



SWANAGE BOYS' CAMP



FOUNDED AND ORGANIZED BY THE ROTARY CLUB OF BOURNEMOUTH



Past President B. G. Haycock

By the Chairman of the
Boys' Work Committee

It was some time in 1928 that the idea of the Rotary Boys' Camp was first mooted, and so far as my memory serves me, Bert Haycock was mainly responsible for the proposal. The spirit of Rotary Service found an early and enthusiastic worker in him. He became Honorary Secretary and I Chairman of the Boys' Work Committee, and this has continued for about nineteen years, although of necessity the personnel of the Committee has changed from time to time.

From the intimate knowledge gained during these years, I would venture the opinion that ninety per cent. of the success of the Camp is due to Bert, and the remaining ten per cent. to the rest of us.

What he has done has been consistently superlative, a labour of love, and many thousands of poor boys have much to thank him for. The clerical work involved in the arrangement of parties, the fixing of dates and all the details necessary for organizing such gatherings is only part of it. The ever-ready help, guidance and encouragement given to Mr. and Mrs. Lock in their many problems, seeing the parties in and seeing them off, is another part. Then there has been the adjustment of minor complaints, yet happily more often the receipt of grateful thanks; the purchase of extra land and the thousand and one odd jobs that are bound to crop up in a camp of this size, dealing with so many boys. All this has been the work of Bert Haycock.

Looking back over the nineteen years I have been Chairman, I feel the Rotary Club of Bournemouth was indeed fortunate in its choice of the Honorary Secretary, for surely I am right in saying that we possess a Boys' Camp the like of which is unequalled in this country. It is, too, supported entirely by voluntary contributions.

CHARLES R. BEACH,
Chairman, Boys' Work Committee

BOYS' WORK COMMITTEE, 1947-8

Chairman: PAST PRESIDENT C. R. BEACH
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President of Rotary Club: H. A. MACKINNON





The Possibilities for Good

“**L**OOK, ladies and gentlemen, to the east in the direction of the rising sun. Could a finer and more inspiring vista be presented to any boy? Could any lad who has stood where you stand now for every evening for a fortnight, gazing over that bay, be quite the same again? Can such a view of loveliness sinking into his consciousness leave him unmoved, and be without a lasting influence for good in the life that is to be his in the days that are to come? It is our hope that year after year close upon a thousand boys will receive inspiration from the surroundings hereabouts, and that their lives will reflect the memories of their stay. The possibilities for good which will result therefrom are inestimable.”

With these words, the President of the Bournemouth Rotary Club finished his speech at the opening ceremony on 22nd July, 1929. He was speaking to a large and representative gathering of men and women representing civic and voluntary organizations in Bournemouth and Swanage.

Next, the then Mayor of Bournemouth declared the now famous Boys' Camp open.

HOW IT BEGAN

Nearly a year earlier, the project had first been discussed and the difficulties squarely faced. All present at this meeting of Rotarians wanted the Camp, but—where should it be? How much would it cost? How should it be run? How could the money be raised? The site was soon found, at Swanage; a Rotarian bought the land and generously gave it as an unrestricted gift. In addition, however, at least £1,350 was needed for huts and equipment; so nine Rotarians acted as guarantors for a total of £2,000, to be on the safe side. Very soon, £750 was promised by Club members in donations, and by June, 1929, all was ready.

But that was only the beginning. The Camp has frequently been enlarged and continually improved. To date, over £4,000 has been raised—and spent—and the need for funds is never-ending.

BOYS' CAMP SWANAGE

To the regular flow of subscriptions from the members of Bournemouth Rotary Club and from others, has been added money obtained in many interesting and exciting ways. Large sums were raised annually by the Bournemouth Pier Turnstile Competition. The Club gave the first prize of a new motor-car, and members gave other valuable prizes. Ladies of the Club and other well-wishers helped in this competition, which was a prominent feature in the town's August attractions. Recently, the competition could not be run—but other ways and means of keeping the Camp going will be found, because the need is so great and the cause so good.

That is easy to say, but—

IS IT REALLY SO REMARKABLE?

