

BRIEF HISTORY OF SCOUTING IN ST. JULIANS

When I embarked in researching the St. Julians Scout Group history, little did I know that in St. Julians it had its Sea Scouts. From record it transpires that the Sea Scouts in St. Julians started in August 1916 under the leadership of Scoutmaster Lieut. J.L. St.Leger Bunnet with Assistant Scoutmaster Mr. C.W. Simpson. The colours were blue and white scarf and the headquarters were in the basement of Lieut. J.L. St.Leger Bunnet house, which was in a street that led up to Balluta to St. Ignatius College Street. There were initially two patrols Seals and Otters and the Troop had its own ensign, half blue, half white with a silver anchor at the head of the pole. October 14th 1917 was a red-letter day for St. Julians Sea Scouts as the Archbishop blessed the new colours and the Chief scout made the formal presentation. The former Scoutmaster Mr. A.E. Eager who had become District Sea Scoutmaster donated the new colours. On the same day certificates for bravery from the Royal Humane Society was presented to George Leach of St. Julians Troop who had rescued a woman from drowning in July 1916. On May 24th 1918 again St. Julians sea scout were in the lime light as a certificate of the Royal Humane Society was presented to Scout Harold Freen aged 14 who as the risk of his life saved a woman twice his age and size from drowning in St. Julians Bay the previous summer. No more records are found as far as Sea Scouts are concerned.

The formation of the St. Julians Scout Group as we know it today started when

some boys were throwing stones at each other and one of these went through the window of the pantry of No. 3 Carmel Street. This chipped a plate of a green decorated dinner set belonging to Commander H. Neville Lake, captain of the submarine depot ship H.M.S. Cyclops. Comdr. Lake got in touch with Col. Worrall to suggest the formation of a Scout Troop in St. Julians to keep the unruly boys off the streets. Comdr. Lake had on his staff an experienced Scouter from Hamrun Charles Delia and together they decided to call the stray boys together. The Troop made its first public appearance at a parade on St. Julians Square on September 8th 1932 with Charles Delia as Group Scoutmaster assisted by Scoutmaster C. Mifsud and Cubmaster J. Borg. The first Group Committee was formed with Marchese Scicluna as patron, Mr. John Francia, Notary Dr. R. Frenco Randon, Edward Darmania Grech and the parish priest Fr. A. Boñanno. The Group used to make use of the tennis courts of Cdr. Lake's residence for parades and training. So far so good, but when Cdr. Lake left Malta in 1935 the Group found itself without a Headquarters and the Scouts were then provided by Mr. Francia with a garage adjoining his residence. Later Dr. Frenco Randon offered the basement of his villa in B'Kara Hill. But the numbers dwindled until in 1936 Mr. J.E. Storace was appointed Group Scoutmaster of the 15 remaining Cubs, Scouts and Rovers. He obtained two rooms in the government elementary

school in St. Elia Street for meetings and the Group flourished to the extent that at one stage it won the Badge Work Trophy and the Record Keeping Competition of the very Oak District.

The Group in 1959 had to close down after facing various difficulties in finding a suitable place to operate from. It was after 11 years when the Group was revived with Tarcisio Giordano as Group Scout Leader. At this point the meeting place for the newly revived group was the Parish Hall. When in 1983 Paul Dalli took over and was appointed Group Scout Leader, Fr. Tony Aguis the Parish Priest offered the church basement as new premises. These premises were not at all very suitable for the whole Group to meet in such a small place. In 1993 the new GSL Charles Grixti approached Fr. Tony Aguis to explain the awkward situation the group was in. Permission was sought by Fr. Tony Aguis from the Archbishop's Curia for refurbishing of the church basement. These works started in 1994 and on August 18th the new premises were blessed by Parish Priest Fr. Tony Aguis.

Today under the leadership of the present GSL Stefan Farrugia the Group will next year be celebrating 70 years of the Group formation. For such an event a sub committee was formed with the specific task to organise special events to mark the occasion.

(Acknowledgment Scouting in Malta - J.A. Mizzi)

