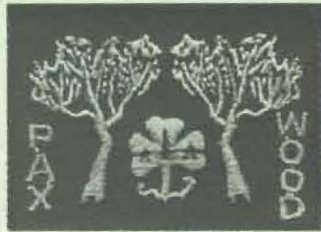


The Pax Wood Story





The original Paxwood Story was written by Helen Grant and was included in the Paxwood brochure to coincide with the opening in 1957. Helen then wrote a fuller version in 1962 which was printed as a separate booklet with a forward by Marjorie Campbell (Mac), the first Chair of the Management Committee.

This updated version was written by Margaret Miller (Chair 1996-2003) in December 2006 for the 50th birthday celebrations in 2007.



The opening of
Pax Wood by
Olave, Lady
Baden-Powell
26th April 1957





The original Pax Hall building opened in 1964 and the new Pax Hall opened in 1989



The Pax Wood Story

“Here you find something charming and delightful, in that, having been a ruin, it has now been brought into a lovely, and shall we even call it an “enchanted” little house for the use of the Brownies and Guides of Kent’.

These were the words spoken by Lady Baden Powell at the opening of Pax Wood on 26th April 1957. But the story of Pax Wood goes back many years before this, in fact before World War II in the 1940s. Mr George Leslie Wates owned a property called Rowhill Grange. His estate covered many acres, with woodlands and stables. He was very interested in youth organisations, the Guides and Scouts most particularly, and he would often allow them to use the grounds for camping and hiking. There was one particular building which was a coach house with a covered yard and a large lean-to greenhouse on the south side; during the 1930s the hayloft was converted into a studio where Mrs Wates could work on her painting.

The Wates family had several children, one of them a daughter Helen. She helped with a Brownie Pack in the Millwall area of the Isle of Dogs. In 1937 this Brownie Pack was about to go on Pack Holiday when a day or so before their departure, they were told it would have to be cancelled due to an infectious disease at the school they were going to use. You can imagine the disappointment among them all – but Mrs Wates came to the rescue. She was District Commissioner for Swanley at the time and suggested they use her studio. It would keep them dry, water was available and they could cook on the little fire. When she saw the place the local camp adviser proclaimed that the building was totally unsuitable for a Pack Holiday, but added with a smile: ‘You come and I won’t inspect you!’

So the children came, 18 of them and had a glorious week in the sunshine – they never discovered that it wasn't the original place that had been planned for their holiday. What a wonderful time they must have had, coming from the East End of London, possibly never having even seen a tree before.

But then the war came and people had other things to distract them; Mrs Wates gave up her painting and the studio fell into disrepair. It became very overgrown with ivy, brambles and nettles. During the war a large bomb exploded on the site where Jam Roll now stands and this shattered all the windows and blew the doors off their hinges. The place looked totally desolate and uncared for. After the war this collection of buildings was regarded as useless and no one really bothered about them until one day it was discovered there was an outstanding war damage claim on them. Mr Wates thought they should all be pulled down, but then perhaps they could be used for shelter for the campsites, which were still being used in the grounds, as the walls were still strong; the roof could be repaired and water and electricity were available.

Time passed, it was now 1955 and Helen Wates had become Helen Grant and was running a Brownie Pack in Bromley. She had never forgotten that wonderful Pack Holiday she had had with the Brownies from Millwall. She was a lady with wonderful vision and she began to think, 'Why not a Kent Guide house?' There were so many possibilities. And thus began much correspondence between the County Commissioner, Mrs Crossfield (Kent was one large county in those days), and the County Camp Adviser Miss L'Anson Jones; finally the idea was accepted by the County Executive Committee. Miss Marjorie Campbell (Mac) was invited to become the first Chairwoman of the Pax Wood Committee, which met in 1956. For the next year there was feverish

activity by all members from Kent – the house had to be cleared of undergrowth, a garden laid and structural work had to be carried out professionally before the interior cleaning and furnishing could take place. A list of everything that was needed was sent out to all Divisions, Districts and Units.