Perhaps to some Rotarians who have joined the Bournemouth Club since 1929, and to many Bournemouth people who have read about the Camp, it doesn't seem very much: the Rotary Boys' Camp at Swanage. Boys and their masters go there regularly for a fortnight's holiday, some Rotarians and their ladies go to see how the youngsters are getting on, and to help the fun along. It's very pleasant and worth while, but is it really so remarkable? Of course, there are poor boys; but does that make a difference? . . .

One great difficulty in writing about the Camp is that sentiment will intrude; and perhaps it's rather out of place. Yet one cannot rule it out completely, because many of the six hundred youngsters who holiday at the Camp every year would have no holiday at all if this particular Camp did not exist. Every effort is made to make sure that only the really needy get there. Some parties are sponsored by other Rotary Clubs; some come from Dr. Barnardo's Homes and the Waifs and Strays Society; others come from London schools through the School Journeys Association. *All* come from big towns, leaving the grime and smoke and overcrowding of the city streets behind and living for two carefree weeks overlooking the Old Harry Rocks and the magic blue of the bay and the friendly white cliffs. It's a complete change for them, in many more ways than one.

Let's take Jim →

Let's take Jim, as an example. His surname doesn't matter. He's a thin, rather gawkish youngster of eleven, with fair hair which is never tidy, freckles, bony arms and legs, a shirt two sizes too large for him, trousers just a little bit too tight—the little bit which makes the difference between an easy split and long wear. His old shoes are a size too small but that doesn't greatly matter because he wears no socks. That is, he hasn't any socks; the pair he started out with fell to pieces. Before he left he was told to bring his "best" clothes and a complete change of



BOYS' CAMP SWANAGE

underclothing, but he comes from a very poor home; "best" doesn't mean very much. He brought everything he has, which are the clothes he stands up in, a tattered towel and a few oddments in a fibre suitcase which has seen a great deal of wear; and four shillings and sixpence which jingles in his pocket. He went to Southend-on-Sea once, on a day's outing, and vaguely remembers a lot of water, a long pier and great crowds of people on yellowish sand, and he expects Swanage to be like that. The train journey from London, in company with fifty-nine other youngsters who come from similar homes, isn't really a novelty for Jim, because he was once evacuated. True, his parents let him return to London because he didn't like living in the country, but at least he had two train journeys, so he knows all about trains. The one they get into at Wareham isn't much of a thing.

