

SUMMER

CAMP

LOG

1952



Bob's Map of Northey Island

Takeley Scouts -- Summer Camp 1952 -- Northey Island

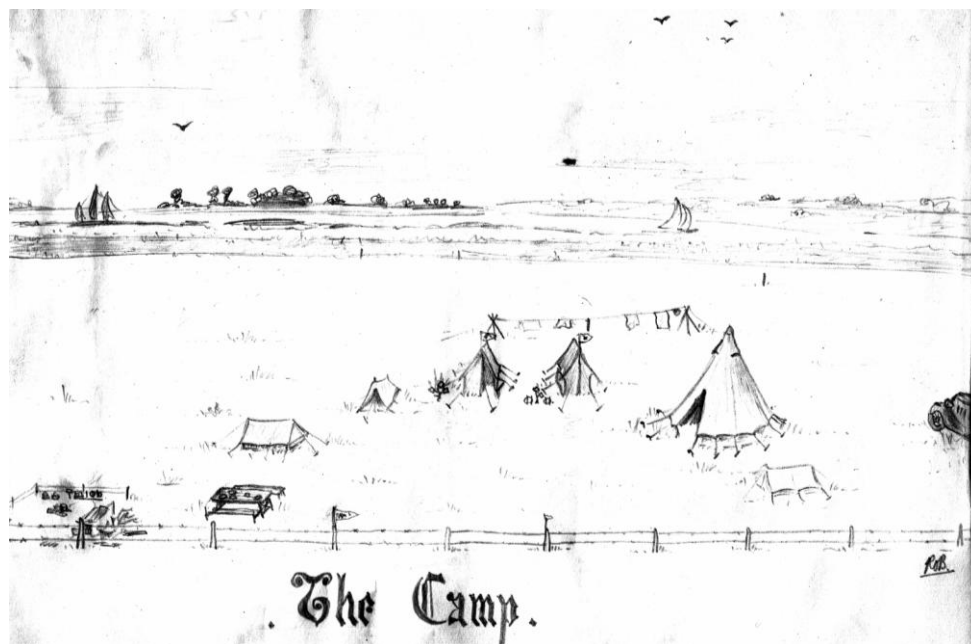
The 1st Takeley Boy Scout Troop was started in 1950/1951 by Les Pepper of Dunmow. He had previously been a member of Dunmow Scouts and had recently been released from his National Service with the RAF. Bob Bishop and I (Norman Young) were both a couple of years younger than Les and were members of Dunmow Rover Scouts and we soon began helping Les with the Takeley scouts.

In 2015 I (Norman) became the only survivor of the four adults who were present at the camp, and the log book of the 1952 summer camp was sent to me by Les's widow Audrey. The original log was handwritten by various camping members in a hardback exercise book and illustrated with black & white snapshots, which are also reproduced. The text here is a summary of the original camp log - but stays especially close to the wording on the occasions when the boys themselves were writing it.

Northey Island lies in the estuary of the River Blackwater. It was owned by journalist Sir Norman Angell, and Dunmow scouts began camping there soon after the war under arrangements made by the original founder of Dunmow scouts Rev F.G.(Freddie) Clarke who was known to us all as Skipper Clarke. It was a short step for Takeley scouts to follow suit and camp there too.

The island is triangular in shape, pointing north, and about a mile across each way. Access at low tide is by means of a causeway (aka 'the hard') built of rocks & boulders & gravel. A track leads to a farm house with a tower, near the middle, and it was usually occupied by a farm manager but often used for holidays. It is surrounded by fields of rough pasture.

Norman R. Young (Aberystwyth)



Bob's sketch of our camp

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Day 1 -- Friday -- 15th August

-- (Skip.L's handwriting) -- We were fortunate that Mr Bell, one of the parents, brought four of the boys in his car and also towed a trailer carrying all the camping kit for the rest of us. Another three boys travelled by bus. (No bus details were recorded in the log, but this would have involved a bus from Dunmow to Chelmsford (or Braintree?) and another to Maldon). The boys were met off the bus at Maldon by Bob who had cycled. Norman also cycled, whereas Scoutmaster Les (known to the scouts as 'Skip' and referred to here as 'Skip.L') rode over on his motorbike.

