

# BUILDING CHARACTER

“It always seems strange to me that we, a nation which has rightly prided itself for so many generations on its maritime heritage, should have to contend with such comparatively small numbers of Sea Scout troops (ships), small numbers, that is, in regard to what they might be and in relation to the potential numbers.

“One of the main reasons for the lack of development, I believe, has been the fault of many Sea Scouters themselves. They have tried to make out that their calling is a highly technical process that requires an incredible amount of knowledge, the learning of a new language (or perhaps jargon would be more accurate), and I am afraid that they have sometimes produced a sort of closed shop approach instead of what surely is right, an approach which says in truth that Sea Scouting is just another way of carrying out Scouting. Sea Scouting is Scouting on the water and the water itself is no substitute for the attributes of the backwoods man and the explorer. The man who takes pride in being unable to distinguish between an oak and an ash would seem to be a very strange fellow indeed, and he is often the first to deride the efforts of the landlubber to distinguish between port and starboard. In Scouting it is never what we know that matters, it is the way we know it; it is all in the point of view. Sea Scouting, as with all Scouting, must be concerned with training and developing the characters of the Scouts. It is not our job to produce strings of admirals or yachtsmen. It is the aim of Sea Scouting, as of all Scouting, to produce good men [and women].

“... I would enter a plea for a return to the simplicities of Sea Scouting which the Founder himself proved were sound and right by the example of his own experiences. I have always felt that *The Wind in the Willows* gives the clue as to the way in which Sea Scouting should be conducted, and whilst we cannot, unfortunately, reach the delightful heights of fantasy, we can spend a great deal of useful time ‘messaging about in small boats.’ Surely Sea Scouting is primarily a matter of small boat work; the grandiose guardship and so on have their place, but it ought to be a secondary place.

“There is some danger today of losing the joy and the adventure of Scouting, and perhaps where we so often go wrong in Sea Scouting as in other branches of our Movement, is in taking the character training light-heartedly and the activities seriously when we ought to take the activities light-heartedly and the character training seriously.”

” John Thurman (Camp Chief, Gilwell) from his  
introduction to *Sea Scouting*, by Tom Browne, M.A.,  
No. 1 in the New “Gilcraft” Series,  
The Boy Scouts Association, London, 1951