

Barnsley History

In the late Spring of 1936, to commemorate the Golden Jubilee (1886-1936) of the City of Vancouver, British Columbia, the BARNESLEY CHALLENGE SHIELD was presented to the British Columbia Branch of The Royal Life Saving Society for Annual Competition of Life Saving and Inhalator Teams by George Barnsley & Sons, Cornish Works, Sheffield, Yorkshire, England, United Kingdom.

Also presented were silver medals (referred to in a letter from George Barnsley) as "merely a token to the members of the team who succeed in winning the competition for the Barnsley Challenge Shield for twelve months." These awards were to encourage "teamwork, rather than leaving individuals to flounder for themselves."

Mr. Barnsley mentioned in his letter of July 10, 1936 that he had visited Vancouver several times, the last time being in 1934 with his son and was "impressed by its wonderful location, its progress and the kindness of all those we met ... so that although thousands of miles from home, one felt at home. Hospitality and friendly team spirit seem to pervade the British Empire, and in that we have the greatest exhibition of the spirit and achievement that teamwork can attain."

Originally, competition for this Shield was open to all organizations of B.C. and was awarded annually to teams of six ladies or men showing the greatest proficiency in lifesaving, resuscitation and inhalator drill methods.

The first year of competition (1936), the Shield was won by the Vancouver City Beach Lifeguards, whose Instructor was George Burrows, the supervisor of all Pools and Beaches in Vancouver. The team members were: George Sims, Walter Tyson, Dave Gray, Oscar Orr, Ken Hall, Edward Lockett. George Burrows was involved with the Shield since 1936 as judge and coach many times.

The successful competitor for 1937 and 1938 was The Royal Life Saving Girls' Inhalator Team, Instructor Violet Mellish. The 1937 team consisted of Jean Stanton, Jeane MacLeod, Alixe Nicholson, Jocelyn Ogston, Delwyn Beaty and Lynda Adams. The 1938 team was Kay Bloom, Connie Peters, Jeane MacLeod, Alixe Nicholson, Jocelyn Ogston and Delwyn Beaty, with the 12 year old Claire Beaty as Team Mascot.

A September 1938 newspaper reported: "The Girls Lifesaving team won the Vancouver rescue squad championship for the second time in succession this year. Probably experienced in getting their man and hanging on to him, eh?"

The 1939 competition was won by the Lifeguard Corps Girls' Inhalator Team, instructed by Ernest A. Lugin, Honourary Secretary of the RLSS, B.C. Branch. The team was composed of Willow Woodhouse, Jocelyn Orgston, Norma Chute, Margaret Hardy, Jean Brydger and Bernadette Doheny, achieving a total of 82.6 points out of a possible 100.

The Royal Life Saving Girls' Inhalator Team came second in 1939. For three consecutive summers, this same team made a two thousand mile tour of the B.C. interior demonstrating lifesaving methods.

In 1940, once again The Royal Life Saving Society Girls' Inhalator crew, instructed by Violet Mellish came first in the Barnsley Challenge Shield competition.

It was not always possible to have an annual competition for the Shield, as the War Years (1939 - 1945) had an effect on the personnel of the Branch and its members. While the Branch was able to stay open and serve the public to the best of its ability, competition for the BARNSELY CHALLENGE SHIELD seems to have been sporadic. I have not yet been able to make a total record of the competitions held, but do not doubt that it was kept safely displayed at the old Crystal Pool, located on the north shore of English Bay. This high visibility of the Shield was a constant reminder to the Lifeguards and the public that here was a 'trophy' of great importance to them all. I have spoken to a couple of Lifeguards of recent years who told me that seeing it hanging in the glass-fronted, very large locked display case had inspired them as young children to become Lifeguards and with a little bit of luck, to become competitors for the Shield. Naturally, each of them wanted to see their team win it and have the fact so recorded on the little shield-shaped plaques around its border. I did not ask if either was ever so fortunate as to be on the winning team!

We know that the Barnsley Challenge Shield was competed for in 1962, 1963 and 1964. It seems that it remained dormant until a great effort was put forth by the B.C. and Yukon Branch to revive not only the idea of the competition, but the competition itself. Much work went into reviewing the competition requirements, assessing them in light of modern methods, and in re-creating Terms of Reference for all aspects of the competition. This investigative and creative procedure was carried out by Ted Hopkins. It took two or three

years to get Lifeguards, Pool Managers, etc. interested in such a competition, as a minimum of five teams was set by the Branch Executive. However, the idea finally took hold. After the first year or two it was decided to hold Regional Competitions around the Branch geographic areas in order to be sure that the whole Branch was able to participate in the final competition for the Barnsley Challenge Shield.

Since 1975, The Barnsley Challenge Shield has been used as the means by which the Branch identifies its competing team for the Canadian Lifeguard Championship.

Submitted April 26, 1982

Mrs. M. J. Lathwell