Memories and History of
The First Willow Point
Wolf Cub and Boy Scout Group

The history of the Group
By Bert Learmonth
This is a history of the 1st Willow Point Cub and Scout Group. I was very fortunate to be given the Minute book from the first meeting 1934 to 1958. This gave me a source of information and also refreshed my memory of many of the activities that took place.

Willow Point September 27, 1934

A meeting of people interested in the formation of a local group of Scouts and Cubs was held in the schoolroom on Friday the 27 of September, at 8 pm. Mr. H Greenwood was asked to act as chairman and Mr. Worsfold as secretary. The chairman called upon Mr. Spearing to address the meeting. Mr. Spearing gave a general outline of the aims, objectives and organization of the Scout movement, and agreed to act as Scout and Cub Master. Moved by Mr. Fitzsimmons, seconded by Mr. Worsfold that a local Scout organization be formed. Carried unanimously. A group Committee was then nominated and passed by the meeting as follows Mr H. Greenwood, chairman; Mr. J. Worsfold, secretary; Mr. J. Fitzsimmons, director; Mr. N. Denny, director.

In order to purchase the necessary equipment, the meeting agreed to make a levy of 50 cents for each prospective Scout and Wolf Cub, payable by the parent. A vote of thanks was tendered to Mr. Spearing. Motion of adjournment moved and seconded.

The following people were present at the meeting. Mr. & Mrs. de Cocq, Mr. N. Denny, Mrs. D. Heddle, Mr. & Mrs. Fitzsimmons, Mr. M. Roberts, Mr. & Mrs. Townshend, Mrs. Shannon, Mr. L. Spearing, Mr. Greenwood, and Mr. & Mrs. Worsfold. Minutes signed by H.M. Greenwood chairman and J.T. Worsfold secretary.

The above is quoted from the minutes of the first meeting. Mr. Spearing was the new teacher for the Willow Point School starting in September 1934. I believe he had been associated with the Scout movement prior to coming here. I don’t think at this time he would realize he was starting one of the most successful Scout groups in the Kootenays.

From the minutes, the Group Committee Meeting of Oct 2nd 1934. A meeting of the Group Committee was held at the home of Mr. J. Worsfold on Oct 2nd All members being present.

Mr. Worsfold was appointed secretary. It was decided to collect 50 cents for each child from the parents as soon as possible and to order supplies as requisitioned by Mr. Spearing. Mr. Fitzsimmons made a very favourable report of a building offered by Charlie Bing for the use of the Scouts. Charlie Bing’s offer was accepted.

H. M. Greenwood, chairman
Jn. Worsfold, secretary.
With the use of Mr. Bing’s building the group was progressing very well. Mr. Sutherland donated a stove for this building, now our Scout Hall. The building was cleaned and repaired which made a nice meeting place. This building was situated at the bottom side of Charlie Bing’s farm along side the road to his place, now called Bing Road, which is 4 ½ miles from Nelson Bridge.

The third group meeting was at the home of Mr. H. Greenwood on Nov. 28, 1934. The secretary was instructed to send letters of thanks to Charlie Bing, for the building and to Mr. Sutherland for the stove. Now the main business was to raise money for the registration of the group and equipment to operate the group. They decided to ask the Women’s Institute for the use of their building to hold a Bridge and Whist Drive, about the middle of December. Admission was to be 25 cents, and parents were asked to contribute refreshments.

The Women’s Institute building was a house on a log float that was beached during a high water. It was situated in the bay below Campbell’s field, the property I now own. Being on the beach it had a slight slope to the floor, which never interfered with its use. During these early years this place was used for many community affairs including special scout activities.

The next Group Committee meeting was held June 16, 1935 at Mr. H. Greenwood’s home. The activities that had taken place since their last meeting were recorded in the minutes. The first of which was the Bridge and Whist Drive that netted them $15.50 less 19 cents expenses.

