

The History of the Queen's Scout Award



Item Code FS145007 Mar/08 Edition no

0845 300 1818

Balmoral Castle in Scotland has been the scene of many famous occasions. One of the most famous in the history of Scouting occurred in October 1909 when Lieutenant-General Robert Baden-Powell was spending a weekend with the Royal Family.

Just before dinner, at a private interview with the King, Edward VII, Baden-Powell was told that for all his services to the Country, and especially for founding the Boy Scouts, he was to be made Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order. During a long conversation after dinner the new Knight, hero of Mafeking, told the King a good deal more about the Scouts, and suggested that boys who passed special tests for efficiency should be ranked as King's Scouts. The King agreed to this and in return suggested that Sir Robert should bring the Scouts to Windsor for a Royal Review.

The first official announcement appeared the following month in the *Headquarters Gazette*. Baden-Powell wrote, 'A new badge with the rank of King's Scout has been approved for those Scouts who prove themselves able and willing to serve the King, should their service at any time be required by him.' In order to be a King's Scout a boy had first of all to be a First Class Scout, which meant passing ten tests, and then pass another four badges out of a list of seven, one of which had to be the Pathfinder Badge.



KING'S SCOUT.

Must be a First-class Scout and a Pathfinder, and pass three of the following efficiency tests:

Ambulance, Marksman, Bugler, Seaman, Cyclist, Signaller.

The badge is worn on the left arm above the First class Badge, surrounded by the qualifying badges.

A certificate is to be filled up and sent to Headquarters for filing.

The requirements for the King's Scout Badge as in 'Boy Scout Regulations' of 1911.

Scouts and their Leaders in the early days were not slow to recognise the prestige attached to the King's Scout Badge. Each application had to be sent to Headquarters and was considered on its merits by the Chief Scout.

The Census for 1910 shows that 1,632 King's Scout Badges had been issued when there were 100,298 Scouts and 7,688 Leaders. The first Scout in England to gain the badge was Patrol Leader Victor Watkins of Dorset, and Patrol Leader Archie Sinclair of 1st Perthshire was the first in Scotland.

The Review at Windsor was to have taken place in June 1910, but in May the King died and the Review was, of course, cancelled. However, it did take place the following year, attended by King George V, who had become the new Patron of the Association.



The design of the original Royal certificate

The Rally of some 35,000 Scouts was held in Windsor Great Park and was described as the largest and most representative gathering of boys that England had ever seen. Some of the Scouts present were from overseas, and 2,937 were King's Scouts. The Rally was a great Public Relations exercise for the Scouts because the turnout of the boys and the effect of the parade was widely commented on and praised by all.

THE NATIONAL SCOUT SERVICE AT WINDSOR

The growth of the Scout Movement was accompanied by a continuing interest in it by many members of the Royal Family. In 1934 King George V established, as an annual event at Windsor, the Royal Review of Scouts who had gained the King's Scout Badge or who had been given an award for life-saving. The first National Scout Service for King's Scouts and those who had gained awards, also took place in the same year, following the Review, and by invitation of the Dean of Windsor the service was held in St. George's Chapel.

For over 30 years the same requirements had applied to Scouts gaining the King's Scout Badge. But the conditions of society in post-war Britain of 1945 were very different from lifestyles prevailing

in the pre-war Britain of 1909. As a result of some concern that was felt in the early 1940s for boys in the older age range, a Commission was set up to look into the training given to older Scouts. After careful consultation with the Movement, the Senior Scout section was formed in 1946. At the same time the whole proficiency badge system was also reviewed and this resulted in a change in the requirements for the King's Scout Badge.

435. His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to authorise the issue of a special Royal Certificate to Senior Scouts who gain the King's Scout Badge. A King's Scout is one who, having thoroughly trained himself in Scoutcraft, places that training at the disposal of the community for Public Service.

*Before being awarded the King's Scout Badge a Scout must:
Hold the Bushman's Thong (or Seaman's or Airman's Badge) and four of the senior Public Service Badges of which Ambulance is obligatory.*

A King's Scout will receive his Badge, if he so desires, from the Chief Scout, who holds receptions for the purpose at convenient intervals at I.H.Q.

*Bushman's Thong 434. Before being awarded the Bushman's Thong, a Scout must:
Hold the First Class Badge and three of the following badges: Venturer, Camp Warden, Forester, Naturalist, Meteorologist Pioneer, Tracker, Astronomer, of which the Venturer is obligatory. A Scout may not hold both the Astronomer and Meteorologist Badges to qualify for the Thong.*

Revised requirements for the King's Scout Badge as in 'Policy, Organisation & Rules' 1947.



Permission was obtained from King George VI to change the conditions, and the Bushman's Thong was then made a requirement for gaining the King's Scout Badge. In addition, the King consented to every King's Scout, under the new conditions, receiving a personal message signed with his facsimile signature. The certificate to

contain the King's message was designed by Mr. Percy Deft Smith, the Royal Designer for Industry, at the request of the Chief Scout. In a contemporary edition of *The Scouter* Lord Rowallan wrote, 'I feel that anything less than the very best that can be produced would be unworthy of the occasion.'

The first King's Scout Certificates were presented at a reception held in B-P.'s room at Imperial Headquarters, Buckingham Palace Road, on Saturday 26 April 1947. The following day those King's Scouts who had been presented with their Certificates went to Windsor and joined many other King's Scouts for the Annual Review, which was followed by the service in St. George's Chapel.

CERTIFICATES SIGNED BY THE QUEEN

The Sovereign, who first granted the King's Scout Certificates died in 1952. He was succeeded to the throne by his daughter, who became Queen Elizabeth 11.

After the death of King George VI in 1952, Queen Elizabeth 11 gave her approval for the King's Scout Badge to be known as the Queen's Scout Badge and for the Royal Certificate to bear her facsimile signature. The message remained the same but the design of the Certificate was changed.

A further change in the badge came in 1966 when the Advance Party Report recommended the launching of the Venture Scout Section for members between the ages 16-20 years. The report recommended that Venture Scouts be able to achieve a Venture Award and a restyled Queen's Scout Award. From October 1967 a Venture Scout was able to gain the Queen's Scout Award by completing a wide range of achievements and experience to gain the Venture Award and then going on to develop some of these further to a higher standard. To complete the Queen's Scout Award requires additional training in Community Service and a period of involvement, within the Community. In addition to developing a new Pursuit or Interest to a high standard the Venture Scout also has to undertake further training and carry out a first class expedition in wild country or abroad. On completion of these Sections the potential Queen's Scout has to be assessed for personal qualities and achievements by the Venture Scout Executive Committee and then complete an interview with the District Commissioner.



The new Queen's Scout Award Badge introduced in 1967.

In 1971 a lapel badge for Queen's Scouts was introduced which was based on the design of the uniform badge.

Up until 1950 all the Royal Certificates were presented at Imperial Headquarters in London. However, since that time many famous and distinguished venues throughout the British Isles have been used for Receptions.

In 1976 girls were admitted to the Venture Scout Section for the first time and also became eligible to gain the Queen's Scout Award. But it was not until 1993 that, with the consent of the Queen, that the wording of the Royal Certificate was altered to make it gender-free.

Records show that since 1952 well over 45,000 Queen's Scout Certificates have been presented to young men and women who have qualified for this coveted award.

**Archives Department
The Scout Association**