

**KENNETH ROBERTSON DRUMMOND JOHNSON (KJ)**  
**JULY 1930 - 13 JANUARY 2018**  
**SCOUTING CAREER**

To his later regret KJ was never a Cub or a Scout as a boy.

He retold the story, in a note penned in November just shortly before he was finally admitted to Lister Hospital, of how he became involved as an adult when working as an Assistant at Letchworth Public Library. In 1956 a regular reader at the library, John DeLouvois, asked if he would be prepared to be tracked secretly around the town by a group of members of something called Rover Scouts. He agreed to this strange request and turned up suitably dressed and walked around acting furtively but never saw anybody following him. Later he reported for a debriefing at a house in Whitethorn Lane where he discovered that his stalkers had turned up late at the starting point and missed him altogether and that nobody had followed him. He was intrigued by this strange society and when invited to a regular meeting of the Rover Crew went along to find out more. He finished this note by saying *"That is how my education began"*

Being too old to become a Rover Scout he chose the option of becoming a Service Auxiliary and an honorary member of Letchworth District Rover Crew, which entitled him to wear Scout uniform and wear a yellow plume in his beret. (Dafodil).

KJ threw himself with great enthusiasm into Scouting and was soon helping out with various Cub Packs and Scout Troops including the newly formed 5<sup>th</sup> Letchworth Westbury Cub Pack.

In July 1957 he accompanied Jim Bruce on a walk (and bus ride because of the heat) to the Jubilee Jamboree, Indaba and Rover Moot (JIM) at Sutton Park in Warwickshire. Jim Bruce was scheduled to lead a team of Rover Scouts from the Moot on hikes in the Welsh mountains. KJ recalled sleeping on a table in a store tent of the Hertfordshire contingent sub camp at the Indaba by kind permission of the contingent leader Fred Cogar then ADC(Scouts) in Letchworth and Baldock District.

Later that year he was asked by the "Citizen" Newspaper if, in addition to his regular weekly KJ column that he had been contributing for some years, he would take on a monthly column detailing local Scout News entitled "Scout Notes". This he did as a monthly event until 1961 when it became a weekly feature and continued without a break until December 1976 (nineteen years) when to the great disappointment of KJ and its readers it was axed by the Newspaper. These notes, quite often with photographs, gave a great thrill to hundreds of boys when their names were published along with details of their latest badge awards, competition results or other Scouting achievements.

In 1958 following an idea by Melville Balsillie then Assistant County Commissioner for Senior Scouts KJ was instrumental in researching a route and preparing maps for what became "The Tour of Hertfordshire" a Cycle event for Senior Scouts covering 104 miles around the County. This project run by the Letchworth District Rover Crew (LDRC) ran from 1958 to 1963 and was quite daring for its time. It must be remembered that at that time few people had home telephones and communications with competitors and check points along the 104 mile route were dependent on availability and access to an adjacent telephone kiosk.

Also in 1958 and 1959 KJ was a member of an adult leader hiking team in the Hertfordshire County Scout Marathon competition which achieved first place on both occasions with a full score.

In October 1959 as an honorary member of LDRC he was instrumental, partly because he could type and also had access to a Gestetner duplicating machine, in producing the first issue of a monthly District newsletter called "Co-Ordinator" with the stated aim of improving communications throughout the Scout District. This publication is, as many of you will know, still being published today and can probably lay claim to be the longest continuously running newsletter in the Country. KJ typed up the stencils and printed the copies which were then folded, addressed and delivered on the same day by a team of Rover Scouts. KJ continued to edit this newsletter for 19 years finally handing over the reins in 1978.

In 1962 KJ was a prime mover together with Jim Bruce in organising and researching routes for the first "Jim's Mystery Tour" for Senior Scouts. This entailed teams of two blindfolded boys being transported by closed car or van at night and dropping them off in unfamiliar country with no maps. Their task was to follow cryptic crossword type clues from instructions picked up the following morning from a village post office and then to home in on a final unknown meeting point two days later. The first Tour, later known as JMT1, ended up in the precincts of Coventry Cathedral. Following on from the success of this exercise a further nine such events were organised by KJ and Jim the last being JMT10 in 1984.

Following on from the success of "Co-Ordinator" in 1963 the then County Commissioner Melville Balsillie persuaded KJ to take on the task of reviving "Hertfordshire Scout News" which had a short life 30 years before. The first issue was published in October 1963 as a small litho printed leaflet by Hive Printers in Letchworth. Unlike most other duplicated material of that time this method allowed photographs and drawings to be included and occasionally some colour. KJ prepared a paste up version of the copy supplied to him from around the County with stern instructions as to size of any typed material to ensure that when this was reduced to final size it fitted the required format. With strict deadlines for publication copy to be sent in to him he had a monthly tussle with senior county members of the movement to ensure that the publishing date was kept to. After 100 issues HSN became HSG with the addition of Hertfordshire Guide news and a partner editor from the Guides. KJ finally retired from editing HSG in 2000 after 37 years, an incredible record of dedication.

In the 1961 Summer Camping season KJ accompanied by Rover Scout Peter Wey set off to visit as many of the local troops camps as he could with his trusty cine camera. These visits included Second Letchworth at Walesby Forest in Nottinghamshire, First and Third Letchworth at Auchengillan near Glasgow, and a detour to the Trossachs to meet up with two Rover Scouts working on one of the first teams clearing what was the then derelict Lochearnhead Railway Station. In April 1963 he returned to the now Scout Station to complete a Hike Leaders Training course run By Melville Balsillie. In September 1964 he organised one of the first District expeditions to Lochearnhead for Fifth Letchworth and First Baldock Senior Scouts.

L&BD Gang Shows featured in KJ's activities from as early as 1957 both as a cast member, script writer and later as a scenery builder and painter and also publicity

manager.

In the 1960s KJ organised 2 trips to France for Fifth Letchworth Senior Scouts and in 1971 was on the leader team on Melville Balsillie's first County expedition to the Lofoten Islands after which he produced a booklet entitled "Lofoten Lark" as a memento for those who took part.

Later he was appointed ADC(Scout Fellowship).

In 2000 he was awarded the Silver Wolf but typically he did not accept that he deserved such an honour and would not wear it. KJ had a number of hang ups one being his dislike of being photographed and any pictures of him are few and probably taken without him knowing.



Above is a photo of him as the Station Master at Lochearnhead in September 1964.

There were many other achievements in his long life not necessarily Scouting related some of which are listed below.

Author of "The Book of Letchworth", Author of a book "Gardener's City" , Author

of a book "Slow Local Verses" detailing some of his local walks and written in verse.

In the 1950s he produced some tape recorded broadcasts for the BBC early morning programmes.

Member of the local Civil Defence in the 1950s.

Founder of the Countryside Bashers Club.