During this time the news came that Countess Gravina was giving her caravan to Pax Wood as an annexe. It arrived, having been towed all the way from Frittenden and turned out to be a real travellers' caravan. At that time it was cream and white inside, and green on the outside but Sevenoaks Division volunteered to re-paint it and they produced colours similar to those we have today. 'Jam Roll' was the nick-name given to the Rolls-Royce that was presented to the Founder at the Scout Jamboree in 1928 – and the Chief Guide was more than happy to have the name given to this new acquisition. She was also happy to have rooms in the house named after the names of their early homes; names such as Pax Hill, Pax Tu, Ewhurst and Mynthurst.

So by 26th April 1957 the house was finally ready for its official opening by none other than the Chief Guide – Lady Baden Powell. Guiders, Guides and Brownies came from all over the County to welcome her, lining the driveways to cheer her on her way. There are many people still coming to Pax Wood who remember that day 50 years ago and can tell stories about the part they played in preparing the house ready for its opening.

The Opening Ceremony was likened to the Sleeping Beauty when the house was awakened by the Prince played by Lady Baden Powel as she brought to life all the children who were sleeping inside – the Spirit of Guiding had taken over and Pax Wood would never sleep again.

So that was the beginning.

For 50 years now members of our movement have been coming for holidays and camps. As with Guiding itself, changes have taken place. There have been additions – such as the building of Pax Hall, which was opened in 1964 – again by the Chief Guide. The county of Kent by this time had been split into Kent East and Kent West, and the new building was known as the County HQ of Kent West. This building stood at the rear of the Warden's cottage and was a prefabricated single storey building. In 1970 the Camp Chapel was built and dedicated.

By the late 1980s the prefabricated Pax Hall had reached the end of its life and Rachel Notley, now Chairman of the Management Committee and a former County Commissioner for Kent West, felt that a great effort should be made to build a new permanent building: but where would the money come from? An appeal was put out through all the Units – could every member donate £1? Charities were approached, and donations were sought. Guides and Brownies bought bricks for the new hall, there was even a Sponsored Wheelie at Brands Hatch and somehow the £100,000 was finally raised and the new Pax Hall was built. This was officially opened on 21st October 1989. It is a much larger building than its older sister (Pax Wood) – it even had every modern convenience with facilities for the disabled.

In March 1997 Pax Wood commemorated its 40th birthday with a celebration lunch when many of the people who had been involved in the opening all those years ago were invited. The main guests were, of course, Helen Grant (now President), her brother Ainsworth Wates and a grandson of the original benefactor. In July of that year the children came to have their celebration with a wonderful 40th birthday party.

During this time the Wates family and their daughter Helen had taken a very close interest in the development of Pax Wood. Their generosity continued when the Rowhill Estate was being sold. The Guides of Kent were able to buy a lease of the land for a very small sum with certain restrictions, which are in position until the year 2022 when the land will come under the ownership of the Kent Guides.

In the 1990s the former coach house of Pax Wood was becoming increasingly in need of repair. Central heating had been installed but the guests still had to negotiate the outside corridor to get to the bathroom which had just one shower and two toilets. The glass verandah, which everybody loved in the summer when the sun shone, was very cold in winter with only the Calor Gas heater for warmth. It was usual to see a couple of buckets in the middle of the verandah floor to catch the water when it rained. It was becoming very obvious that some form of upgrade would need to be done on the old house. What a stroke of fortune when a former Commissioner from Beckenham – Miss Marjorie Eden – left a large legacy to Kent Guiding to be used to provide or furnish a holiday house, including facilities for the Trefoil Guild and handicapped members.

It was in 1996 that the four Kent County Commissioners decided that this money should be used to extend and refurbish Pax Wood. It took 18 months for views to be sought, plans to be drawn up, building permission obtained and, finally, in January 1998, with the house now emptied – all furniture having been put into storage - the new building was begun.

During the next six months, Pax Wood resembled a builder's yard. A septic tank was installed which meant the ploughing up of the Orchard site to install the land drains. One would never have believed how many large lorries could have negotiated the narrow driveway but eventually, seven months later at the end of July, all the work was complete. Again a band of volunteers set about getting the house ready for its grand opening on 12th September 1998. The Region Chief Commissioner, Mrs Frances Drake, officiated at the opening ceremony. Both buildings were full of children, Brownies in Pax Wood and Guides in Pax Hall – they came from units all over Kent. Again the guests included members of the Wates family – Helen Grant and Ainsworth Wates.