The first campers arrived soon after 10am on the day but they had to wait about half an hour for the tide to recede enough to allow driving and walking across to the island. Some wartime food rationing was still in force at the time and so Skip.L filled the time by riding into Maldon to confirm that the arrangements were in order.

There were seven scouts from Takeley. They were **Brian Bolden - David Bell - Peter Smith & Ray Marshall** - who arrived by car - and **Colin Chambers - Terry Brewer & Terry Moore** who came by bus.

They were divided into two 'patrols' - the Curlews (Brian, TerryB, TerryM and Ray) - and the Peewits (Peter, David and Colin). Each patrol had it's own ridge tent. Scoutmaster Les (Skip.L) and Bob Bishop & Norman Young were known as the 'O's (officers) and were housed in a bell tent.

A group of sea scouts from Hertford were already camping near the trackway on the Maldon side of the island - so we pitched our tents a good distance further east in order to be quite separate. The all-important latrine trenches (toilets) were then dug & screened off at a suitable distance.

Our (cold) dinner consisted of luncheon meat, tomato, cucumber, and bread & butter. The appointed cooks - Colin & Brian - then lit a fire, heated some water and washed up. The rest of the afternoon was devoted to gadget making (no details given). Skip.L went 'ashore' to get some milk, and returned just as the rest of us were finishing our 'tea' of bread & butter & jam & orangeade.

As Bob's drawing shows, Northey Island is about a mile across each way, and the evening was mostly spent exploring - with pointers from Skip.L & Bob & Norman who had all camped there before in previous years. We mostly kept to the southern half. A late snack was followed by prayers and bed - but not before a couple of the boys forgot where the kitchen waste pit was and trod in it, while Bob actually sat in it.

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Day 2 -- Saturday -- 16th August

-- (Bob's handwriting) -- The cooks (TerryB & David) were up at 7am. After much changing of minds by the others only Skip.L & Bob went swimming before breakfast - which consisted of cornflakes, sausages and bread & marmalade. The traditional act of 'breaking the flag' to fly open & loose from the erected flagpole was followed by an inspection of tents and of personal kit. This was won by the Peewit patrol.

The two patrols were then sent out to explore and to observe the wild life. Dinner consisted of tinned herrings, tomatoes & spuds followed by plums & custard. A customary rest hour was then taken after which Peter, Colin & TerryB walked in to Maldon while the rest of us went 'swimming' in the nearby rock pool which always held enough water at low tide for a good splash about. A sharp rain shower caught us all off guard - especially those who had already dried themselves & got dressed. (There was no shelter!)

After teatime (of bread, butter, jam & tea), a visitor arrived in the form of Skipper Clarke in his old Ford 8 car. He brought with him the luxuries of a camp bed & mattress as befits an older man. He was well known to Skip.L & Bob & Norman from earlier Dunmow scouting days and we made room in our 'O's bell tent for another person. He had been a scoutmaster at several places since his Dunmow days and was currently based in Warwickshire.



**The Curlews –
Brian Bolden, Terry Brewer, Terry Moore, Ray Marshall**

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Day 3 -- Sunday -- 17th August

-- (SkipperC's handwriting) -- Those in the Curlews tent were chattering by 6am and someone brought a welcome mug of 'tea in bed' for our visitor SkipperC. The sun was shining and promised a fine day, but many were reluctant to emerge from their sleeping bags - whether made up from blankets & safety pins, or the sort readymade for campers. (Iodine soap was often used for seawater washing - but no mention here of the facilities for washing). Some were not keen to wash unless under pressure, and nobody went for an early swim.

Skip.L & Bob went to the Catholic church in Maldon, leaving Norman in charge of breakfast time. Egg & bacon with bread & marmalade were eventually prepared by the cooks, but as usual it took less time to eat than prepare.

Curlews (the birds) were probably nesting on the island and attracted our attention for their calls and long bills. Flag break, inspection, collecting firewood, washing, shaving, shampooing, chiropody all get comment. All but the cooks, & one other, bathed. Dinner was a feast - roast beef, runner beans, potatoes & gravy. But for some reason not enough roast potatoes to go round. Then stewed plums & thick milk.

