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Mind how you go
by Robert Smart

A Lone Pine type drama occurred here a couple of months ago when two 12 year old scouts, no not the twins this time, got lost on the Mynd in thick fog and a thunderstorm!

On a hot, sunny afternoon, two 12 year olds, Walter and Edward, set out from Asterton on the west side of the Mynd, below the Gliding Club, to walk to the Scout outdoor centre at Minton. They started out at 5pm and should have arrived by 8pm. They were last checked in at a checkpoint on the edge of the Gliding Field at 5:30pm but after that they disappeared. Just after 8pm the Police were called and a helicopter scrambled from Worcester searched the area till dark as did several walking parties but no trace of the boys could be found.

Early next morning the National Trust were called in to help and four volunteers together with the Mynd warden and the Area Property Manager who had been up since dawn leading a dawn chorus bird spotting walk also joined in as did my own G.P. who happened to be cycling past at the time!

Personally, I was appalled that by 11 o'clock nothing seemed to have been done as the scout leader was still drawing up search routes for pairs of walkers on his O.S. map and sending them off. As my colleague had a Landrover we were sent off round Asterton to check outlying farms while I would have preferred myself, to have gone straight for the woods as with my vast knowledge of the area, I knew my way about the forest better than anyone else (and I'm not bragging - it's 40 years' experience!). The Police helicopter returned and an RAF rescue helicopter from RAF Kinross in Scotland - apparently they couldn't get one from RAF Valley on Anglesey - also joined the hunt, plus two Police dogs.

About lunch time the message came through that the two boys had been found, safe and well, in the forest, as I knew they would be. It's quite big that forest, and every ride looks like every other ride to the untrained eye. They had been properly equipped, of course, with a tent and survival rations but to add to their discomfort they had a violent thunderstorm from 2:30 to 3:30am with torrential rain. They had got lost in the forest and when the fog came down they pitched a camp in a gully. Their tent was green which made it even more difficulty to spot, but they did the right thing by staying put and waiting for rescuers to come to them rather than wandering over the moor.

The Mynd is a big place and in a fog, for somebody unfamiliar with the area, frightening. The advice is, when in doubt go downhill, never go up; by going downhill sooner or later you will come to a path or a stream in the valley bottom and by following that, you will be certain to find a farm or a road, otherwise stay put and wait for help to find you.