

'A FEW OF MY FAVOURITE THINGS', Number Twenty: Off to the Jamboree

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The Scout Motto "Be Prepared"¹ has been drummed into countless boys and, latterly, girls for almost 120 years. It has been a key life lesson for generations of scouts.

Many scouts of my generation qualified for their Collector Badge² by hoarding stamps. Some went on with it, and became serious philatelists.

Among them was Australia's most notable designer of personalised first day covers, Jack Peake, from Adelaide; the irrepressible Ernie Stermole, who turned his collection into a book³; and Melbourne businessman William Wells who formed excellent collections of Malayan stamps and postal history, while on his way to becoming Scouting's Chief Commissioner of Australia (1992-99).

My own scouting journey was quite unusual. I joined when I was 18. No, I wasn't the world's oldest cub! I stepped straight into Rovers, the upper age-level. And I loved it!

For seven years, I immersed myself in camping, Rover Moots⁴, a never-ending roster of associated social events, and so much waterskiing, I was just about waterlogged. Our Rover Crew, 6th Coburg (Stan Evans) Rovers, were a really dynamic bunch. We raised serious money doing a variety of projects, bought and fully restored an old bus, ran a huge national event called Surf Moot for a couple of years, and became lifelong friends.

Looking back fondly, I wonder why I didn't get into collecting Scouting covers and memorabilia. In more recent times, I have happily acquired a few Scouting-related items for my Australian Destination Mail 1901-1966. One of these is the subject of this column.

As most readers will know, the Boy Scout Movement was founded by an English soldier named Colonel Robert Baden-Powell, the hero of the Siege of Mafeking during the Second Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902.⁵

B-P, as he was widely known, ran his first outdoor camping adventure in 1907 with a mere 20 boys. Within a year, Scouting had been established in several other countries, including Australia and New Zealand.

The first major event, or "jamboree"⁶, attended by scouts from many countries, was conducted at Olympia (London) in 1920.

In Australia, major celebrations were being planned for the centenaries of the village of Bearbrass that quickly became Melbourne, and of the Port Phillip District of New South Wales (that became the colony of Victoria on 11th November 1850), both established in 1834-1835.

A proposal to include a World Jamboree as part of the festivities was embraced enthusiastically.

Conducted outside Frankston, South-South-East (SSE) of Melbourne⁷, between 27th December 1934 and 13th January 1935, the Jamboree was a huge success. It was the first held outside Great Britain and attracted 12,000 attendees from 20 countries and territories⁸. The event was so prestigious that it was opened by the then Governor-General Sir Isaac Isaacs and

B-P himself, on his third and final visit Down Under.

One of the trans-Tasman scouts at the Jamboree was Edward (Ted) Lewis who honoured his promise to write to his friend, Cuthbert (Cuth) Andrews⁹.



Using two pieces of notepaper each headed 'Australian Jamboree/FRANKSTON' and featuring the event badge at upper-left¹⁰, Ted wrote in glowing terms of his experiences: "...We have been thrilled to the back teeth...I am writing this note in the tent which is threatening to blow away at any moment...I have so much to tell you that I will have to make a special Scout Jamboree night... Meeting these foreign chaps is great fun...the Jamboree closes tomorrow a four day hike follows then five days in Melbourne..."

Fortunately, young Ted used a matching Jamboree envelope to send his missive. The Empire letter rate was paid with a 2d Victoria Centenary commemorative stamp, which was tied by a beautiful impression of the 'AUST.JAMBOREE FRANKSTON/VIC' datestamp.



It was becoming a regular philatelic feature for the Postmaster-General's (PMG's) Department to operate a temporary post office during important events, a practice that flourished during the Centenary Celebrations. The Jamboree post office was open from 24th December 1934 (three days before the camp began operating) until 12th January 1935 (one day before the official closing of the Jamboree)¹¹.



To cater for the anticipated high volume of mail, the office was supplied with three similar but distinguishable steel datestamps. All bore the same inscription. The implement used on mail posted in the temporary letterbox had slightly smaller lettering and the time of processing was incorporated in the dateline.

At first glance, the others are identical. However, the arcs - or separators - either side of 'VIC.' Are of different lengths: 1,1½mm on one and 2,1mm on the other. (For postmark tragiics, a difference of half a millimetre is significant.) Also, on the first, that used on this cover, the 'J' is level with the dateline; on the other it is above the dateline.

The envelope also bears a superb strike of the 'TAKAPUNA/N.Z.' cds showing that transit time across the Tasman Sea was ten days. This datestamp was applied because the addressee had

moved, so the cover required forwarding to "Hamilton/Waikato".