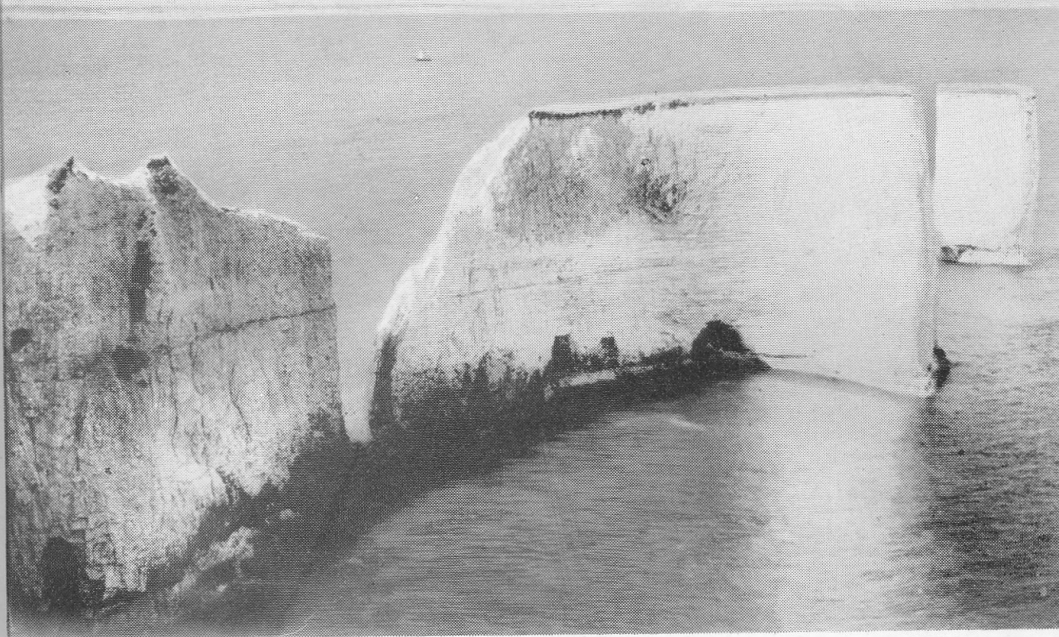
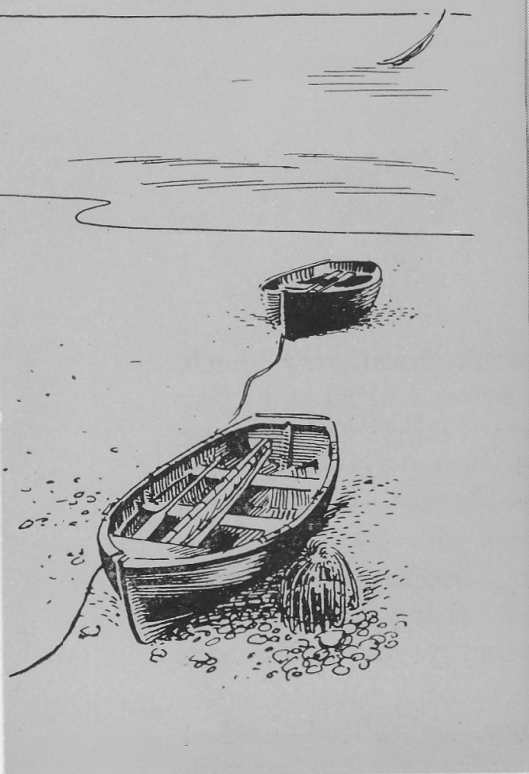
Swanage is a funny little station, Jim decides, and says so in broad Cockney. He's already marked down by the men in charge as a likely mischief-maker, so he's told very sharply to get into line with the others. The long crocodile walks out of Swanage Station. Soon they start to climb a steep hill, turn off that on to a narrower road which winds between big pieces of rock and grassy hillocks, and it's heavy going. Jim's used to flat surfaces and the ring of hard pavements beneath his feet. Up and up he goes, panting a little, until suddenly he sees several huts. One is very high on a hill, others are nearer. Neat, freshly creosoted, with red tiles along the top, they have windows in which there are neat panes of glass—those windows make Jim's eyes glisten. He looks down at the handy stones.

There's something new, he doesn't know quite what it is. It's the air; he's never breathed anything like this; it's clean *and* laden with a salty tang. He—coo, what's that? Coo!



Rooms with a view

He and the others are lucky because it's a sunny afternoon. Looking left, he's caught sight of the white cliffs and those Old Harry Rocks, like big needles, rising out of the clear, bright blue sea. He's seen some white sails moving gently and the fringe of sand in the bay, the red roofs or the



yellowish grey Purbeck stone of the houses below ; and it's just like a picture. It isn't quite real—except one thing, a steamship going out to sea. He watches until it's out of sight. The scene and the steamer subdue him for a while, and he feels almost shy when he sees a smiling matron and a white-haired man who stoops rather a lot, standing near one of the huts. The masters are talking to this couple. The boys are called to meet Mr. and Mrs. Lock, who are in charge of the camp. And Mr. and Mrs. Lock have a queer notion that they'd like to weigh each boy.

Jim turns the scale at six stone eight pounds. The Locks give him a searching look, but he hardly notices it. He remembers "six stun eight" and goes, with half the other boys, to one of the huts. Inside are thirty iron bedsteads, with mattresses and blankets. He's allotted a bed and shown how to make it and roll the mattress, Army fashion, next morning. Above his bed is a window, overlooking the scene which had already caught his eye. A room with a view! Then he's shown the wash-house, where twenty-two white and shining porcelain basins are ranged side by side, and at the end is a sunken tiled bath and above it a shower with hot water. A master demonstrates the shower ; Jim's eyes glisten again. Do some damage with all that water. If he could get at the tap—okay, okay, sir, I won't touch it. He doesn't like that master who's standing in the doorway.

