

Flag Procedure



Item Code FS322086 Feb 2010 Edition no 3

0845 300 1818

General Considerations

Most, if not all, sections possess Colours. The design and wording on the flags are outlined in Policy, Organisation and Rules (POR). Both the Union Flag and the sectional Colour are used frequently at religious services, Scouts' Own Services, Investitures, parades and in camp. While current practice varies considerably throughout the country, the following points are set for the guidance of Leaders.

Flag Procedure

In the Scout Association, the following procedure should be adopted when the Union Flag is hoisted, broken or lowered:

Hoisting:

When the Union Flag is to be hoisted or broken, all present should be brought into a horseshoe or other formation round the flag, except in very large camps. The order should be given to come to the alert. The Scout who is carrying out the hoisting or breaking proceeds with it, takes two paces back and then salutes, and the others present follow. When the Scout has resumed their place in the horseshoe, the Scout Leader gives the order for the Scouts to be at ease.

Lowering:

When the flag is lowered, the following procedure should be adopted. The attention of all those present should be called by some suitable sign - in camp the blowing of a horn, the ringing of a bell, or something of that nature. All Scouts, whatever they may be doing, cease what they are doing if it is safe to do so, and come to the 'Alert' facing the flag. The flag is then lowered and when this is done the signal previously given is repeated

so that everyone may carry on with what they were doing. It is the custom in the Scout Association that no one salutes when the flag is lowered. Those responsible for lowering the flag should take the utmost care to see that no part of it comes into contact with the ground.

In United Kingdom, the Union Flag takes precedence over all other flags, and in camp is flown above all other flags, banners etc. But if British Scouts are camping in a foreign country wish to fly that country's flag as a compliment, this should be flown on a separate mast at the same height as the Union Flag.

Flag Carrying - On The March

Slope: Sloped over right shoulder, flag gathered in right hand, left arm swinging free.

Carry - gathered in: Flag gathered in, pole vertical, butt in carrier, held in right hand, hand level with mouth, elbow square and level with hand, left arm swinging free.

Carry - flying free: Position of hand as in Carry, but flag not gathered in.

Use: The Slope is the normal method. The *Carry - gathered in* is used when marching past or when specially ordered. The *Carry - flying free* is the salute at the actual moment of passing a saluting point. Flags are never lowered on the march.

Note: The Carry position is tiring and should be used sparingly.

At The Halt

Order: Flag held vertically at the right side, butt on ground, gathered in right hand.

Carry - gathered in: As on the march but left arm to side.

Carry - flying free: As on the march but left arm to side.

Lower: Point of pole on ground, pole under right arm and flag free, except when ground is wet or muddy.

Use: The Order is the normal position. The Carry - gathered in or Carry -flying free is used on occasions such as an inspection, when ordered. When parading with other bodies, common sense should be used in departing from these rules. For example, on Remembrance Day in many places, the British Legion lower flags during the sounding of the Last Post. Scouts should conform. Similarly, in International Parades it is normal custom to follow the practice of the host nation.

Carrying the Flag for Beaver Scouts

It is recommended that the appropriate-sized carrier be worn by the Beaver Scout, sloped over the right or left shoulder to allow greatest ease of movement. The loose bottom corner of the flag could be held against the pole with one or both hands, depending on the Beaver Scout's capabilities.

The Beaver Scout carrying the flag may be closely accompanied by two other Beaver Scouts to form an escort. The remainder of the Colony walks behind this group.

The flag should be a source of pride for all in the Colony and the Beaver Scouts should all take turns in carrying the flag.

Further Uses Of Flags

The Union Flag takes precedence over all others. When flags are carried into a place of worship, they are usually carried to the faith community leader who receives them from the bearers, either standing or kneeling, according to custom. If handed over kneeling, it is usual to bend the right knee. This allows the 'carrier' or 'bucket' to be in the right position. Each place of worship usually has its own procedures regarding the positioning of the Colours after they have been received by

the faith community leader. Flags, however, should not be placed on the altar or table (as per the custom in that faith community) in normal circumstances. The exception is when a new Colour is to be dedicated or blessed.

A general rule underlies all that has been written above, namely that when Colours are paraded in the open, in a place of worship, or in a Scout room or hall, all should be done decently and in order so that due respect is given to the symbols of our country and the Association. For this reason it is normal procedure for Scouts to stand at the Alert as a token of respect when flags are carried in and out of a place of worship, or on and off parade.

