

Gildas Kansas Jones

3 February, 2008
Trevelin, Argentina

Dear Troop 27,

One of the best things about traveling around the world is that you discover unexpected things in unexpected places, including here in Patagonia.

As in the United States, when Argentina was opened for settlement, advertising and recruitment was conducted across Europe to attract settlers to the new lands of opportunity. Among the many new immigrant groups in Argentina, a colony was established on the Atlantic coast of people from Wales.

The coastal Welsh colony was very successful and prosperous, and soon outgrew the local resources. Consequently, they petitioned the governor for permission to explore westward, into the Patagonian frontier lying before the Andes Mountains, for suitable lands for another Welsh settlement.

The governor authorized an expedition and the group of one "Norte Americano" (from the U.S.), two Germans, six Argentinians and 21 Welsh set out westward into the unknown, unexplored, unmapped, terra incognita of Patagonia. After many weeks of exploration they crested a small mountain range and were greeted by a wondrous site. "Beautiful Valley," one of the Welsh cried. That valley was where the Welsh founded Trevelin (from the Welsh Tre: Town and Velin or Melin: mill).

The valley became home to the most productive wheat growing farms in Argentina for nearly a century, and Trevelin's Andes Mill (which ground the wheat into flour) supplied the entire region.

Trevelin became an enclave of Welsh culture, and to this day, features classic Welsh tea rooms where you can overhear the local residents converse in their native tongue, which is quite a contrast to the Spanish spoken in the rest of Argentina.

Aside from the Tea Shop, one of our stops in Trevelin was the regional museum that tells story of the town, its industry and its residents.

Among those early residents was a young man by the name of Gildas Kansas Jones and he is the point of this story. He was born in Trevelin 115 years before we got here, but Gildas Kansas Jones and the two of us shared a common bond: Troop 27.

The following is transcribed from the placard accompanying the display regarding Gildas Kansas Jones:

Boy Scout's Outfit – Year 1908
Aberystwyth (Wales)
Belonged to Gildas Kansas Jones

This Boy Scout's outfit was worn by Gildas Kansas Jones, born in Trevelin, Argentina on September 17th, 1893, and who died in the same town on August 16th, 1982.

In 1908 Gildas Kansas Jones was taken to study in Aberystwyth, Wales, by his father, William James Kansas Jones. That same year, Lt. General Sir Baden Powell K.C.B. founded the first group of Boy Scouts in the world. Gildas Kansas Jones was one of its first members.

Even though he wasn't yet 18, he was named Scout Master's Helper. (In the Scout's regulation it said that to occupy that post one had to be over 18 years old.) The red ribbons on the sleeve are a distinction of the rank.

Gildas Kansas Jones

According to his writings, at weekends and during the holidays the Boy Scouts would go to the country by bicycle, with backpacks and tents, learning to manage camp life on their own. When the West Division of the British Army carried out maneuvers they served in British Hospitals and in the camp hospitals as helpers. They also served as messengers between the camps of the different regiments. They were also the Guard of Honor for the Division's Staff.

When Gildas returned home in 1912, he brought all the parts of his Boy Scout outfit, which he distributed to his male descendants a few years before his death. His son, Oscar Kansas Jones, had the jacket, trousers, leggings and suspenders. His grandson, Omar Ernesto Seguel, who had the hat, decided to donate it to the museum, along with the other grandsons, Nelson Gustavo Beltrán and Fernando Raul Villar, who had the shirt and belt.

The outfit and hat have the original badges. There is a safety pin on the right side of the hat, a fleur-de-lis on the front and a badge with the words BE PREPARED on the left. On the left cuff there is a star, that together with the ribbons are distinctions of rank. On the right cuff are two round pieces of cloth distinctive of the group to which they belonged.



Display case of Gildas Kansas Jones' Boy Scout outfit



Hat, front



Hat detail



Pants, note leggings



Jacket



Belt detail



Right sleeve detail



Sleeve detail



Sleeve pin detail

Gildas Kansas Jones



Gildas Kansas Jones in his Boy Scout uniform



Gildas Kansas Jones' Boy Scout Troop, the first, original, Boy Scout Troop

Gildas Kansas Jones



The docent at the museum the day we visited. Her grandfather was Gildas Kansas Jones.

We hope you enjoyed this story about your Boy Scout ancestors as much as we enjoyed stumbling upon it down here on the other side of the world.

Troop 27, you travel with us.

Be well,
Doug & Steph Hackney



Photo by Jorge Valdes

Douglas and Stephanie Hackney are on a two to three year global overland expedition.
You can learn more about their travels at: <http://www.hackneys.com/travel/index.htm>