High Tea

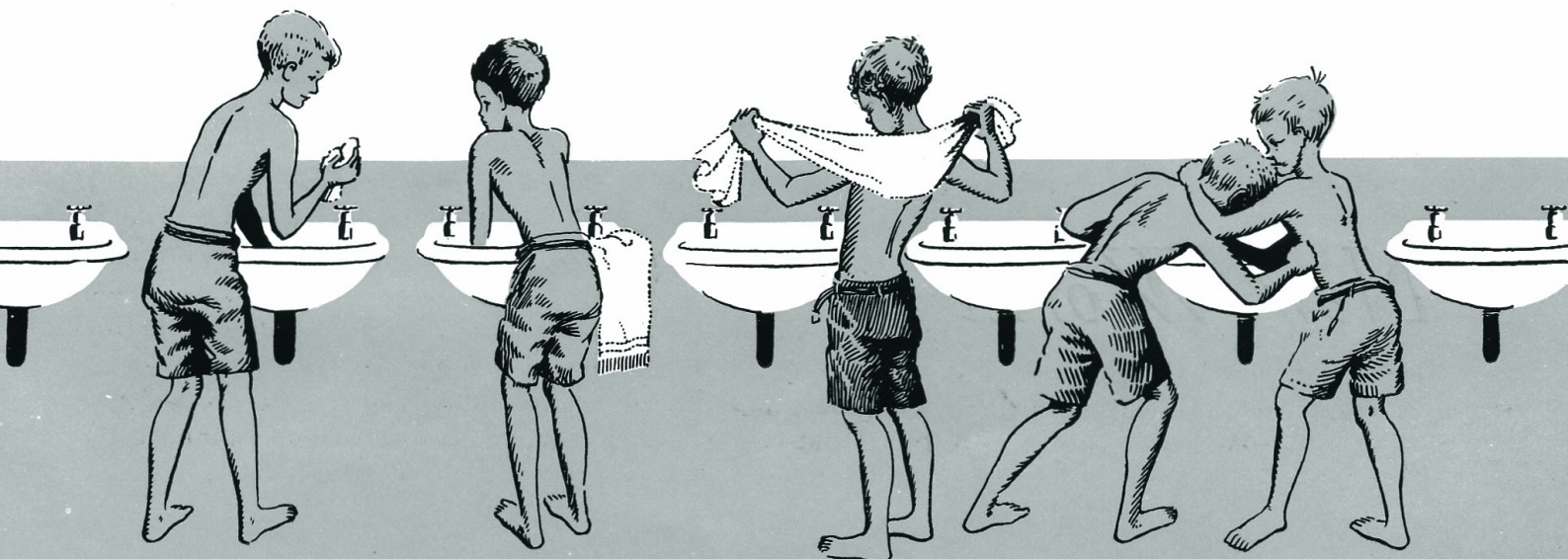
Funny thing, he's hungry, although he had some bread and margarine sandwiches on the train, with a shaving of cheese inside. He can smell something cooking. Before he's had time to look round the camp, he's called to another of the huts—the mess-room, meeting-room, games-room, the place-where-you-play-when-it's-wet-room. There's a stage and a piano and some long tables set with knives and forks, and with rows of chairs on each side. Two boys who've been detailed as stewards bring in great heaped-up plates of bread-and-butter and some rissoles. *Hamburgers!* Jim stands behind a chair, a master says grace, most of the boys sit down and start to eat eagerly, but not Jim. He grabs two pieces of bread-and-butter, makes a huge sandwich of the "hamburger" and bites deep.

BOYS' CAMP SWANAGE

It's all right to *eat*, but why do they make him sit down and use a knife and fork? At home, he just grabs his share and dodges out into the street. Oh, well. Coo, that tea's hot! Cor, what a nerve; he's got to wash up, why pick on him? He's given a funny little stick with some white string on the top, a bowl of hot water—and several other boys are given the same. He makes a fair showing at the job, aching to go outside and *see* everything again. Thank goodness he doesn't have to wash *and* dry. Okay, they can go now.

Outside, some boys are kicking a football and others are playing cricket. It's no good really because the pitch isn't even and there are stones jutting out of the grass near the sides. There's one thing about the city pavement and a lamp-post, the pitch *is* flat. He joins a little group who wander up and down the camp. They peep into the master's hut, which is right at the top of the hill, into the kitchen where Mr. and Mrs. Lock are putting some oats into a huge boiler. They look even into a small cottage, a real *house*—where, he learns, the Locks spend their brief summer leisure and live in winter.