Dedication And Blessing Of Flags

New Flags: The acquisition of a new flag, whether a section or Union Flag, calls for a ceremony of some kind. This may take the form of a simple presentation by the donor, a religious act of worship or be a part of a religious act of worship. In any case, and particularly where the Group is sponsored by or attached to a local faith community, Leaders are urged to consult well beforehand with the leader of the religious community concerned and the County Chaplain or District Chaplain. In this way, much confusion can be avoided.

There is no set pattern or ceremony which must be followed. As circumstances vary, consultation beforehand is vital so that what is finally agreed is meaningful and clear.

Thought, therefore, should be given to the following points:

- 1 Consecration - Scout and Union Flags should not be 'consecrated' because this means 'making holy'; that is, setting a person or an object apart for the sole service of God. For example, a religious building is consecrated because it is to be used solely for the purpose of religion and worship.
- 2 Dedication - this means 'setting apart for a particular purpose' not necessarily religious. An author may dedicate his book to a relative or

friend; a religious community may dedicate a piece of furniture or an organ to God. A gift so dedicated should, therefore, be treated reverently and with respect.

3 Blessing - This is a further method open to Scout Groups depending upon their Sponsoring Authority or their religious allegiance. A service of blessing of Colours in no way restricts their future use and they may be paraded at the Group's discretion. The blessing of a Colour may become a visible sign of our Duty to God. This is equally true, of course, of a dedicated Colour.

It is, therefore, appropriate in certain circumstances for new Colours to be dedicated within the context of an act of worship, a Scouts' Own in a Scout Headquarters or in camp. It must be remembered, however, that flags so dedicated must be treated thereafter with special care. While all Colours should be treated with due respect, opinions differ regarding the exact treatment which should be accorded to dedicated flags and how they should be disposed of when their usefulness is at an end.

The Scout Association does not lay down any hard and fast rules, other than if flags are dedicated they must be treated with the greatest reverence at all times. For instance, it would not be correct to fly a dedicated Union Flag on a flagstaff in camp, or to move it uncased without an escort. Groups are advised to consider this carefully before undertaking the charge of dedicated flags.

There are some who would argue that 'dedicated' is more appropriate in relation to people, and that 'blessing' is better used in relation to objects.

Both words, in fact, have within them similar or associated implications.

In asking God to bless something we are requesting that it may be put to some good use and that our possession of it may remind us of God. In offering a flag to God, we are making use of symbolism, and its usefulness is to remind us of what it means. The Union Flag is a symbol of our loyalty and service to the Queen, our country, and our fellow citizens. The Scout Flag is a symbol of our togetherness in Scouting and reminds us of

the ideals set out in our Promise and Law. When we bring these symbols to God for his blessing we are asking him to accept this loyalty, service and togetherness and to acknowledge that without his blessing we should not be able to keep our Promise and Law.

Planning a ceremony involving the dedication or blessing of flags should be done in consultation with the religious leader conducting the worship. He/she will be in a position to help in the selection of suitable readings, prayers and music. It is strongly recommended that everyday language be used so that all young people concerned can understand the meaning and purpose behind the service.

The actual ceremony may take place either during the course of a normal act of worship or it may be held separately. Before the event begins, adequate preparation must be made to see that the flag is placed on a stand or table at an appropriate position in the place of worship. A Colour party consisting of a bearer and two Scouts should be in a convenient position to receive the flag at the appropriate time.

Forms Of Ceremony

The following are intended as a guide and are not exclusively for the use of Scouts. The wording should be changed according to the tradition of the faith community, the occasion and section involved.

Alternatives are provided for Scout or Union Flags.

a) The presentation of flags (Introduction for a Scout flag)

Religious Leader: Scouts, you have come here to receive the flag of your Troop. This flag is a symbol of the unity of the Troop which is part of the world-wide family, you are bound together by the Scout Promise which shows that you acknowledge God as the ruler of all people and things; that you pledge your service and loyalty to your Queen and Country; that you are always ready to help your neighbours; and that you will strive to keep the Scout Law.

The Scout flag has a long and honoured tradition and the privilege of carrying it is now entrusted to you and to future generations of Scouts in this Troop. It is fitting, therefore, that you should make your Scout Promise again to show your intention of being worthy of that Trust.

Here follows the Scout Promise.

Alternative introduction for a Scout flag

Religious Leader: Scouts, you have come together to offer this flag and all that it stands for to God; and to offer ourselves in loyalty and service to Scouting throughout the world. We, therefore, dedicate ourselves anew for God's service and purpose for- all people, and pray that God will keep us true and loyal to him.

