



E-NEWS



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Rise and Shine Radio Show

Our Spiritual Leader, Revd Jack Dunion, broadcasts his own online radio show every Sunday at 9am on River Radio (formerly Leven Radio):

<https://riverradio.uk/>

The link below now gives access to all backdated Rise & Shine programs:

<https://www.mixcloud.com/RevJack/>

Leaders United Weekend

Jan Millar writes:

In the light of the current situation regarding Covid 19, the Leaders United Weekend due to be held at Purley Chase from 20th - 22nd November has been cancelled.

Seaburn Dene's Centenarian - Jim Otterson

Revd Bruce Jarvis reports:

On 25th October James (Jim) Otterson passed the wonderful milestone of his 100th birthday. COVID-19



restrictions meant that it was not possible for any kind of party or gathering to be held, which was a shame, but yet another casualty of this pandemic. The best that could be done was for local family members and some close friends of Jim and Dorothy to go through the garage into the back garden, suitably masked and a maximum of six at a time, where we could spend a few minutes with the man himself. Jim and his wife sat in their

conservatory, while visitors stood or sat outside. Fortunately, it was a dry and sunny, if breezy, October Sunday morning.

Jim, or Skip as he is widely known, has had a long association with Seaburn Dene New Church, right from its inception in 1956. Revd. Eustace and Mrs Jean Goldsack lived in a house just down the road from our present building, and they generously made their living room and garage available to the infant congregation until the community hall became available. Jim, along with his brothers, had long been involved with the Scouting movement, and when he and Irene bought their first home on the new estate in 1956, they quickly found themselves forming the 26th Sunderland (Seaburn) Scout Group, ably supported by Ted Bottomley from Keighley, who, with Marjorie, had moved to the North-East to work for the Shields Gazette. Ted and his brothers were also keen Scouters.

The estate was occupied by young marrieds with families, so it didn't take long for the group to grow, and eventually to have their own Scout headquarters. Jim was in charge of the Scouts, and Irene was Akela of the Cub Pack. Eventually increasing numbers created a need for additional leaders and packs, all supported by an active parents' group. While never formally a Church group, a close link was retained, with attendance at parade services, and assistance with fund-raising activities like the Christmas Fayres.

When I arrived at Seaburn Dene New Church in 1985 I found a vibrant group of boys and leaders, and would visit them in their Scout Hut. The major festival services were a crowded affair with the boys and the girls of the Guides and Brownie groups (who held their meetings in the



Church building) crammed in with the adults, many of the youngsters sitting on the floor. In the mid-70s the congregation had moved into their own premises on the edge of the estate.

Sadly, Jim's wife, Irene, died just before Christmas that year. Recently retired, Skip continued with his scouting activities until eventually he had to retire from the leadership. He passed on the mantle, but retained his active connection with the Group. Along with his interest in and support for the Church, he also became involved in work for the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, encouraging many young people to spread their wings and develop personal and practical skills. It was in this sphere that he met Dorothy Powell, who was later to become his wife, and they have enjoyed much happiness. Together they have faithfully served the congregation in various ways. Jim took over care of the Church garden, and they both served on the Council until quite recently.

So there is much to celebrate. For many people, Jim is the "perfect gentleman". For many, many others, he is a wonderful link with their youth, establishing values and attitudes that have remained with them.

We rejoice that Jim has made it to his centenary, and wish him and Dorothy happiness together in the months to come.



Photo courtesy of Sunderland Echo

Article can be accessed here: <https://www.sunderlandecho.com/news/people/retired-sunderland-scout-leader-celebrates-100th-birthday-3013686>