Suddenly he's alone. The sun glints on a window and the stones are at his feet. He grabs one—okay, okay, he was only going to see how far he could throw. Pity the masters' hut is at the top, they can see everything.

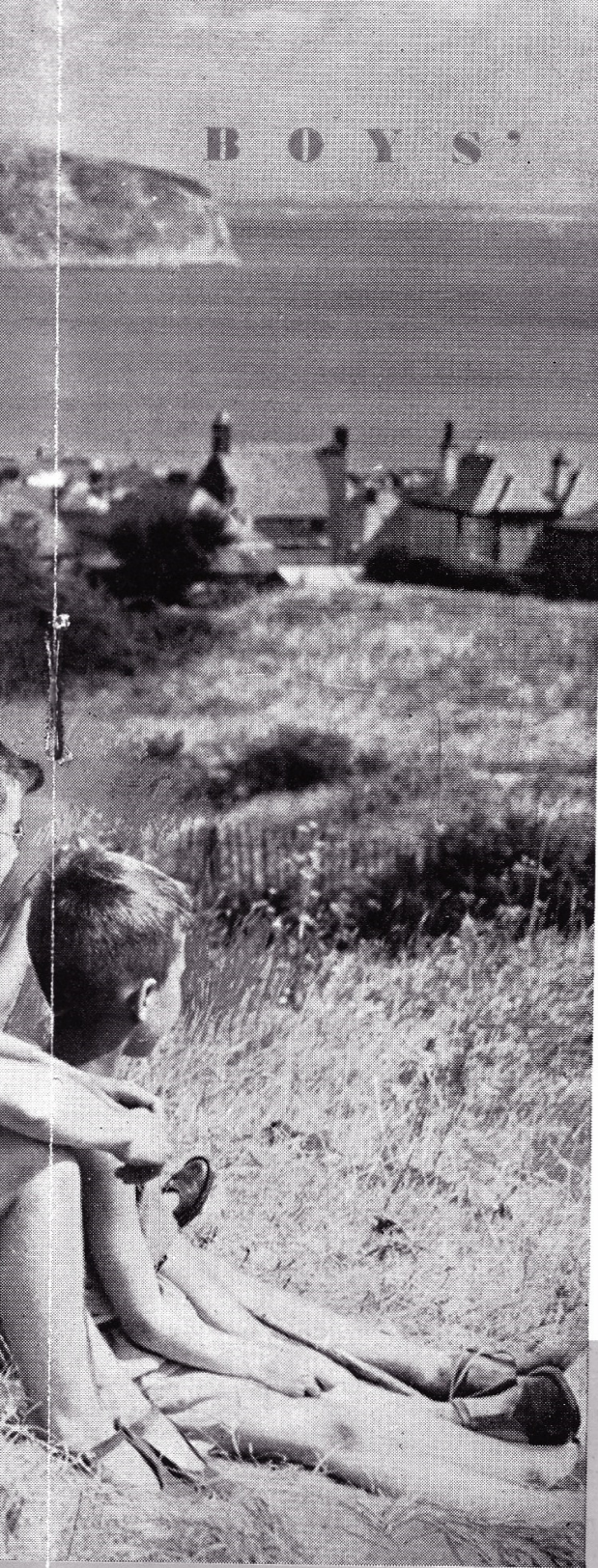




New World

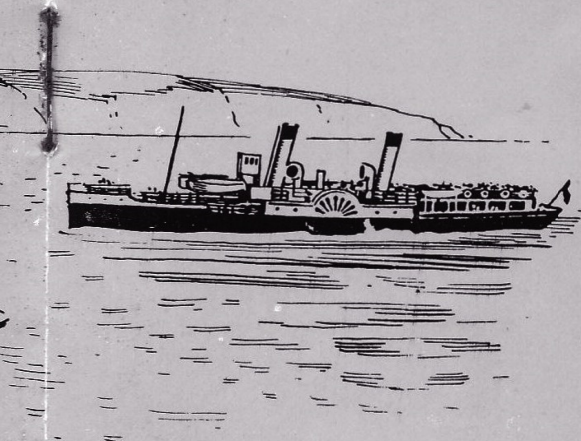


BOYS' CAMP SWANAGE



HE doesn't realize it, but in the next few days he discovers a new world. Hot and cold showers, regular washing, plenty of soap, and—they've given him a tooth brush. Regular meals—breakfast of porridge, a boiled egg, tea and marmalade; dinner of roast beef and vegetables and porridge again (in fact, the second lot is semolina and he notices the different taste) and rhubarb tart; high tea of salad and tomatoes and *always* plenty of it. At night he can make as much noise as he likes and no one protests, he's too far away from other houses to be a nuisance. And by day . . .