The next item was very important; on February 23, 1935 the Group Charter No. 248 was presented to the 1st Willow Point Group. This ceremony took place at 3:00 p.m. in the Women’s Institute building. District Commissioner J. Dronsfield and the 1st Nelson Troop under the leadership of Scoutmaster Harry Street assisted the Willow Point Troop on this enjoyable afternoon. 25 boys were assembled and the meeting opened with the Flag Break. Commissioner Dronsfield outlined the regulations, and then invested Messrs. H. Greenwood, N. Denny, and J. Fitzsimmons as Group committeemen for the Willow Point District. Scoutmaster L. F. Spearing and acting assistant W. Brinley also made the Scout promise, and Mr. Spearing received his re-endorsed warrant from the Commissioner. Girl Guides Mary Campbell and Mildred Horrigan were presented with Cub Instructor’s Badges. The Cubs and Scouts put on short demonstrations and games. This was the official beginning of the First Willow Point Cub and Scout Group.
On April 22, 1935 a monster rally of Cubs, Scouts and Girl Guides was held at Calgary, the occasion was the visit of the Chief Scout and Chief Guide, Lord and Lady Baden-Powell. The following contingent went from Willow Point to take part in the rally: Scoutmaster L. F. Spearing; Scouts Jerry Fitzsimmons, Larry Fitzsimmons, and Eric Denny; Wolf Cubs Herbert Learmonth, Richard Roberts and Hugh Worsfold. The group travelled by train except myself; I went by bus because I had a pass. I believe my father helped pay for one of the other boys. We all arrived in Calgary Sunday evening and stayed in the Hotel Whales, on the Tenth floor, at that time the Hotel Whales was one of the high buildings in Calgary and this was the top floor that we were on.

The Nelson group toured the big stores of T. Eaton and Company, and Hudson’s Bay Company. The afternoon was occupied by visits to the Calgary Herald newspaper where we saw all the workings of printing a daily paper. Before we left the press was started for the current paper. The next place was the Calgary Museum where they provided a history of the western prairies. A lot of questions were asked to which we got a lot of informative and interesting answers.

The giant rally to welcome the Chief Guide and Chief Scout was held at Victoria Park Arena on the evening of April 22nd, Easter Monday. Between five and six thousand Brownies, Girl Guides, Wolf Cubs, and Boy Scouts, with their respective leaders were massed in the form of a fleur-de-lis on the rink floor to welcome Lord and Lady Baden-Powell. When they mounted the platform to loud cheers, the entire assembly sang “O’ Canada” and “A Toast to the Chief”. The Chief Scout gave his message of encouragement and praise to the rally, and then the Chief Guide gave her message of gratitude to be in Calgary. She then read a message from the Princess Royal, Princess Mary. Following the remarks of the Chief Guide the march past commenced with each of the four groups filing past in an orderly fashion. Our group was not directly involved in any of the displays of the different groups, which lasted for more than an hour. It was a certainly a very impressive sight to be there and see and hear Lord and Lady Baden-Powell, a highlight in my scouting career.
On May 6th the Scouts and Cubs in cooperation with the Willow Point Girl Guides took a leading part in the King George V Jubilee Celebration at Willow Point. At 8:15 p.m. Scoutmaster L. Spearing fired a Royal salute of 21 rockets. A beacon fire previously built by Scouts was then lit by Company Leader Mildred Horrigan. Guides, Scouts and Wolf Cubs gave a short program.

On June 9th the 1st Willow Point Scouts and Cubs with Scoutmaster L. Spearing and the Willow Point Guides with Guide Captain O. Dickson paraded to St. Andrews by the Lake Church for Divine Service at 11:00 am. The Lord Bishop of the Diocese conducted the service.

As the minutes of the Group Committee often show, acquiring funds for different events was an ongoing need. A camp was coming up in August, which would need
funds. A Field Day for July 1st was planned to take place in Horrigans field. We always called it Horrigan’s field because they lived on the property but The Jaeger family of Spokane who spent their summers here owned it. The plans were all finalized, but July 1st turned out to be a very wet day so the decision was made to postpone the Field Day to Saturday July 6th. This day turned out to be a little showery but it was decided to go ahead with the program; the minutes note that the afternoon was much better. The day grossed $37.50 with a profit of $21.27. Today this doesn't look like much but then it was considerable.

Many people in the community were involved in many of the different club activities: Mr. Gilroy of the Willow Point Store, the secretary of the Crystal Club, Mrs. Horrigan, and Mr. Niven.

