

"HOW DID THE PATHFINDER MOVEMENT START ?"

In recent days this question has often been asked, and it is doubtful whether many Pathfinder Officers in the Transvaal could give a satisfactory reply to it; hence it is felt that this ~~statement~~^{account} of the early ^{Pathfinding} days may be of interest to many.

It is possible that many people could claim to have started organisations for non-European boys in South Africa before the Pathfinder Movement actually came into being and one honours them for it, but although many of these organisations were run on Scout lines and have since been merged into the parent movement they cannot rightly be said to have originated it, for so far as one can see they were self-contained organisations run in connection with some particular institution, and they shewed no signs of extending outside these limits, nor did they link up with the Movement until some time after its inauguration in the Transvaal.

The whole question of a Scout movement for non-European boys in this country was brought before the Transvaal Scout Council as long ago as October 1911, and although nothing was decided requests continued to come in at intervals. As I write I have before me a copy of the Minutes of a special meeting of the Transvaal Scout Council held on August 22nd. 1916 "to consider an application receivedre the formation of a Cape Coloured Troop on similar lines to the Boy Scout organisation" and at that meeting were Hon: D/S/M. J.B. Young (afterwards to be the first Pathfinder Commissioner) and Mr. J. Hungerford who for many years has been a member of the Transvaal Divisional Council. A further meeting was held on October 10th. 1916 when the matter was again discussed and it was agreed that some action should be taken to form some such organisation, but that it must be under the control of the Scout Council although not affiliated to it, that it must not be called a "Scout" movement, that it should have a distinctive uniform and that it must follow special regulations laid down for its guidance. This having been unanimously decided

decided a deputation waited upon the Chief Scout for the Union (H.E. Lord Buxton) for his counsel and approval. His Excellency felt that it would be well for the matter to wait until the end of the War and his advice was carried out although in some quarters there was great disappointment.

Within a month of the signing of the Armistice the Transvaal Scout Council was again approached and asked to redeem its promise. This, with the approval of the Chief Scout for the Union it proceeded to do on the lines previously laid down, and in July 1919 an organisation known as "The Trackers" came into being with specified rules and regulations. (It is interesting to note that it was upon these Tracker regulations the original regulations of the Pathfinders were based.) The Transvaal Scout Council assumed control of the Movement and application for registration had to be sent to the Council's secretary. A few Troops were formed, but they gradually lost interest, probably through lack of any encouragement, and after a time the Tracker Movement ceased to exist except on paper.

In 1920, Canon W. A. Palmer, Principal of the Diocesan Training College, Grace Dieu, Pietersburg (and now Dean of Johannesburg) applied to the Scout Council for permission to start a Scout Troop at his Institution, and in reply he was invited to start a Tracker Troop. This he refused to do and for a time the matter dropped, but in February 1922 he had enrolled on his staff two Scouters, Mr. W.E. Wilkinson of Johannesburg (now Vicar of Kensington, Johannesburg) and myself who had been working as a Scouter in Hertfordshire for some years. We urged Canon Palmer to approach Scout Headquarters again and this he did, only to receive the same invitation to start Trackers, although no active work was being carried out in that connection. "The demand appeared to be urgent, but when the scheme was carried the interest appeared

appeared to lapse" wrote the Secretary. After some further correspondence Canon Palmer asked for a Round-table conference between the Scout Council and representatives of missionaries and others interested in the welfare of Bantu youth, and this request was granted.

The meeting was held in Johannesburg on July 27th, 1922 and at that meeting the non-Europeans were represented by the Rev. H.R. Higgs, W. Hill (now Archdeacon of Johannesburg), J. Howard, Canon Palmer, W. Parker (now Bishop of Pretoria), A. Winter (now D/P/M for Central Johannesburg), Messrs Achterberg (representing the Transvaal Education Department), G. Dickenson (representing the Palladin Movement), W.E. Wilkinson and myself from the Diocesan Training College.

The whole question of Native Scouts and similar movements was gone into and discussed fully and it was obvious that there was a very strong division of opinion on the advisability of authorising a Non-European organisation to come into being. A/D/C. ^dHongkinson was in the Chair and at last, after the matter had been well ventilated he put the question to the vote; "Should a Non-European organisation be authorised?" The voting was equal and the feeling was tense while all waited for the Chairman's casting vote! He gave it in favour of the Movement, and the meeting then proceeded to discuss details. It was decided to change the title "Tracker" to "Pathfinder" and to make sundry other small alterations to the Tracker regulations which were used as the basis of discussion. These amendments were later approved by the Transvaal Scout Council and the present Pathfinder Movement had come into being!