It was a busy Sunday with several scouting visitors. Before dinner Bernard (Ward) arrived from Dunmow on his bike. Later, (Lionel) Bruce from Stebbing cycled in, and Roger from Westcliffe on a motorbike. All of them known to we 'O's from previous scouting, and had all camped on Northey Island in earlier times.

After tea Bruce went with Bob for a rockpool dip. Roger went with SkipperC & Norman and the seven boys to the Congregational church in Maldon - 'safety in numbers' said SkipperC. On the way back Bruce was seen cycling back home and all went to a nearby café for coffee and chapples (cakes). The walk back was punctuated with courting couples on the sea wall and the odour of a sewage outfall. Roger took ages to dress up in his gear before mounting his m/cycle to return home.

As the group returning from church approached the camp they detected the scent of hot soup - but also heard the indignant voice of Skip.L who had been preparing it - saying 'you're 20 minutes late'. But the soup, with bread, made a good end to the day before prayers & turn in and a final check by the 'O's.



**The Peewits
Peter Smith, David Bell, Colin Chambers**

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Day 4 -- Monday -- 18th August

-- (one of the boys' handwriting) -- The cooks were Peter & Colin under the charge of SkipperC and by about 8am they prepared porridge, sausages and bread & butter & marmalade. After washing up, all except the cooks went to wash in the rock pool. SkipperC & David dipped in their birthday suits. Inspection was at 10am and was won by the Curlew patrol. The duty orderly and another went to the mainland farm to get the milk and the mail. Dirty towels were then washed.

At 1300hrs came dinner of cold meat, potatoes & greens followed by fresh fruit, and rest hour at 1330-1430. It then rained for about six hours and everybody was confined to their tents for the afternoon and evening. At 1700hrs tea of B & B & J was eaten in the tents. The plan for camp games in the evening was cancelled by the weather. The 'flag down' was held at 2030hrs and then supper of bread & cheese & cocoa. Prayers at 2200hrs and then to bed.



Camp from the south

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Day 5 -- Tuesday -- 19th August

-- (a second boy's handwriting) -- Under Bob's orders the cooks today were Brian & TerryB. Breakfast at 8.30am was cereal, egg & bacon, bread & butter & jam. The flag was broken by TerryM who was the duty orderly, then he and Ray went 'ashore' for milk and mail at the farm, but they had to wade through the incoming tide to get back.

All except the cooks went to the shore line to collect firewood. The cooks stayed back to search for a missing clothes brush belonging to the Curlew patrol. At 1pm dinner of sausages and potatoes & carrots was served followed by a DELICIOUS jam pudding made by SkipperC who was let loose in the grub tent for a short while. Rest hour was 2pm-3pm. During free time some went to 'the wreck' (of an old boat) and some went to Maldon and some exploring.

Tea of bread & butter & jam & tea was at 1715hrs. After this there were games with Norman & Bob which was great fun and it went on through the evening until supper of bread & corned beef and cocoa was served at 2030hrs. Supper was to have been soup but it was accidentally spilt by Bob when the handle came off the dixey can. There was only enough left for three.



Morning Inspection

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Day 6 -- Wednesday -- 20th August

-- (a third boy's handwriting) -- Chaos in the Curlews tent at 0800hrs because Brian and TerryB had overslept so Skip.L & SkipperC & Bob tried to drag them out - even the cooks Ray & David deserted the kitchen to watch. Norman in charge of cooks put too much porridge in the largest billycan and had to get rid of it in the grub tent and Ray started cooking it again. When porridge was served it was found to be burnt with black pieces in it but it tasted quite good. After that it was bacon & fried bread which was much appreciated.

-- (a fourth boy's handwriting) -- Just before breakfast we went to the rockpool to bathe & wash. Brian cut his foot on a rock and we all came out & dried ourselves. The next item was getting ready for inspection. The Curlews had many faults and had only 5 for kit and 2½ for their tent. The Peewits defeated them with 7½ for kit and 8½ for tent. The cooks scored 8.