The August 18th Minutes record the following Scouts and Cub who attended Camp Busk at Kokanee Aug. 3rd. to Aug. 17th. Gerry Fitzsimmons, Larry Fitzsimmons, Alec Sutherland, and Bert Ramsden were there for the full two weeks. Louis Jackson, Louis de Cocq, and Leonard Greyson went for one week Aug. 10th. to Aug. 17th. The following Wolf Cubs attended the camp for the last two days Aug. 16th. and 17th: Herbert Learmonth, Ian Greenwood, Richard Roberts, Hugh Worsfold, and David Worsfold.

This is the group of Cubs attending the camp. Back row from right, Herbert Learmonth, Hugh Worsfold, ?, Ian Greenwood, front row 2nd right Richard Roberts, 1st. left David Worsfold.
This campground at Camp Busk was close to where the Visitors Centre is now located. Sad to say this area that was a nice level field disappeared during a high water in Kokanee Creek around the early 60’s. At that time there was a bridge across a small part of the creek that joined the camping grounds to the camp mess hall, kitchen, and headquarters, now close to where the Visitor Centre is located.

The report to the Group Committee from Scoutmaster L. Spearing records the following for the period from October 1934 to December 31, 1935. The Scouts held 42 meetings, the Cubs held 44 meetings. There were 8 Wolf Cubs in the pack and 10 Boy Scouts in the Troop. The Wolf Cubs passed 132 tests and were awarded 16 Badges; the Boy Scouts passed 86 tests and were awarded 11 Badges. Girl Guides Mary Campbell and Mildred Horrigan were assistant Cub instructors until the fall, then Patrol Leader Lois de Cocq filled this position. Bill Brinley was acting Assistant Scoutmaster for about a year.

Mr. Spearing was both Cubmaster and Scoutmaster making it very time consuming for him. The way he held these meetings, which were on Saturdays, was to have the Cubs come to the Scout Hall first about 1:00 pm. for their meeting, which went to 2:00 pm. or maybe 2:30 pm. Now the Scouts would come for their meeting and he would continue as the Scoutmaster. There were no lights in this building so the meetings had to be during daylight hours.

Looking back to this time I can say he was certainly dedicated to the scout program. For the coming year he requested the Group Committee ask for volunteers to help take meetings every second Saturday. They would teach the boys some of the skills they knew. I do remember “one session; a Mr. Dalrymple” a sea Captain from the sailing days, taught us rope splicing which I have made use of ever since.
The afternoon of August 21st 1935 Gerry and Larry Fitzsimmons were involved in the accidental drowning of a nine-year-old girl, Phyllis Harris, near the Willow Point wharf. The two boys were on their way to the beach to go swimming, when they arrived at the beach they noticed something floating a short way from shore Gerry quickly realized it was the little girl and went out and pulled her in. He immediately started artificial respiration while his brother went to his house to call for help. The Doctor was called and arrived in 20 minutes. After his examination he said she was dead despite his heroic efforts. Gerry was commended for his actions especially being a scout.

At 8:00 pm Monday January 6, 1936 the Annual Group Committee meeting was held at the Willow Point School. All the reports for the first year were recorded in the minutes. The officers for the next year were elected with little change; Mr. J. Fitzsimmons became chairman and Mr. J. Worsfold still secretary.

The need for finances is always a necessity so according to the minutes Mrs. J. Learmonth moved they ask the parents of each Cub and Scout to contribute 25 cents to cover registration and badges for the year.

At the April meeting Scoutmaster Spearing read a letter from Commissioner Dronsfield to all Scouters conveying an invitation from the Scouts of Pullman Washington to the Nelson Scouts to go to Pullman for one week in the coming summer July 19th to 26th This would be in lieu of summer camp. The Cubs would be able to have a one-week camp at Camp Busk in July, under the supervision of Mr. Wade.

The committee asked the Crystal Hall Club for the use of the hall for a social evening mainly to honour Mr. and Mrs. Maguire, the oldest inhabitants of Willow Point. The Hall was offered free for this evening’s social event and would be held on May 28th. this being their Wedding anniversary. The Willow Point Boy Scout Association Invited all members of the community to attend this social evening to honour this couple. The evening was a success with various entertainments and the presentation of a gift from the community.