In September 1922, the first Troop to be registered under the new conditions was formally inaugurated at the Diocesan Training College, Pietersburg and in the October issue of "The Reveille", the Transvaal Scout Magazine, the

appointments of "the Rev. S.P. Woodfield and Mr. W.E. Wilkinson as "Joint Packmasters" of the 1st. Pietersburg Pathfinders as from 7/9/22" appeared amongst the appointments of Scouters in the official gazette. It may be here noted that Pathfinder appointments continued to be gazetted in "The Reveille" until June 1924 sometimes under the heading "Pathfinders", sometimes under "Native Pathfinders". In September 1924, the first page contained the names of the Transvaal H.Q. Officials, and there was included the item: "Pathfinder Movement" - D/C in charge: Mr. J. B. Young." while ^{the} in/April 1925 number formal leave of absence for Mr. Young, ^{as he in charge of Pathfinders} was again given together with the name of his temporary successor. These facts are mentioned here because few realise the courage with which the Transvaal Scout Council took up the work of the Pathfinder Movement. As early as November 1923 the Editor had published an article describing a camp held by the Pietersburg Pathfinders - an act easily liable to misconception by some.

Mention has already been made of D/C. J.B. Young. In August 1923 he was appointed by the Transvaal Scout Council to take charge of the Pathfinder Movement. At the time of his appointment there were only three registered Troops:

1st. Pietersburg. (College)	7/8/22.
2nd. " (Town)	1/6/23.
with Mrs. E.M. Fuller as P/M.	
1st. Pretoria.	30/6/23.

The first Reef Troop to be registered was the 1st. Roodepoort (18/8/24) followed by the 1st. Johannesburg (S. Cyprian's) 18/9/24.

On August 25th. 1923 representatives of the Pathfinder Movement were given an opportunity of discussing their difficulties with Sir Alfred Pickford, the Imperial H.Q. Commissioner for Oversea Scouts who was on a visit to this country. Naturally, Sir Alfred was not in a position to give any decision ^{on} ~~to~~ the many points raised, but he assured the Pathfinder

representatives that Imperial Headquarters regarded their Movement with sympathy although it was bound to accept the decisions of its South African Council as to its actual status.

By this time the Chief Scouts of the Union were also coming into touch with the Movement, and H.R.H. Prince Arthur of Connaught was pleased to accept an album of photographs shewing the 1st. Pathfinder Troop at work in camp. Later, when H.E. the Earl of Athlone paid his first visit to Pietersburg to meet the Native Chiefs of the district his Guard of Honour was formed of over 100 Pathfinders in full uniform, some of whom had marched eighteen miles the same morning in order to be present. Their appearance in the streets of Pietersburg headed by the "Band" of bugles and home-made drums caused a sensation amongst the inhabitants, as may be imagined. H.E. was greatly interested in the boys and asked many questions as to the aims and working of the Movement.

The Court of Honour of the 1st. Pietersburg Troop spent many hours at work under the "Indaba Tree" sifting the Regulations under which they worked, and they sent many suggestions to the Transvaal Scout Council - most of which were approved. These suggestions were intended to make the Movement more suitable for Native boys and were based on actual experience and experiment.

Owing to the small number of Pathfinders it was not possible to obtain the metal tenderfoot badge under 1/- each - a big tax on the ordinary Bantu boy. Proficiency Badges, too, presented a difficulty, for the cost of a small number of cloth badges would have been prohibitive, and so Cash's name tapes were used instead. No one could pretend that they were satisfactory, and it was a work of art to present a number of them on parade without a few undignified dashes

being made to catch the elusive strips, ^{as they were} caught away by some sudden gust of wind.

All this time, D/C. Young was the only executive H.Q. Officer, and he felt the need of an advisory body which could share with him some of the responsibility of the growing movement. He accordingly called a meeting of those interested with a view to the appointment of an Advisory Council; the meeting was held on August 27th, 1924 and as a result an Advisory Council was formed with Mr. J.D. Rheinallt Jones as Chairman. The first formal meeting was held on December 3rd, 1924 and at that meeting a complete list of Appointments and Registrations to date was formally approved. It shewed that there were 28 registered Troops (including 1st. Modderfontein in the Orange Free State) and 49 Officers.

The Transvaal Scout Council took up the matter of the Pathfinder Advisory Council and in February 1925 issued a "Constitution" to govern the personnel of such council and to lay down its duties. At the same time was issued a more detailed copy of the Pathfinder "Rules and Regulations". Amongst the members of the Scout Council appointed to represent it on the Pathfinder Advisory Council was Mr. K.H. Fleischer, so soon to become the Treasurer of the Transvaal Division and later to become the H.Q. Secretary for the ^{S. African} Pathfinder Council.

In April 1925 D/C. Young left on a visit overseas during which he hoped to raise funds for the carrying on of his work. Capt. G.H. Byrnes, the Transvaal Scout Secretary was appointed to take charge of the Movement during his absence, and Mr. Rheinallt Jones remained Chairman of the newly formed Council. Just when D/C. Young was on the point of leaving Ireland ~~for~~ on his return journey news was received of his untimely death.

This was towards the end of 1925, and at the next meeting of the Divisional Council, a very warm message of condolence was sent to his widow and daughter. As Commissioner-in-Charge of Pathfinders Mr. Young had done much to help forward the work. He had the necessary leisure so that he was able to visit the Troops in different parts of the Transvaal, and his genial manner and kindly courtesy had won for him the friendship of all who worked with him in the Movement. In order that his memory might long remain with the Pathfinders, four Challenge flags were given by his sister for competition in the four districts of the Transvaal, and the "J.B. Young Memorial Trophies" are ^{now} well known. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ It was necessary for a successor to Mr. Young to be appointed, and the Pathfinder Council unanimously invited its Chairman, Mr. J.D. Rheinallt Jones, to combine the charge of the Pathfinder Movement with his work as Chairman of the Council. Owing to his absence overseas for some time it was not possible for Mr. Jones to give his answer until his return in August 1926. To the satisfaction of all Mr. Jones agreed to become Officer-in-charge of the Pathfinder Movement, and about the same time the official designation of the Senior Officer of the Movement was changed to that of Chief Pathfinder.

