> put on a Gang Show in 1942 in the church hall of St. Mary's Church, to which we were attached and fully supported by our incumbent Vicar. And I was fortunate enough to be there.

The 106<sup>th</sup> Scout Troop slowly morphed into the Tottenham District Gang Show and was held at the Swimming Baths at High Cross, usually in January. During the winter a sprung floor was installed over the swimming bath itself, for they also held a dance every Saturday. It was in this salubrious environment that we performed for a whole week, Monday to Saturday, and always 'Sold Out'. Parents and friends always being a guaranteed audience – on pain of death!

At eighteen, like every other boy in the Country, I was subject to spend two years in the Armed Forces and again struck lucky by being put into The Royal Air Force. At twenty they set me loose upon the world again and this happened in November 1949. I went to a Gang Show rehearsal and was immediately given a part. I had five weeks to learn the part which was a central character in a play by Ralph Reader called 'Great Oaks'. So Gang Show re-entered my life each year. Ralph had the beginning of the war had been summoned to Ad Astra House (HQ. R.A.F) and asked to create groups of people to travel to RAF Stations and entertain the airmen. Many former members of the Gang Show were by now serving airmen and Ralph was able to get them posted to his new unit. 'The RAF Gang Show' was thus created. Many famous names in British entertainment after the war had their talents spotted and honed from their membership of this illustrious association. After the war 'The RAF Gang Show' toured the British Isles commercially ending in 1950. The first Scout Gang Show after the war was performed in 1951 at 'The King's Theatre', Hammersmith. In 1952 it transferred to Golders

Green Hippodrome which was a bigger theatre, seating over 2000, about a third more than the King's. The Gang was offered The Palladium, much bigger but, because of its acoustics one must work with a microphone, was totally unsuitable for our show.

The London Show was always put on in the first two weeks of December, which are, or were, dead weeks in show business being the rehearsal time for Pantomime. In case you are unaware the very first Gang Show was in 1932 and was put on in Holborn for a Scout Troop there. Ralph Reader had come back to England, from America where he had made his name as a Choreographer/Director and worked with the big names of the American stage. He originated from Crewkerne, Somerset, where he had been a Scout. Back in England he sought out a local Scout Troop because of his enjoyment in his youth. Finding this Holborn Group and realising how poor they were, he suggested they 'put on a show'. He wrote the words, composed the music, directed the show and publicised it. Because he was in show business he was advised not to put his name to it, so everything was done by 'A Holborn Rover'. Having done all this they still didn't have a name. Ralph asked the boys and one bright spark (Could have been Dinky Rew- a cub then.) "Why don't we call it the Gang Show? Cos you always come in and say, 'Hi Gang!'" From such is fame.

Ralph was called in by The Chief, Baden Powell, and asked if he would make this show into a London Show because Scouting had been given the chance to purchase Gilwell Park in Chingford, which would make a superb Training Ground for London Scouts. Ralph agreed and so The London Gang Show began. They were so good that they were invited twice to become part of The Royal Command Performance. Now that really is an accolade, for you have been judged by Show Business itself, The Professionals. I was only in 1952 and 1953 shows for I got married and moved out into South-East Essex. Transport was not like it is now and would have involved me in about an hour and a half each way – if there was a train running. So I reluctantly had to bow out. I still retained my connections with Scouting and even formed a Scout Group, the 5th Rayleigh, which this Year is to celebrate its 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Now I live in the East Midlands, am surrounded by Gang Shows and am a member of a Scout Lodge in Freemasonry, I am pleased to say.

Peter Baker, PPSGD and a member of The Kindred Lodges Association

#### **Note from the Editor**

I hope everyone is still enjoying TATTS. Why not submit an article for an edition, it's always good to hear member's perspective on their time in the show or experiences in other shows and how Ralph influenced their lives I will include as many as possible. Thanks to those members who keep me up to date with happy and sad events around the globe, it is often the only way people keep in touch.

In the next edition there will be an account of Ralph's life as told by him which we found while sorting through the archives. I hope to discover and share some more gems as we sort through the vast amount of material, so keep up to date with your subs and keep in touch.

**NB.** Unfortunately Richard tells me that we have lost touch with the following people. If you can help us with this, or perhaps you are on the list, please get in touch. If we do not hear in the next six months then these names will be deleted from our membership and sadly we will lose touch completely!

Derek Allen, Steve Ashenden, Adrian Bailey, Michael Belle Garde, Toni-sue Burley, Malcolm Burnett, Simon Burgess, Janet Bushnell, Matthew Butterfield, Leonard Clark, Stephen & William Corp Reader, Richard Crompton, Kenneth Dougherty, Alan drew, Colin Dutton, David Ellingford, Jill Ellis, Carol foster, Richard Goold, Michael groom, Sylvia Graham-Taylor, Peter/Cath Groves, Anne Harvey, Dudley Hebden, Alan Hollingdale, June Holloway, Peter, Nick & Jacqueline Humby, David Hunt, Richard Jefferies, George Jordon, Terry Kemman-Lane, William Lockwood, Peter Lush, Malcolm Lycett.

If anyone hears of a member who is not receiving TATTS and information please give them Richard Micklefield's or my address and e-mail and we will ensure they are able to get back in contact.

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The tree planted in the grounds Hylands House in Chelmsford in memory of Terry Simister. A lovely tribute and just the kind of information members like to see. Thank you to Mike Ely

Brenda

**TATTS is sponsored by ATL**

## LONDON GANG SHOW FELLOWSHIP



### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the forty-fourth Annual General Meeting of the London Gang Show Fellowship will be held at the Anchor Hotel, Church Square, Shepperton, Middlesex on Sunday, 27th October 2019 commencing at 1.00pm.

The following business will be transacted: -

#### **Adoption of Annual Report and Accounts Election of President, Vice-Presidents, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer Election of six members to the Executive Committee**

Nominations for any of the above offices should reach the Secretary no later than 10th October 2019

Please join us at 12 noon for light refreshments. There will also be a cash bar available.

Guests are welcome at the meeting but shall not vote.

Members are also reminded that the annual subscription of £5 falls due on 1<sup>st</sup> October and should be sent to the Membership Secretary, Mr Richard Micklefield – address below.

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Committee nominations and apologies please to the Secretary : -

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**NB**

**It will greatly assist with catering if you will please confirm your attendance**