The July 1st meeting was to finalize plans for the concert to be held July 3rd. at the Crystal Hall. This concert was made possible through the kindness of Mrs. Hvidt who consented to bring her group out to Willow Point to aid the Willow Point Scout funds. The concert was enthusiastically received by the audience, which showed their enjoyment by calling for numerous encores. The evening netted $14.05 for the Scout funds; not much today but it was a substantial amount then.

In June 1936 two boys came up from the Cub Pack to the Scout Troop, I was one of them. This made it possible for me to go to Pullman as a Scout. The trip to Pullman was certainly a big highlight for the seven boys from our troop, who were Gerry
Fitzsimmons, Larry Fitzsimmons, Eric Denny, Alec Sutherland, Louis de Cocq, Len Grayson, and Herbert Learmonth.

I can still remember much of the most interesting parts of that trip. The Nelson Group of which we were a part left the Greyhound depot in Nelson at 7:45 am. The bus was a charter from Nelson to Camp Cowles, Diamond Lake, Wash. with my father being the driver. We arrived at the camp at 1:00 pm. The group was eager to go swimming right away but was quickly stopped so their swimming system could be explained, the buddy system which is always used at all camps. After a good swim and a well-cooked camp meal the group left at 3:00 pm. in an American bus arriving at the New Washington hotel, Pullman where we could wash and clean up. We were then taken to the Federal Congregational Church, which would be the Canadian headquarters, and treated to a lovely supper and reception. The week’s program was outlined to us and then we were assigned to our host families.

Monday and Tuesday were taken up with sports and instruction in and around the University. On Wednesday the 22nd a trip was planned to Lewiston, Idaho. Here about 60 boys visited the Potlach Forests, Inc., mill. This was one of the largest pine mills in the world at that time, kind of unbelievable to us young kids. Luncheons and dinners were always well taken care of by different service clubs. in the evening we left to spend a night at Scout Camp Laird, near Potlach. Thursday we travelled to Camp Grizzly in Idaho and were taken up Mt. Lookout point where rangers have a 40-foot tower with an excellent view of the country. On Friday we returned to Pullman and our headquarters and were given souvenirs of our trip, one was the College yearbook of the Washington State University; I still have mine.

On Saturday the 25th, it was with a great deal of regret we left Pullman, Washington where we had been royally welcomed and entertained. We travelled back to Camp Cowles, Diamond Lake for our last night of this wonderful trip. On Sunday at 1:00 pm. my father driving the Greyhound bus from Nelson picked us up. I still have wonderful memories of this special trip.

The Scoutmaster’s report of January 1, to November 22, 1936, reports Boy Scouts had held 17 meetings and had two hikes. The Wolf Cubs had held 17 meetings and had one hike. In the spring the minutes record that two Cubs went up to Scouts. The enrolment numbers at the end of this period were 8 Scouts and 8 Cubs. Six Cubs went to Camp Busk in Aug. and 7 Scouts went to Pullman Wash. in July. The Cubs passed 27 tests and the scouts passed 23. The Cubs were awarded 11 badges and the Scouts were awarded 6.

This report read to the annual Willow Point Group Committee meeting of Nov. 23, 1936 at the Willow Point School states that; along with the normal items of business planned at an annual meeting, Mrs. Learmonth (my mother) was voted a hearty thanks for the large part she took in the party for Mr. and Mrs. Maguire. The need for raising
funds was always a concern for the committee. Again they planned a Bridge and Whist Drive; this was a common way during these years to raise funds. The Women’s Institute Building was always the place of choice to hold them.

Along with the regular meetings the troop would take hikes usually during the late spring. This is one I remember taking up the Kokanee Creek valley. There was always snow from the many slides in the winter.

The photograph, taken by our Scoutmaster, shows our troop on one of those hikes, up Kokanee Creek. The photo, the only one I have of any of our troop activities, shows us standing on one of the many snow slides in winter. From the left to right are, Hugh Worsfold, Alex Sutherland, Herbert Learmonth, unknown, and Eric Denny.

There was a Scout and Cub camp held every year at Camp Busk. This year the Scout camp was from Aug. 4th to Aug. 11th. followed by the Cub camp. Scoutmaster L.F. Spearing was in charge of the Scout camp and Cubmaster Wade was in charge of the Cub camp. I do not know the reason, but no Willow Point boys were able to attend this camp in this year 1937. I do not know what the reason would be.