There's the beach; and bathing; and a walk out on the hills, watching men disappear into big holes—tunnels—and donkeys walking round and round a winch, dragging a thick rope. If he's lucky he sees huge pieces of stone come out of the tunnel. He only vaguely knows, even at the end of his stay, that these quarriers have ancient rights and privileges and that no one but a native can quarry for the fine Purbeck stone, as their forebears have for centuries. He doesn't know that Purbeck marble and stone has helped to build countless churches and cathedrals and old buildings up and down the country, but he likes to watch those donkeys. And there are coach trips. Through the quaint



B O Y S ' C A M P S W A N A G E

twisting streets of a village called Corfe, which has a ruined castle on a hill—what a hill! Jeeps couldn't get up it! And he reads in the guide book specially prepared by his masters that the castle was destroyed by the Ironsides; he knows that doesn't mean West Ham, although they call them the Old Irons. Often seen them play. He doesn't know of the wonderful defence of Corfe Castle by Lady Bankes and a handful of maids and men, when they defied the Roundheads for two years.



There's so much he doesn't know, although he gets a glimmering of knowledge, odd snatches that linger in his memory. That the quarriers have to walk through the streets of Corfe every year on Shrove Tuesday taking to the Warden of the Company of Marblers and Stone-cutters a loaf of bread, a bottle of beer and a fee of 6s. 8d. ; and march through the streets with a can of pepper so as to retain their ancient rights. That nearly two hundred men were drowned in a wreck off Kimmeridge Ledges, not far away. Made of funny, dark stone, those ledges.

There's so *much* to see, never mind about learning. Places with funny names. Winspit, Dancing Ledges, Agglestone—where there's a big rock that looks as if it will tumble over; it weighs more than a steam engine *and* carriages. Nine Barrow Down, the Tilly Whim Caves . . . Coo! Thrilling, that was, when they walked down the cliff and went into the dark caves over the loose rocks and shingle, wondering if the roof would fall in when they threw stones, but it didn't. And that garden, with a big stone ball—four times as high as he was—that shows all the places in the world. Standing in the stone-walled field near the Globe, and staring into the sea just below, he sees something move in the water. Funny black things, turning over and over and making a lot of white bubbles. Porpoises, the master says. Big black fish will do for him.





And tomorrow they're going on a steamer—the steamer—to Bournemouth. A seaside place! And the next night some men with funny names, 'Tarians, are coming out to have a sing-song or arrange some sports or something.

He can run up the steep hills now, race among the hillocks and stones. There's a big hole in one of his shoes but the soles of his feet are pretty tough now. His trousers . . .

The 'Tarians

Funny thing, about those 'Tarians. Some of them brought over pairs of tennis shoes, some brought trousers, shirts and socks, and he was better dressed than when he first arrived. So were some of the other boys. The 'Tarians looked a bit like School Inspectors at first but they were all right. They weren't all men, either. And they were coming back again next week . . .

Next day was wet ; and didn't it blow! Nearly knocked him down. But they were all dry in the "hall"! The gramophone played, they had games, read comics, and there was a book all about birds.

He had discovered that Mr. and Mrs. Lock were always friendly. With two other boys that rainy day he fetched potatoes and helped to peel them, and did odd jobs about the kitchen. There was a big coke-stove roaring and red, he'd never seen one before, but they were going to have a gas oven in soon. There was a big 'frig—cost nearly two hundred pounds, Mrs. Lock said—where all the food

B O Y S ' C A M P S W A N A G E

“Come again next year,” called Mr. and Mrs. Lock.

His voice was loudest of them all.

“Rather!”