At this same meeting of the Advisory Council it was agreed to ^{include} ~~XXXXXX~~ two Bantu representatives in the Council, a step ~~forward~~ ^{Bantu} which has greatly justified itself. The first two members were Messrs. J.R. Rathebe and T.P. Mathabathe, and the former has been a member of the Transvaal Pathfinder Council ever since. ~~that time.~~

A demand for
~~The question of~~ a Movement for the younger boys now began to make itself heard, and a small sub-committee was appointed to draw up a suitable scheme for these young lads. The name chosen for them was that of "Klipspringers" and they

were given a Law similar to that of the Wolf Cubs which reminded them that:

A Klipspringer is always merry and happy,

A Klipspringer is always busy, and

A Klipspringer never thinks of himself,

but the name was not approved by the boys living in towns, and so it was changed for the more prosaic name of "Junior Pathfinder".

In March 1927 a revised copy of the "Rules and Regulations" was put out - the last of the roneed productions - and this contained the regulations for the Junior movement as well.

The Chief Scout, Sir Robert Baden-Powell, was visiting the Union towards the end of 1926, and he inspected his first Parade of Pathfinders in Johannesburg in November of this year. Since that time he has been a keen observer of the progress of the Movement and in 1931, when he was again in the country he expressed his pleasure at the great improvement that had taken place since his last visit.

Troops were beginning to spring up in all parts of the Union and it was becoming obvious that the Transvaal Council would soon cease to be regarded as the pivot of the Movement; so in June 1928 the South African Scout Council was asked to sanction the formation of a South African Pathfinder Advisory Council and this sanction was given, but owing to the fact that many parts of the Union were not yet organised it was not possible to hold the first meeting of the South African Pathfinder Council until June 20th. 1930. Before this meeting Mr. Rheinallt Jones had been unanimously invited to become Chief Pathfinder for Southern Africa, and his appointment was ~~willingly~~ confirmed by the South African Scout Council at its next meeting. Unfortunately, Mr. Jones was unable to preside at the first meeting of the S.

African Pathfinder Council which was held in Johannesburg owing to his absence overseas, and the honour fell upon me as Acting Divisional Pathfinder/^{for the Transvaal}during his absence. At that meeting we had the pleasure of the presence of our old friend Sir Alfred Pickford who was again visiting the country, and he brought greetings from the Chief Scout to the members of the newly formed Council.

By this time the first printed Book of Rules and Regulations had been circulated - it was issued in 1929 - and it did good service until the S. African Pathfinder Council was able to arrange for a complete revision of the whole "Constitution, Rules, and Regulations" in October 1931 ^{when our present} ~~and these are~~ *Handbook was compiled.* ~~the basis of our Movement at the present time.~~

I am only too well aware that many matters of interest have been omitted from this brief sketch - to mention only a few, the problem of Indian and Coloured with their "Scouts" and "Paladins" respectively, the quiet beginning of "The Pathfinder" as a Reef Bulletin written by Mr. Sykes for the benefit of his own District only, the great assistance afforded us at all times by the Transvaal Scout Council who have allowed us to use their Equipment Store and Committee Rooms, the steady growth of interest and practical support given to the Pathfinder Movement by stalwarts of the Scout Brotherhood, the increasing sense of responsibility shewn by the Bantu who have qualified for promotion to the higher ranks through sheer keenness and hard work (to mention only one case - that of D/P/M F.J. Oliphant of Pietersburg, who started as a Troop Leader in 1923), and, of course, the real hard work and enthusiasm of our present Chief Pathfinder and his Secretary, Mr. Fleischer. But to write of all these would call for more than one "Special Number" for the Transvaal, and it seems better to stop at a stage in our progress which was reached when the Movement became a Southern African one.

To those of us who have been ~~in~~ the Movement since its ~~the~~ early days the development that has taken place seems almost miraculous, and in consequence the memories of many long discussions, the difficult problems, the prejudices and the compromises have lost their bitterness.

One wonders what the Bantu boys did with their time before there was any Pathfinder Movement, and we find it adapting itself to town and country conditions alike with an ease that does credit to those who drew up its schemes of training. At last we are able to go "FORWARD", knowing that we have not betrayed our trust, but that in all ranks there is a real desire to live up to the high standard that has been set before us not only on paper ~~in our "Aims" of the Regulations,~~ but in practical everyday life by Him Who was the greatest of all Pathfinders, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

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8 APR 1934

S.P. Woodfield.
Divisional Pathfinder. (Tvl.)

Collection Number: AD1715

SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS (SAIRR), 1892-1974

PUBLISHER:

Collection Funder:- Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

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