

## **Caravan Club Centre Profile – 8**

### **Beds. & North Bucks, Hertfordshire, North London, South London, East Surrey & West Surrey**

THE STORY of the London Centre has been told up to about 1950, by which time: it was divided into the London and Home Counties (North) and South London. The hiving off later of the outlying areas of Essex, Kent and Sussex has also been reviewed. Before numbers grew too great it was possible to hold occasional joint events, such as Henley Regatta rallies and a series of dinners at the Palmerston Restaurant, in London.

#### **London & Home Counties (North)**

London and HC (North) covered its area intensively, some interesting rally venues being the College of Aeronautics at Cranfield, Trent Park, the home of Mrs David Gubbay at Cockfosters, Woodhall Park, Hertford, the seat of Mr T. Abel-Smith (visited many times), Luton Corporation's Stockwood Park, Pinewood film studios, Woolmer Park near Hertford for the polo, and the sports ground at Great Offley, when the parish council were friendly hosts.

A service to members of many Centres was the regular Silverstone rally for the May meeting.

The Centre made a practice of visiting outlying towns for dinners - Harrow. Berkhamsted, Greenford, etc. Fireworks rallies, mostly at Whippsnade, and special ladies and children's rallies usually figured in the programme.

From the ranks of the Centre the Club gained W.P.Stole, Club Chairman and still a valued younger elder statesman, and J.L.P. Brodie, an Executive Committee member who might well have become Chairman some time but for his untimely death. Other prominent men have been W.H.Rickinson, A.H.T.Witten and F.K.Dingle, all Chairmen, R.M Buckle, Hon. Secretary for a long spell, E.A.Markwell and J.Darvell.

In late 1958 growing numbers dictated division into a North London Centre (North London, Middlesex, and South Bucks), Beds and North Bucks, and Hertfordshire. The three Centres, for old times sake, hold a joint rally once a year. They also compete for the Hooper Handling Trophy.

North London has broken interesting new ground with rallies at Alexandra Palace, deep in built-up London, and has gone as far afield as Blenheim Palace and Beaulieu. Beaconsfield, Burnham Beeches, Ascot have been popular venues. Throughout this period N.B.Frost has been Secretary and C.P.Barradell Treasurer. S.J.Freeborn became well known as Chairman.

#### **Beds & North Bucks**

Beds and North Bucks started its career under the late A.Woolnough, with R.A.Coe as Secretary. L.C.Benson, a North London veteran, was a tower of strength. The Centre has owed much also to Mrs Stella Hobbs, Secretary for over two years, and C.H.Walker. The present Chairman is N.C.Brown.

From a membership of 203 the Centre has now passed 400. It has been very busy at rallying, with frequently four events in the month, and reached its 100th rally last October, at Apsley Guise. Some favourite venues have been Ravenstone Mill near Olney, Cardington RAF, Whippsnade, Woodside near Luton, Pavenham and Bledlow. The Club site at East Runton has been visited. Ladies, teenagers and children have all had their days. The Centre has maintained the traditional Silverstone rally.

### **Hertfordshire**

Hertfordshire held its first rally at Woodhall Park in March 1959, when the Mayor of Hertford hoisted the Centre flag. It reached its 100th rally this year. The county has been well explored, including such places as Ashridge, Ivinghoe Aston and other beauty spots of the Chilterns, Gorhambury (the Earl of Verulam), Pendley Manor, the education centre near Tring, and Dobbs Weir in the Lea Valley, but the Centre has gone as far as Hurstmonceux and Selsey. It has had teams in the Road Rally several years.

R.M.Buckle. Chairman for the first three years, brought long experience of organising, and other builders of the Centre have been D.E.Restall and the late C.S.Rushbrooke, who have held the Secretaryship turn-about, F.L.Duce, and the present Chairman, F.A.Bareham.

### **South London**

The South London Centre has 340 members in the smallest of Centre areas - half the administrative county of London, and even in the years when it included Surrey it was very compact. It has also had a remarkable number of old hands with experience of Club organisation. This, and its wealth of veteran caravanners have given it a tight-knit quality. If all caravans disappeared tomorrow, South London would probably continue as a club.

It is very sociable, and has more dinners at rallies than any other Centre. Its annual dinners, mostly at the Piccadilly Hotel, are among the most important in the Club. Christmas and fireworks rallies have been consistently held, many of the former being at a site provided by the Brighton Corporation, which has also been hosts to the Centre for many Easters. Whole-week summer holiday rallies, mostly on the sea front at Southsea or at Selsey have had full houses.

The Centre is notable for holding rallies in December and January, and has done interesting things like putting on a Continental touring advice rally at the Crystal Palace site.

Rallies have been held in private and municipal parks, such as Penshurst and Stoke Park, Guildford, in hotel and guest house grounds, at Chessington Zoo, and on the fields of friendly sports clubs.

Among Centre personalities, the present Hon. Secretary, C.W.Churcher, has been Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary for getting near twenty years, and in some Club or Centre office continuously since 1939, including long service on the Executive Committee, an unsurpassed record. Bert Wilson, Hon. Treasurer and on the Club Executive, is the Club's chief foreign touring ambassador.

Some other names eminent in the 1950-60 period are N.E.Robinson, organiser of the Southsea rallies, D.J.Wakely, J.A.Hardee, G.V.Mardon, J.C.Perren, H.G.Friswell and the late F.V.Ostler. More recently Lt. Col. T.S.Boam, a pre-war veteran but not an office-holder while in the Army, is a leading Club personality as a Vice-Chairman, as a member of the Finance and Management Committee and in other roles, and T.Rose and J.C.Herridge are other leaders.

### **East Surrey**

When Surrey separated in 1959 and made two new Centres. East Surrey inherited such invaluable old hands as G.H.Scott, L.F.Hibbcrd, and A.K.Anderson, who as Treasurer, Chairman and Secretary built up the Centre. Mr Scott is well-known at the national level as marshal of the judges at successive National Rallies, and is also on the Finance and Management Committee. East Surrey has the same close-knit quality, nowhere reflected better than in the enthusiasm with-which it attacks

the Road Rally. The East Surrey teams in their white overalls - this year there were four teams in spite of the distance to Scarborough - have been very prominent at the rallies. Practising for the tests has been organised. They have twice won the Chidson Trophy.

In a reputedly hostile county they have good relations with the authorities, exemplified by the AGM and Christmas rallies at Dorking and by the use of Oaks Park, Carshalton.

### **West Surrey**

West Surrey had been the relatively unexploited part of the old South London Centre, and started with very few old hands, among them R.A.Bull, a pre-war veteran and Chairman since 1961, and F.W.Read-Wale, first Chairman. It has thus developed a quite different personality, which might be summed up as relaxed, provided this is not taken to mean any lack of Centre loyalty or unity.

Its rallies, which began with one at Stoke Park, Guildford, in July 1959, are informal, and its well-attended annual dinners are easy without loss of dignity. Two Christmas rallies have been held. Other rallies have covered ground as far as the New Forest, and Esso House, Abingdon. Good relations with local authorities have borne fruit in the loan of municipal parks, particularly at Guildford, Woking and Farnham.

Miss Nancy Oldfield, Centre Secretary, is the only woman caravanner in her own right who holds office anywhere in the Club.

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