The new building had been designed to keep one very important aspect of the original Coach House, the covered entrance which can be seen as you approach from the driveway – it still looks as it did when it opened many years before. It is only when you walk round to the back of the house that the changes can be seen. On the ground floor the verandah has gone; there is a well fitted kitchen, a disability suite, First Aid room and craft room. As you walk upstairs you will notice the bare wall on your right, this is the original outside wall of the coach house which can also be seen in the Guiders' room. All the bedrooms now have en suite facilities (no more outside walks at night to the toilet!).

Marjorie Campbell (Mac),
the first Chairwoman of
Pax Wood



Pax Wood 40th birthday party.
l to r Helen Grant, Rachel Notley, Hazel Harrison, Margaret Jago (nee Simmons)



Clearing the site and
starting the rebuild of
Pax Wood 1998

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Building on the new Pax Wood progressed quickly
ready for the opening in September 1998





Pax Wood opening
by Frances Drake,
London & South-east
England Region
Commissioner



Helen Grant with the
Mayor of Dartford on
opening day

It was with great sadness that we learned in July 2000 of the death of Helen Grant. She had moved to Devon but as President kept in constant touch with the Management Committee members and was always eager to know how things were going at Pax Wood. A Memorial Service was held in the following September when many family members and old friends gathered to pay tribute. Our connection with the Wates family continues as Anita Laird (daughter of Ainsworth Wates and niece of Helen) agreed to become the new President. A memorial to Helen was dedicated when the footprint of the first Pax Hall was covered with decking, and equipment was bought for the area to be used for outdoor games

In the last ten years improvements at Pax Wood have continued; each year there is upgrading, replacing or just putting in something new. 'Jam Roll' was repaired and repainted – the years had taken their toll on the lovely caravan - wood was rotting and it badly needed repainting. A new toilet block was built on the Orchard site. To accommodate today's members both toilet blocks now have electricity and showers. A new Adventure Play area was constructed to replace the old assault course. The Friends Working Group, who still continue to carry out much service at Pax Wood in order to maintain its high standards, refitted the Chapel with a new altar table, bench seating and steps. Pax Wood was in need of a permanent shop so a wooden building was built at the rear of the Warden's Cottage; this has recently been moved to new quarters, a small brick building just a few yards away.

So many improvements and changes have taken place at Pax Wood in the last 50 years. Who could have imagined what was started by Mr George Wates in the 1930s when he allowed Guides and Scouts to camp in his fields, could have developed into such a well loved place by so many members of local, UK and International Girlguiding? So much generosity from the Wates family, guidance from Helen Grant, devotion and vision given by Guiding members over the years all with one aim – to preserve something for future young people to enjoy, a place to have fun and adventure together.

So that *“lovely enchanted little house in the woods”* is still with us today and hopefully for many more years to come.



Pax Wood House in the snow (before the alterations)

Jam Roll

Presented to Pax Wood in 1957 by Countess Dorothea Gravina (1905-1990)

She joined the Guides as a junior member in 1918 and attended international rallies in many countries.

District Commissioner for Malling and Headcorn, Division Commissioner for Weald.

Captain of 1st Frittenden Guides.

Lead many mountaineering expeditions. In 1962 she was leader of a successful four-woman expedition to scale three unclimbed peaks in the Himalayas.

Member of Our Chalet Sub-Committee and the Alpine Club.

She raised three children in the caravan which she took about on her travels. She was described by a long-time friend as a 'well known and intrepid character'.

Married Count Gravina who was a conductor and a great-grandson of Liszt and a contemporary of Toscanini.

Awarded the Beaver Award of the Guide Association.

Died in November 1990 (aged 85).



Miss Marjorie Eden

Was a Guider who ran the 3rd Beckenham Company from the 1930s to the 1960s when the Company met at Christ Church, Penge. When Marjorie died she left a generous legacy to the Guides of Kent. After careful consideration of Marjorie's wishes, it was agreed that the legacy should be used for the refurbishment of Pax Wood House, paying particular attention to the provision of facilities for the disabled. The whole cost of the structural refurbishment was met from the legacy and the Eden Suite is so named in her memory.

