

## Peter Hutton

*'The friends we make and the experiences we share ...'*

Peter was a longstanding friend of mine; but not just mine his friendship spread to many, many people. He was always welcoming, kind and happy when we met and we had interesting talks about many things, from mountaineering to life in general, he could be serious when he wished.

I would have first met Pete probably in 1946 or 1947 when I moved home and at the same time moved schools to Custom House Lane Primary School in Mold Road. We were aged seven, eight or 9 years at the time; the headmaster was Mr E .L. Coppack, (1942 – 1970) most other details are lost in the passage of 65 years; forty or so children in a class did not mean high educational standards. However, there is no doubt that we became childhood friends, and with other children, we got into mischief as was quite normal. Over the years, we walked, ran, canoed and cycled together. I was envious of Peter being in the Wolf Cubs, but I am sure that was not an issue. I did grow envious when he had inherited a love for the scouts from his older brother Bob,<sup>1</sup> so he naturally joined the scouts; they went camping and doing all sorts of exciting things, something I longed for. Our educational paths divided briefly at aged eleven when we moved to different schools but came together again aged thirteen, by now I was in the scouts and I am very sure doing all the things that scouts did at that stage of development.

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<sup>1</sup> There is an excellent picture of Bob and Peter in Sue Copp's book, *100 years of Scouting in Connah's Quay*, Bridge Books, 2007.

About this time, I remember Peter had a job working at the Red Hall Farm, a hundred yards from his home. I wonder if this came about through support for his mother and family as his father died when he was aged three; his father was a ships captain and died when the ship sank in an accident. His mother had to support three children in the war years. He was involved in bottling the milk in the dairy and I used to go along to help; a farmyard was a wonderland for the both of us. One of the early jobs was fitting the cardboard tops onto the milk bottles. I can remember we were a little excited when aluminium foil tops were introduced, new bottles were needed, and an introduction to what was new technology at that time.

School, and non important education past by but always there was the outdoors. Wepre Woods, Princes Brickyard and sometimes the river and the docks (do not tell the adults!), adventure playgrounds were readily available. Here we found serious education! A clear memory sticks about us deciding to make long bows and arrows. We sorted out a yew tree in the woods, and chose a couple of branches. The eight-inch sheath knives, (I still have mine – I am sure Peters too is carefully preserved), that were the standard equipment for any real Boy Scout, were put into use shaving the branches into the tapering shape needed. Of course, we did not end up as Robin Hood's mark 11 and mark 111 but it certainly was a lot of fun and we had a certain amount of satisfaction with the finished product. The practical involvement in many things perhaps shows a light on modern youth today who are becoming engrossed in Facebook, ipads and I T technology.

The Scouts and scouting had a major influence on our growing up. The leaders at that period, '*Skip*' Harry Butler, Gilbert his son and Wilson (*Willy*) his son-in-law were inspirational in their dealings with youngsters.

Wyn Jones in an account of the period takes up the story, ‘At a summer camp in Mid Wales, Willy Prydderch showed us how to tickle trout. Not only showing, but also to our amazement actually catching two, while Peter Hutton, nearly drowning himself, caught one. They were quickly cleaned and into the pan. A never to be forgotten taste and I have enjoyed trout ever since’.<sup>2</sup>

Yes, Peter’s early interests and skills came from his practical ability to have a go at anything. As young teenagers, when in the scouts we set out to build canvas canoes, who was the project manager? I may have sent for the plans to build PBK 10 canoes, but it was Peter who had the skills that were needed and also the tools required to build them. They were largely built, in the old scout headquarters after we had been out socialising on a Saturday evening. We would then call in at the off-licence of the Hare and Hounds Hotel and each buy a pint bottle of Forest Brown Ale – which would carry us through until the early hours of the morning. The others involved were Alan Roberts (whose treadle fret saw was put to good use), Wyn Jones and Malcolm Turner.

In later years when it was found that the founder of 1<sup>st</sup> Connah’s Quay Scout Group, Lieutenant –Commander (known as Captain) E.LI. Marriot was buried in an unmarked grave in Connah’s Quay cemetery it was Peter who put together a simple solid oak memorial that was dedicated on March 4th 2006, sixty-four years after his death, and shortly before the centenary of the founding of the scout movement.

Aged 15 years he left school to work as an apprentice for a railway wagon construction company in Saltney. I do not think he worked there long, for his main joinery skills came from working for Charles Gill

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<sup>2</sup> Jones, Wyn, unpublished account, *The Story of a Remarkable Man*, 2011.

Joinery initially at Wepre Hall and then on the Queensferry Road, near Shotton, where he finished his apprenticeship. Being a few months older than myself he qualified for National Service, he then entered the Merchant Navy, following a very famous line of Hutton's of Connah's Quay into the Navy. His father was lost at sea in 1941. Our time together then drifted apart, although he still attended scout camps when home on leave.

His range of practical skills and interests was vast. Joinery: heavy, motor and light plant engineering: house building; if a job needed doing, Peter was able to get it done! Of course running through everything was his love for animals and the countryside. Peter's knowledge grew from the early days of exploring the countryside and our adventures together trying to snare rabbits on the Sand Hole, to a growing recognition of all things in the countryside being wonderful. His bird recognition was, as with most things, self-taught but extensive.

The Gorphwysfa Club came along when his interest in mountaineering developed; supporting many of the club meets throughout the country. He played a leading part in the club and with Penny organising successful Annual Dinners, one of the highlights of the club year. The Oak Seat in the Gorphwysfa Copse, in Snowdonia that he designed and built in remembrance of Lady Nancy Rowlinson, another Gorphwysfa friend, who died of cancer, is a lasting memory of his joinery skills.

Peter has been a huge help to the Friends of St Julitta's, Capel Curig in restoring the building, his skills are in evidence throughout the medieval church and outside. It was Peter who had the skills to put on the roof of the Bier House (in Capel Curig rain!), the first of our major jobs and it was Peter who put together the stand that the performers stood on at the

poetry evening last Tuesday - in between anything associated with timber in the church will have his signature on it! Of course, when it was suggested that the group held an annual medieval dinner in the church the Hutton's rushed forward to help; several lovely evenings have now taken place.

He has been a tower of strength so many times when help has been needed. Penny and he have been long standing supporters of the group, help essential for a volunteer charity, help again so visible today.

Andrew Blackford's words when he said he was a **gentle-man** and a gentleman summed Peter up totally. Peter's battle with cancer for about 18 months was so typical of his strength and resilience, not giving up hope until the very end, his loss will be felt by many people. Our thoughts and love for this kind and generous man rest with Penny, Kate and Phil, and all the other relatives who have suffered a huge loss; their loss is our loss too.

Harvey Lloyd

### **Further Reading.**

Anon, *Custom House Lane School, 1881-1981*, Undated, probably 1981.

Copp, Sue, *100 Years of Scouting in Connah's Quay*, Bridge Books, 2007.

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Maddock, A.R., *Deeside, the History of Flintshire, Part X1*, Jones and Griffiths, Printers, Church Street, 1941

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