After inspection followed general wood getting, milk & water getting. The wood getters were led by SkipperC. Most of the camp sat around now until dinner. Dinner consisted of a stew made by SkipperC & Co, and stewed plums. From 1330-1430 was rest hour. Then it was free time until 1700 - instead of a firelighting competition. Some of us went swimming and some went into Maldon. After this came a tea of bread, jam, cucumber & tomatoes.

From 1730 - 2030 there was another free time order which was heartily appreciated. After this we had supper consisting of cocoa, bread & cheese, we then had soup round the kitchen fire, but this was interrupted (by rain?) so we went into the O's tent to finish it off. We had prayers and said good night. We collapsed sleepily into our beds and were soon fast asleep.



Sleeping time for some

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Day 7 -- Thursday -- 21st August

-- (Norman's handwriting) -- SkipperC brought early morning tea for the other three 'O's, and a morning wash for all was followed by shredded wheat & boiled eggs, an easy meal for TerryM & Peter to make - so perhaps they should have used the excess porridge that Norman nearly cooked yesterday. Pressing on to inspection, amidst much discussion about what was happening today. Some new venture was in the air.

Nobody has yet written about the rowing boat which the nearby sea-scouts had let us use. It was mainly in case we needed to go to the mainland at high tide. On Tuesday Skip.L and Norman had rowed over to fetch the sausages because TerryM & Ray were running late as they had been waiting for the tide to get low enough for them to wade back to the island. On Wednesday Skip.L & Bob had used it to go over for milk & mail, getting swamped from the rough water on the way.

After flag break the inspection had resulted in a tie with the cooks being commended for their clean kitchen. The mystery activity was then revealed. The boys were to go on a hike (with map) to Beeleigh Abbey via the Maldon boathouses, cooking their meal on the way from items in the parcel provided. On returning they were each to write a log of their journey illustrated by sketches & maps, with emphasis on Beeleigh Abbey & Maldon Hall.

The seven boys all set off, while Bob cycled into Maldon for some requisites. Two teenage girls (staying at the island farm house) brought the mail for us. Skip.L & Norman walked over to the mainland for the milk and on the way were hailed by a fisherman in a punt asking if we liked eels and showed us a pail of live writhing wriggling wet creatures. We decided to give them a try and we bought a pound and the man prepared them for us. Back at the camp they were stewed and we four 'O's ate them with salad - but were not enjoyed by SkipperC who made a date pudding to follow.

The boat had been left high & dry by the tide so Bob & Norman moved it to a better mooring. We four 'O's later went for a swim from the western shore and Bob & Norman took the opportunity to go for a lengthy swim - and saw the same two girls with two others in a rowing boat. After cycling into Maldon for more food Bob & Norman then returned to find the seven boys already back from their hike and eating a meal of cold luncheon meat & potatoes, with date pudding to follow.

-- (SkipperC's handwriting) -- During the evening most of the boys spent the time writing up their journey logs. They all seemed to have enjoyed their day - including the food supplied. A priest friend of Skip.L's brought a German friend for a short evening visit but they declined the offer to join us for supper. After that we had a scout's 'campfire' (sitting around the fire and singing scout songs). It was all very informal and at the end TerryB read prayers and chose a Prayer for Scouters (aka the 'O's). SkipperC was very aware that this was to be his last night of camping with the Takeley scouts.



Eating time (with farm tower on the horizon)



Eating the eels - Norman, Bob, Skip.L.

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Day 8 -- Friday -- 22nd August

-- (Skip.L's handwriting) -- After suitable farewells SkipperC (aka the Old Crow) drove away in his car about 9.30am taking Ray with him to collect the milk from the mainland farm. The usual flag break and inspection were delayed, but afterwards Bob & Norman took some of the boys to the rock pool while Skip.L & the cooks prepared dinner. Colin had difficulty opening a tin of herrings and had to call for help from Skip.L, but herrings & salad it was, with stewed plums & custard afterwards. For some reason the plums seemed to act like prunes on some of the boys to the amusement of the 'O's.