Marjorie was well known throughout Kent for running camps for disabled Guides. The first camp was held in 1932 which was attended by her sister who was a Guide in her own Company and the last such camp is believed to have been held in 1968 at Birchington.

The opening of the Eden Suite and the new refurbished Pax Wood took place in September 1998 and was attended by many, including a group of Trefoil Guild members who had been members of Miss Marjorie Eden's Guide Company.

The Chief Guide's speech at the opening of Pax Wood April 1957

Mr Wates, fellow Guides, and also may I say fellow Scouts and friends of Scouting and Guiding - I feel that this is indeed a very momentous and wonderful occasion. I have been very fortunate in the past in being able to visit camp sites, camp homes and buildings which have been made available for the use of Scouts and Guides in various parts of the world, but here today we have all been able to share in something which is quite unique. I would like first of all to say to Mr. Wates how very greatly I regret his father is not well enough to be with us today, though I am rejoiced to hear he will be coming home soon and will be able to come and see this lovely thing which has emerged from the plan in which he took so wonderful a part when the idea was mooted to him. I feel for the Guide Movement this place will be - shall we call it a power house, but not like a modern power house, a great modern building with chimneys, straight and square, walls with no beauty at all - here you find something far more romantic and charming and delightful in having been a ruin, it has now been brought into a lovely and charming and, shall we even call it, enchanting little house for the use of the Guides and Brownies of Kent, so we can never be grateful enough to Mr. Wates himself for having agreed to make the place available, by having helped so much in the construction of it. Also we should like to offer our thanks, I am sure, to all those - both great and small - people behind the scenes who have helped with the building, with the equipping, and for the delightful furnishings. Indeed here we will find in days to come Brownies and Guides, not only coming from Kent but perhaps from other places too, who will come here to rejoice in the surroundings to benefit by their stay and will, in their turn, go away refreshed in mind, in body and

shall we also say in spirit, for continuing the game of scouting and guiding, for continuing to carry out the ideals for which the movement stands. So may I in accepting the key from you, Mr. Wates, say to you and through you to your father how grateful I am sure we are at the present time in Kent and in the whole of England may feel in what he has done. Also may we hope that all who enter in these walls and those who share in the surroundings of these camping grounds, in the beauty and peace and the quiet scenery will always think with gratitude of those who have made this place available during this unique and special centenary year, so to everyone who has had a share in making this possible I would like to offer our gratitude, and when I say our gratitude may I speak for the whole movement and also at this moment, as I am standing in Kent, on behalf of Kent, for Mrs. Crosfield, their Kent Guide leader at the present time who I know would like to associate herself with what I have said. I would like to say how grateful we all are and how much we would wish joy and success to all those who come to be within this delightful place in the days and the months and the years that lie ahead of us.



A new roof for the Warden's cottage

Friends of Pax Wood refurbishing the Chapel



The new Adventure Playground



Pax Wood House
today



Anita Laird, President
and niece of Helen Grant,
opening the Helen Grant
Memorial Play Area
5th March 2005

Pax Wood Management Committee Chairwomen

1956-1967	Hon Marjorie Campbell
1967-1979	Helen Grant
1979-1985	House and Hall Committees formed; Chairs included Marjorie King, Cath Scott, Audrey Yolland and Beryl Braby for the Hall and Sylvia Cracknell for the House
1985-1990	Rachel Notley (Management Committee reformed)
1990-1996	Barbara Naylor
1996-2003	Margaret Miller
2003-	Lynda Metcalfe

Friends of Pax Wood

The Friends offer support to the management committee. The four Kent counties who share responsibility for the running of Pax Wood, need to ensure that the site is self financing, and it is reassuring to be able to utilise the time and talents of Friends. Your subscription can help to provide a much needed item or, for those who are able to give of their time and energy, Friends are asked to try to support 2 working days a year to help with such tasks as gardening, light maintenance and spring cleaning.

We very much hope that you will consider becoming a 'Friend' – why not join now and help us to continue the wonderful opportunities that Pax Wood offers today and for the future of those in the Guide movement.

Chair:

Claire Inglin

38 Edendale Road, Barnehurst, Bexleyheath, Kent. DA7 6RW