In his letter, Ted asked Cuth "What sort of holiday are you having?" It seems likely that callow Cuthbert had been holidaying in the Auckland area and had returned home to Hamilton in the Waikato Valley, 120km SSE of the city.

In an earlier article, I stated that one of my collecting mantras is "Common items in uncommon circumstances". What could be more mundane than a base-rate envelope bearing a stamp of which 116,000,000 were issued?

Now for the "value-adding", to use very modern terminology. Add the Jamboree 'badge' and cancellation and the cover is instantly transformed into an object of philatelic desire. The re-addressing and New Zealand datestamp on the face are welcome postal history elements. The enclosure, on notepaper that matches the envelope, provides context and colour.



The cherry on top is my personal reminiscences evoked by these now 90-year-old artefacts.

No wonder, then, that this cover and its accompanying letter are among My Favourite Things.

- 1 Derived from 'Baden-Powell', who wrote "Be Prepared means you are always in a state of readiness in mind and body to do your DUTY." Extract from 'Scouting for Boys' (1908), of which more than 150 million copies have been sold, in numerous languages, across some 300 editions.
- 2 The Collector Badge is one of (currently) 34 Achievement Badges.
- 3 'Australian Scout and Guide Philately: A Catalogue of Stamps, Cachets and Pictormarks on Covers' by Erhard (Ernie) Stermole (2007), self-published to celebrate One Hundred Years of Scouting.
- 4 'Moot' is derived from the Old English 'gemot,' referring to arguments in court, and law students still take part in moot (or mock) courts. In Scouting, rover moots are similar to jamborees but are events restricted to the senior cohort only.
- 5 Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell (pronounced Bay-den Powh-l; and occasionally as Barden Pool). Promoted Major-General (1900); Lieutenant-General (1907); knighted (1909); created hereditary peer as Baron Baden-Powell of Gilwell (1929); awarded the Order of Merit (1937).
- 6 The word was introduced by Baden-Powell in 1920. Before the Boer War, B-P served in India, where 'jamboree' is a Hindi word for a gathering or festival.
- 7 The actual site was an open area of 280 acres (113 hectares) about 3km south of Frankston township, between Kars Street and Overport Road, today a treed residential area, with a small recreational space called Jamboree Park. Between 1.7.1965 and 24.3.1979, a local milkbar was home to the Baden Powell post office: see 'The Post Offices & Hand-Held Datestamps of Victoria' by Watson Webster & Wood, Volume One at page B-4.
- 8 Australia, Belgium, Canada, Ceylon, England, Fiji, France, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Japan, Malaya, Nauru, Netherlands, Netherlands Indies, New Zealand, Scotland, South Africa, United States and Wales.
- 9 From his writing, it is safe to say that Lewis was an older scout, perhaps a Rover, or possibly a leader.
- 10 The badge is inscribed at the base 'VICTORIA 1935', which suggests that the Jamboree was initially planned for the New Year.
- 11 As noted, the official final day was 13th January. While the senior boys were on their long hike, it is likely that the younger scouts remained on-site.

Awards to Society Members

Congratulations to Society members who exhibited at EFIRO 2024.

John DIBIASE served as Australian Commissioner.

**EFIRO 2024 Specialised World Stamp Exhibition,
National Library of Romania, Bucharest, Romania, 16-19 April 2024.**

Ian CULSHAW: The Fiscal Stamps of Western Australia 1879-1974, Revenue, 8 frames, GOLD (90)

Stephanie BROMSER: Tastes of France, Thematic, 5 frames, LARGE VERMEIL (87)

Ian MCMAHON: "Postal Stationery Collector", Literature, LARGE VERMEIL (87)

Simon RICHARDS: Classic Victoria – Half Lengths and Queen on Throne, Traditional, 5 frames, LARGE VERMEIL (86)

Glen STAFFORD: Bolivian Revenues to 1906, Revenue, 5 frames, LARGE VERMEIL (86)

Darryl FULLER: The Consular and Service Fee Revenues of Israel, Revenue, 5 frames, LARGE VERMEIL (85)

Vijay SUKLA: India – Handstruck Scinde Dawk & Lithograph Issues, Traditional, 5 frames, VERMEIL (83)

Bernard BESTON: Quayle & Sons Engravers & Printers, Albany, New York, USA Ecuador 1936-1937 Stamp Issues, Traditional, One-Frame (82)

John DIBIASE: Postal Notes and Orders of Australia, Revenue, 5 frames, VERMEIL (82)

John MOORE: Airmail from Zanzibar 1931-1966, Aerophilately, 5 frames, VERMEIL (81)

Mark DISERIO: Australia, Letter Cards – Stamped to Order, Postal Stationery, One-Frame (76)

Philip ADAMS: Australia's Kangaroo & Map issue: the ½d Green, Traditional, One-Frame (82)