The nearby Hertford sea scouts were returning home next day and the boat we had been borrowing from them would no longer be available. So Skip.L rode into Maldon and after getting cash from the Post Office, he managed to hire a rowing boat for Saturday & Sunday from Mr Hitchcock for 30 shillings. After tea in a café Skip.L returned to camp, and in the evening Mr Godfrey (from the mainland farm?) came over and watched the evening 'mud sports' organised by Bob & Norman

These consisted of some ordinary running & jumping events but they took place in the mud exposed at low tide at 'Southey Creek' near the rock pool. Because of hidden stones it was important to wear plimsoles, but in order to avoid losing them all footwear had to be tied on with string. The sight of Brian floundering in the mud after his high jump will long be remembered, but it was Brian who came out winner of these mud sports, which were thoroughly enjoyed by all.

A game of 'mud rugby' was then played - in the same mud. But so much effort had gone into the sports that little energy was left. The mud covered bodies were then washed off in the rock pool. Meanwhile Skip.L whose lumbago had kept him from taking part in the sport hurried back to camp to prepare hot cocoa to go with the bread & cheese supper. Prayers & goodnights soon followed another busy day.



First Aid in the Kitchen



Swimming was favourite

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Day 9 -- Saturday -- 23rd August

-- (Skip.L's handwriting) -- Bob roused the cooks Ray & David, and soon afterwards Skip.L, who seemed reluctant to rise, was set upon by the boys and dragged out of his sleeping bag and rolled in a most undignified way. Breakfast was 'camp dogs' (sausages) & fried bread, then B,B,M & tea.

After flag break & inspection, a cry from the boys came – “Can we make a raft?”. It was agreed, but Bob had to hold back the cooks from joining in because today was to be the roast beef & two veg. day. However he promised that if they prepared everything including firewood quickly he would keep watch over the cooking process while they went to help with the raft. (Nothing recorded in the log about the rafting activities)

Meanwhile Skip.L & Norman put on their uniforms and left on foot for Maldon to collect the boat - as well as buying some more food ready for visiting day tomorrow. They were rowing downstream but soon warmed up in the bright sun and shirts came off when out of sight of the land. They arrived at camp just as Bob was dishing up the hot roast beef & potatoes & carrots with eating apples to follow.

After rest hour the afternoon was spent swimming and rowing up & down beside the island - only one non-swimmer allowed per swimmer in the boat, and although it was late, teatime came all too soon. On the 'Daily Program' the activity for this evening was listed as 'Free Mud' and there were many queries as to what was the meaning of this.

It turned out to be a 'mud trail' which was prepared by SkipL & Norman. After the meal the boys (except David who had to be careful with a cut foot) were then blindfolded and placed in line, and all holding onto a cord. This 'moving trail' was headed by Norman who took them on a merry chase up & over & down the slippery & muddy creeks. Brian managed to fall into a watery creek and wondered if he had 'had it' - but he was OK. It was all quite hilarious and it also made a very funny sight for the onlookers. Eventually the blindfolds were removed and they could all see where they had been.

Skip.L then prepared some very welcome soup & bread. However he soon had to read the riot act for the only time during this happy summer camp, because one scout (who shall be nameless) carelessly hurled a hammer out of his tent and it struck TerryB on the head and not surprisingly causing him pain.



The raft had its moments



The boat was great fun

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Day 10 -- Sunday -- 24th August

-- (Skip.L's handwriting) -- This was 'visitors day'. Skip.L went off to early morning service, and the cooks were Brian & Peter roused by Norman. Breakfast was over & cleared by the time Skip.L returned. The water supply had been turned off last evening around 2000 hrs and in spite of us having filled every available container it soon became clear we would run out before dinner.

Uniforms were worn today for flagbreak & inspection, and scouts were then expected to go to church. All had left by 1030 for the 1100 service - except Norman who was the Duty 'O' and who would catch up on his bike. Skip.L then began to make a jam roly poly pudding during which the first visitors arrived. Mrs Moore & a friend, and Mrs Smith with Peter's younger brother sat in the shade of a tent while Skip.L took them some tea which they appreciated. They had seen the boys walking along the sea wall, and were pleased to know they had gone to church.

Norman had a puncture on his way back to camp, and he was followed in by a scout from Takeley, **Gordon Lingley** (not in uniform), and some more scouts from the 1st Dunmow Troop (Terry Francis, Derek Warner & Michael Early). They all decided to go for a bathe in the rock pool. Next to arrive were Bernard (Ward) and BryanB from Dunmow, and they brought news that the water supply had been restored.