At a November meeting Scoutmaster Spearing reported the Scout Hall’s roof was leaking very badly. The repair to the roof was considered too costly at this time so it was decided to find the use of another building for the winter. Mr. Greenwood undertook to see Mr. Emory about the use of a log building he had. This he did and at the next meeting reported that Mr. Emory would let them use it for a scout halt. The building was behind the Crystal Hail.

Again the need for funds was brought up at the meeting and again it would be another card party proposed to be at the Crystal Hall but was changed to be held at the Women’s institute on Dec. 11, 1937. These card parties at the Women’s Institute were an annual way of acquiring funds. During these years these parties were quite popular with other groups as well as the Cubs and Scouts. It was decided that the senior Cubs
and Scouts would canvas the community to sell tickets. 24 people attended, four tables of Whist and one of Cribbage, netting the scout funds $11.60. Today we look at this amount and think it is very little but at that time it seemed to be sufficient.

The Group Committee meeting of Feb. 14th, 1938 was held at the Willow Point School. Scoutmaster Spearing reported that he is being ably assisted by Rover Scout Aubrey Daymen. Mr. Spearing invited the Group Committee to attend a special meeting at the Crystal Hall; this was in honour of Lord Baden Powell, the Chief Scout's birthday. The meeting was planned for Feb. the 19th. but due to sickness was postponed to Feb. 26th.

This meeting consisted of an indoor track meet in the Crystal Hall with two teams of Scouts and two teams of Cubs competing. Scoutmaster Spearing and Assistant Scoutmaster Daymon ran the events with the judging by Mr. Denny and Mr. Worsfold. Everyone had a lot of fun and after the races a large number of badges were awarded all earned since Jan. 1st. Scoutmaster Spearing reminded the boys of the reason for the meeting then closed with three cheers for the Chief Scout Baden Powell.

The June meeting discussed the forthcoming International Camp at Camp Busk. July 16th. to 30th. They hoped that some boys from Willow Point would go and although they would help them any way they could, they could not attempt to raise money for camp fees. Two Willow Point scouts, Hugh Worsfold and myself, would go for the second week 23rd. to 30th. and one Wolf Cub, Beverly Green, would attend the Cub Camp 27th. to the 30th. At these International Camps it was always great fun to meet with the American Scouts and of course trade mementos.

At the Nov. meeting 1938, a letter of resignation from Mr. Spearing as Scoutmaster of the 1st Willow Point Group was read. The reason he had been transferred to the Ymir School. The Group Committee recorded their appreciation of the splendid work he did organizing and running, almost single-handed a Scout Troop and a Wolf Cub Pack for four years. The committee sent him a letter of thanks for spending so much of his free time for the group and his unfailing cooperation with the Group Committee. After being a Scoutmaster for many years I can look back and appreciate the work he did to organize the group.

The need now was to acquire another person to take over. A Major Mathesen, who had been invited to the meeting; agreed to take the position of Scoutmaster. It was now necessary to find a Cub Master or Mistress by the next meeting; Frances Campbell agreed to fill the position.

The Group Committee agreed to have a Cub, Scout, and Committee meeting at Christmas time to honour Mr. L.F. Spearing who would be back in our district at Christmas time. A Thanks Badge was duly awarded to Mr. Spearing.

The Cub and Scout meetings were now being held in the Women's institute
building. I can remember Major Mathesen quite well; he being military we were subjected to a lot of drill. I must say we became very smart at it. In April 1939 Major Mathesen moved from the district consequently resigned as acting Scoutmaster of the 1st Willow Point Troop. At the end of the school term June 1939 Miss Frances Campbell resigned as Cub mistress; their services were much appreciated.

In the fall of 1939 the group was unfortunately unable to find any leaders so no meetings could be held. By 1941 the group turned in their charter.

W W II was now being waged so a lot of things were disrupted. Quite a few of this Scout Troup enlisted in the Services. Eric Denny joined the R.C.A.F., Bill Heddle, Richard Roberts, and myself joined the R.C.N.V.R., some of the other boys also joined the Services but I’m not sure which ones. Fortunately we all returned.