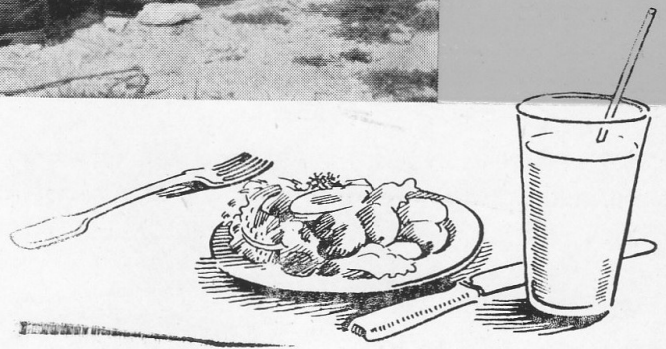
Yes, perhaps too much sentiment has crept in, but one cannot argue with facts. Some boys are better off than Jim, some even worse. None will forget the Camp at Swanage; it will be stored away in memory for many years to come. So will the Locks. In winter, the Locks do repairs and keep the huts in good condition, preparing for the first eager party which will come in late spring.



At least the disbeliever cannot now plead ignorance of what it's all about; and knows that to maintain the Camp funds are needed regularly, because a nominal fee is charged sufficient to cover the cost of food only for each boy. Gifts are also needed—oh, what a problem vegetables remain!

Not all visiting Rotarians come from Bournemouth. The Wimbledon Club was so impressed that it gave £100 and the piano to the Camp Fund and now sends a party of boys every year. The visits by “Rotarians” do more than just show interest, they are part and parcel of the Camp's summer life and of its existence. Isn't that worth remembering, too?





was kept so that it didn't go bad. He sucked lumps of ice that came from it. Mrs. Lock confided in him a great deal. Vegetables were one of the big troubles, especially *greens*. And Mr. Lock peeled a half-sack of potatoes every day.

Some of the boys had once put in some plants in the small patches of gardens, she said, but the gardens were overgrown now. Jim wasn't fussy about greens, but—well, he could *dig*. For his odd jobs he was rewarded with a cup of milk. Well, Mrs. Lock called it milk from a farm; it certainly didn't come out of a bottle and it had some thick stuff on top. A bit like melting ice-cream. He'd sixpence left, enough for one more ice when he went down into Swanage.

How quickly days passed . . .

The tiny gardens were neat and planted; the 'Tarians came again; there had been another steamer trip to Bournemouth, several to tiny villages, train rides, coach rides, swimming, bathing, games, fetching coal, making up beds, *cleaning* windows—funny thing about those windows, after the first night he hadn't wanted to throw stones at them.

Tomorrow they were leaving.

What, being weighed again? Yes, said Mrs. Lock, they were always weighed when they came and when they left, it was said that two more boys went away than had come. She laughed, but Jim didn't get it. He stood on the scales. Mrs. Lock's eyes glinted and Mr. Lock smiled gently. *Seven stone five!* He'd noticed he was sunburned but not that he was fatter. *All* of them were, but he'd put on *eleven* pounds, three more than anyone else. The lowest was two and a half, but Mr. Lock said it was three. Now, line up boys, for the walk to the station . . .

BOYS' CAMP SWANAGE

July 10th

Mrs Morgan
7114 North Row
Blackwall
Poplar E14

Sir I am sending this letter to thank you for allowing my son (Thomas Morgan) to go to your camp. which he liked very much, I was sorry I could not afford the whole of the expences. but I managed to pay 6/6. and now I have been informed that I havn't got to pay the rest of the money
Thanking you very much Mrs Morgan

118 East Wickham
Poplar
E14
London.

Dear Sir
Just a few lines to let you know I enjoyed myself very much & like the place & liked it so much that I wish to come again but I will be leaving school on Christmas. Mr and Mrs took treated us very well everybody wants to come a down next year no more to say
Yours truly
W.O. Bonnel.

118 East Wickham Buildings
North Street
Wimbledon
S.W.

Dear Mrs Locke,
We all arrived home safely at about 1.45, that is about three hours quicker than it took coming. Everyone was sorry to get back, although they've got school to look forward to! I hope you, Mr. Stevens and Mr. Locke enjoy your day's holiday. I'm sure you all deserve longer. As all I can see from here is a rather miserable street with the sun trying hard to get in through the blocks.