The campers were soon back from church and the cooks went straight back into action. They produced a meal of cold roast beef with a salad of lettuce, cucumber, tomatoes & beetroot. It was served a bit late because the potatoes had not been peeled in time and the cooking could not be hurried.

By about 1330hrs the adult visitors decided they wanted to get off the island before the tide rose too high, especially as one of them was not keen on boats. However one of the boys had been to look and reported that the 'hard' was indeed covered. Skip.L had just given out the roly poly and was already in the middle of eating his own portion. He was beginning to feel a bit full - and there was no shortage of offers to finish it for him.

That gave him the moment to go with the adults to see the state of the tide. The water was already too deep so it was agreed the boat was the only option ("provided Mr Pepper does the rowing", said the friend of the two parents). Skip.L took them across without mishap to pick up their car and leave for home.

Two more visitors were already waiting on the other side. They were Vic Stock (Scoutmaster of the 1st Dunmow Troop) and his fiancée Jill Coates, and Vic rowed the boat back to the island. There was just enough coffee for the visitors so everyone else had tea. Skip,L then (with Brian) had to row back to the mainland to meet General Charlton who had sent a telegram to say he would arrive at 1500 hrs.

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Mr & Mrs Bell & their young daughter had already arrived and went to sit in the boat while Skip.L waited for the General who arrived with his wife and two young companions. The tide was rising fast but while Skip.L was trying to bring the boat closer to shore for easier access, the General tried to help - and he fell into the water up to his knees. He & the young lad eventually got into the boat, but Mrs Charlton and companion decided to stay behind.

The boat was landed on the western shore where the campers and Dunmow visitors were having a swim. The five new visitors climbed the slope to the camp and were given drinks. The General declined a pair of dry socks and walked around in bare feet. Meanwhile Bob rowed back and brought over the young lady who had stayed behind.

After their short stay, three boat loads of visitors were rowed back to the mainland while Mr & Mrs Bell stayed for tea. The usual bread & butter & jam and left-over salad was followed by cake and biscuits, with the campers being the biggest eaters.

As this was the last camping day it was then decided to take the boat back to Maldon before the tide got too low again. However the boat was found to be already high & dry, so Skip.L and Bob had to push it about 70 yards before it would float. They then had to row upstream to return the boat to Mr Hitchcock. On the way Bob managed to briefly lose both the oars but they were quickly retrieved by Skip.L. They then walked back along the sea wall.

Meanwhile some of the scouts took the raft which they made earlier in the week for a trip right round the island with Norman's permission. However Skip.L was not happy about such a risky journey, but they all arrived back safely, and the raft was then dismantled.

Arriving back from Maldon at about 1900 hrs Skip.L arranged a program for the last evening camp fire, and meanwhile Norman tried to look for the girls staying at the tower house. The well-known songs were sung lustily and the quieter ones such as 'From Out the Battered Elm Tree' and 'These are the Times We Shall Dream About' were sung with a tinge of sadness on this last night of camp.

The customary prayers were read by the Duty Runner and then all scouts everywhere were remembered, especially those scouts of the Takeley Troop who were unable to be present. The boys all retired to bed while the 'O's reflected on these few happy days spent in friendship & brotherliness.

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The scouts set out on Thursday's hike



**Peter, Norman, SkipperC, Bob, Skip.L,
Ray, TerryB, TerryM, Colin, Brian, David**

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Day 11 -- Monday -- 25th August

On this last morning the cooks were up at 0600 hrs and the rest at 0630. Breakfast was followed by hurried activity to strike the tents, pack everything, and clear up all round so as to leave the camp site clean & tidy - as all scouts should.

The three boys who came by bus left camp about 1020 hrs so as to catch their 1100 hrs bus from Maldon. Mr Bell arrived at about 1030 and all our camping & personal kit was stowed in his trailer. The four boys who originally came with him climbed into his car, taking some seashells as souvenirs of the camp, and all soon left for home.

This left the 'O's - Skip.L & Bob & Norman - who went for a final dip in the rock pool before heading for home and leaving Northey Island in peace.



Leaving Northey across the causeway at low tide