

THE EARLY DAYS OF HONG KONG SCOUTING—PART 9

ARCHIVES OF THE PAST – Part 5A

On 31st May 1926, the Commissioner for the Colony of Hong Kong Rev. G.T. Waldegrave reported to London Headquarters about scouting and more interestingly personnel matters within the Hong Kong Branch in the following long letters which was received on 13 July 1926 and filed on 14 July 1926 by London HQ:

RECEIVED

13 JUL 1926

14.7.26

The Seamen's Institute,

21, Praya East,

Hongkong.

31st May 1926.

Dear Butterworth,

I fear that a letter from Hongkong is by way of being long overdue, but I think this one will explain the reason for any remissness in this respect. The youngsters were very pleased to see the ref. to their fireman's work in the Scouter.

Headquarters is getting more and more shipshape, and we have a shop of sorts there now, but it is not being used as a club as much as we should like, though even in that it is improving. The Rovers are going slow, but rather more by intent than otherwise, as I do not think that the full idea has been grasped yet, and I find it rather hard to keep lads who though no longer boys are hardly young men yet from leaving the scouts prematurely to join the Rovers. My own little lot of Sea Rovers meet once a week at H.Q. and other Rovers are welcome to come along for the evening. I take these meetings myself from the instruction point of view, and so hope eventually to get the right foundation. We had quite a nice little preliminary Rover Meeting, but our speaker who was dealing with the British Constitution mistook a purposely leading question from a very keen Scouter-Rover-Leader as a semi-Bolshevik remark and proceeded to rend him to bits! I leave you to imagine how freely the lads talked after that.

Thanks very much for putting the accounts straight. It was just what we wanted. By the way, Charles Blason wants me to point out that he is not a parson. They always address him as the "Rev".

Ravenhill's letter has been handed to two of my Rovers who will deal with it jointly. I find it rather hard to stir up the youngsters to correspondence as they are afraid that their English will be laughed at, though I tell them they need have no fear of that.

As regards the general trend of Scout matters here, on the whole it is very satisfactory, though we suffer of course from lack of scouters, and owing to the boycott still being on, finance is none too good, and our Training Camp site cannot yet be developed. This is annoying as we are all keen to get a Camp going, and transport here is none too easy for us to be able to pitch and pack up camp weekly over a series of week end Training Camps which is at present the only possible way we

can give the Training. Blason and I are now trying to see if we cannot fix up something in his direction, so that the gear could be stored with him, though he has none too much room.

No troops are actually giving undue trouble, I am thankful to say. Becher, late S.M. of the 10th Troop at last resigned. He was the great cause of trouble by underhand ways, and his boys hated him. The Kowloon troop under a really good S.M., Jackson, is doing finely, and the clergy there have I think now realised that there was more to be said for our side than they had imagined, now they see what a good Scoutmaster is and can do, and also I think Farrell did a lot of things without telling them, and then when he got into hot water sheltered behind them telling them distorted accounts of things. They then would refuse a private talk with me, out of a mistaken idea of loyalty to their own staff, and only the big row which brought matters to a head opened their eyes to the way F. had let them and us down.

Clementi is a splendid Chief Scout, and is pushing us in schools and university for all he is worth. The principal Government School for Chinese etc, has long refused to have anything to do with us, but now under pressure from above is willing to have a troop, provided we get the right man. That is the question, as failure there might bring us into disrepute elsewhere, though the great opinion held of the movement in home educational circles is being boosted here, and the Professor of Education at the University speaks up for us whenever he can. The Chinese Student has not the same idea of service or vocation as our men have, and looks on education mainly as a means to making good financially etc. in the world, so that we have the idea of social service to instil for a start. As I write I have a private secretary whom I employ for special things at work sorting out and classifying statistical returns from the various troops, with a view to passing them on to our local Education Dept. It is in this sort of thing that I find White lacking. He is all right for summonses and minutes of meetings etc, but anything requiring real initiative stumps him at once. However I have a good lady, mother of two of my sea scouts, willing to lend a hand, and I hope to get a lot of help from her.

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To be continued