



THE BRIDGE

*Bi-monthly community magazine for Balnarring, Bittern,
Crib Point, Flinders, French Island, Main Ridge, Merricks,
Pt. Leo, Red Hill, Shoreham, Somers and Tuerong*

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From left: Paul Francis, Bryan Francis, Peter Edwards, David De Wynne: members of the Balnarring Beach Seal Patrol. Paul, at 17 years old, was one of sixteen selected Queen's Scouts who went to London for the occasion of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on June 2nd 1953 at Westminster Abbey. Read Ilma's article on page 42.

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LONE SCOUT AT QUEEN'S CORONATION

June 2nd 1953

The British monarch, Queen Elizabeth II was crowned at Westminster Abbey. Among the thousands invited to witness the occasion was seventeen-year-old Paul Francis, from Balnarring Beach. Paul was one of sixteen selected Queen's Scouts who went to London for the occasion. From his position outside the door of Westminster Abbey he had an excellent view of the Queen and the other dignitaries as they passed through the abbey doors.

Paul's path to becoming a Queen's Scout had been an unusual one. He first joined the scouts in 1944, one of a small patrol at Balnarring Beach run by George Smith, Scout Master from Flinders, who came once a month to lead the boys. After three years, both the Flinders and the Balnarring patrols were disbanded when Smith became ill. Then in 1948 a Lone Scout group started up in Balnarring Beach. Lone Scout groups were formed when a group of boys were interested in scouting but lived too far from an established scout troop to attend meetings. Each of these small patrols was required to have an adult as a leader to advise and Paul's father, teacher, Howard Francis, filled that role. Their Scout Master was based in Elwood. He oversaw their work and visited periodically. The Balnarring Beach Seal Patrol, as they were known, had three members: Paul, his younger brother, Bryan and Peter Edwards. David de Wynne also attended but had to wait until he was eleven years old to officially join. The boys ran their own weekly meetings and competed monthly against five other Lone Scout groups. Such was their enthusiasm and devotion that they became top patrol in the Lone Scouts.

Paul worked his way through the various proficiency badges to attain 2nd class level, then 1st class, Bushman's Thong and ultimately King's/Queen's Scout. He was officially awarded the Queen's Scout Badge in 1952, the first Lone Scout to reach this level. The Governor of Victoria, Sir Dallas Brooks, presented him with his certificate. The following year Paul Francis was chosen to be among those who represented the Australian Scouting movement at the Coronation.

Ilma Hackett

(Balnarring & District Historical Society)