## **SCOUTS-L**

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## SCOUTING HISTORY: WORLD WAR II

Date: Mon, 24 Feb 1997 22:17:54 +0800

Reply-To: "Grant O'Neil" <poneilgdo@ALPHA2.CURTIN.EDU.AU>

Sender: Scouts-L Youth Group List <Scouts-L@tcu.edu>

From: "Grant O'Neil" <poneilgdo@ALPHA2.CURTIN.EDU.AU>

**Subject:** Re: Scouting trivia

X-To: SCOUTS-L - Youth Groups Discussion List <SCOUTS-L@TCU.EDU> To: Multiple recipients of list SCOUTS-L <SCOUTS-L@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU>

Status: RO X-Status:

>I also recall a story in UK Scouting Magazine some years ago about a group >of Scouts in a Concentration Camp. Apparently they met secretly, as one >would, after work details. The exact details of the story are lost to me. >however it is clear that they suffered.

I don't know about German concentration camps, but I do know that scouters in Changi (on the infamous Burma Railway; for those not familiar with that unfortunate piece of British Commonwealth military history, you will probably recall the movie Bridge on the River Kwai. That was about the Burma Railway, but does not come close to showing the appalling conditions in which men worked, lived and died there...) met as members of 1st Gilwell Park Scout Group and I have even seen a handmade Gilwell scarf with painted MacLaren tartan that was improvised there. Most of them were British Commonwealth Troops captured by the Japanese at the surrender of Singapore in 1942, and very large numbers died through malnutrition, overwork and disease. Yet in spite of all this they kept their spirits up by organising concert parties, craft activities and scouting and other things to preserve a semblance of "normality" in a life that otherwise would have been unbearably lacking in hopes for the future. A story close to my heart; my father's uncle died there...

## YiS

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Date: Sun, 9 Mar 1997 18:15:55 +0800 Reply-To: "Grant O'Neil" <poneilgdo@ALPHA2.CURTIN.EDU.AU> Sender: Scouts-L Youth Group List <Scouts-L@tcu.edu>

From: "Grant O'Neil" <poneilgdo@ALPHA2.CURTIN.EDU.AU>

**Subject:** Scouting in Changi

X-To: SCOUTS-L - Youth Groups Discussion List <SCOUTS-L@TCU.EDU> To: Multiple recipients of list SCOUTS-L <SCOUTS-L@TCUBVM.IS.TCU.EDU>

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During some recent discussion on the list about scouts in concentration camps etc. I commented that I had heard of scouts in Changi (the notorious Japanese POW camp on the Burma Railway). A number of people wrote me commenting they would like to find out more about this. Yesterday I visited our local scout museum and spoke to the BP Guild member who was there; this is what I found out so far:

I saw a Gilwell scarf in the museum with painted tartan. I previously commented on having seen this and thought it had some connection with the Changi scouts. Actually, the only connection is that it dates from the WW2 period. Due to rationing it was not easy to get badges etc for scouting (most people only think of rationing in terms of food, but there were also clothing rations) so many badges during the war were a painted version of the embroidered peacetime badge. I have also seen a painted King's Scout badge from the same period. BTW, there is also a display in the museum of badges earned by a scout in Engalnd during the pre-WW1 period; I think the dates were 1911 to 1915, plus a wartime badge for coastwatching duties. One of these badges was a King's Scout badge; I was interested to see that apart from the obvious age the basic design was virtually unchanged from our current Queen's Scout badge (for a picture of this badge see my Venturer page at http://student.curtin.edu.au/~poneilgdo/venturer.html)

As far as the scouts in Changi, apparently there was an article about this in the Australian Scout magazine about two years ago (I am guessing it would have been in connection with the "Australia Remembers" commemorations of the end of WW2) which I will try to track down and summarise for the list, but the basic story is that scout inmates of Changi organised themselves into a Rover Crew, having to meet secretly as the Japanese guards would have executed them had they been caught.

Hopefully I will soon be able to track more details and share them with the list.
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