Alternative introduction for a Union Flag

Religious Leader: Scouts, you have come here today to receive a new Union Flag. This new Colour is a symbol of our loyalty under God to our Queen and our Country. Many people down the years have honoured this flag and it is now being handed to you and to future generations of Scouts in the expectations that you will do the same.

b) Prayers

Suitable prayers follow,

For a Scout Flag

Religious leader: O God, please bless all those who will follow this flag which has been given to us. Help us to look after it with care and respect and be proud of the Scout Movement of which it is a symbol. Help us always to do our best to help other people and to do our duty to you and to the Queen. We pray too for the worldwide family of Scouts of which we are a part.

For a Union Flag

O God, we give thanks for this new flag that we have received, which is the symbol of our country. Help us always to be loyal to our country and to the Queen and to show respect for the flag. May we always do our best to carry out the Promises we have made and to try to make our community, country and the world a more caring and better place.

c) A Brief Address - can be given by the Religious Leader, Donor or suitable personality.

d) Dedication or Blessing

The Religious Leader will then proceed to the dedication or blessing of the flag using words such as the following:

“According to the faith we hold, we dedicate this flag, that it may be a sign of our duty to God and to our Troop,

For a Union Flag

Religious Leader: According to the faith we hold we dedicate and set apart this Union Flag that it may be a sign of our duty to our Queen and country.

e) Further Prayers

Further prayers may be added here for our Country, for peace, for Scouting, and any others which may be appropriate.

f) Presentation of the flag to the Colony/Pack/Troop/Unit

The Colour party will advance and receive the flag(s) at the hands of the donor or the religious leader, the bearer(s) kneeling on the right knee.

Religious Leader: On behalf of your Colony/Pack/ Troop/Unit accept this flag which has been dedicated to God, remembering the purpose for which it is dedicated, the cause of which it is the symbol and the honour in which it is to be held.

g) The National Anthem (If desired and particularly where a Union Flag is involved)

h) A Prayer of Dismissal

This could be a closing prayer.

i) A Simple Presentation in a Place of Worship

The Colour is brought to a central position in the place of worship, by the bearer.

Religious Leader: This Colour is the sign and emblem of our Colony/Pack/Troop/Unit. It represents the honour and code of the Colony/Pack/Troop/Unit and should always be treated with care.

We dedicate it to God who is the Lord of our lives and of this Troop. I dedicate this Colour that at all times it may be the sign of the..... Colony/Pack/Troop/Unit and an acknowledgment of the commitment of its members to God. Then the company shall say: O God, we pray that this Colour may always inspire us to be true to our Promise, loyal to our Leaders and obedient to you.

The Colour is then put in a central position in the worship area..

At the end of the worship the bearer kneels to receive the Colour, and as it is returned the religious leader says: Receive this Colour on behalf of your Pack/ Troop/Unit. Remember that it has been dedicated to the service of God. Let it be respected by you. Let it be a symbol of loyalty to your Pack/Troop/Unit and to your Movement the world over.

j) A Simple Presentation not in a Place of Worship

If a religious service is felt to be inappropriate (e.g. in an Open Group with no specific allegiance), a simple ceremony may be held in the Group Headquarters or in the open air. This does not have to be "non-religious" because it is not being held in a religious building, and any of the forms of words may be used as in the foregoing section.

On the other hand, such a ceremony can be more spontaneous and free. Simplicity and sincerity are the keynote.

The following is suggested as being suitable for the presentation of both the Scout Flag and the Union Flag.

The Troop should be drawn up in horseshoe or open-square formation facing the Scout Leaders and the donor (if present). If the donor is not present, he may be asked to nominate someone to present the flag on his behalf. Or the District Commissioner may be invited in his place.

After a few words of introduction, including thanks to the donor, the Leader brings the Colony/Pack/Troop/Unit to the alert. The Leader may lead the Scouts in the Scout Promise. The

Colour party is then called forward and the donor (or his nominee) presents the flag. If the flag being presented is the Union Flag, the National Anthem could be sung.

The Troop stands to the alert as the flag is marched off.

Note: Exact wording has been omitted in order to give the Leader the opportunity of speaking naturally and sincerely in words of their choosing. The ceremony might well be used at a meeting and it may be felt desirable to invite parents and supporters. If further prayers are needed they may be found in prayer books or the prayers on page 4 may be used..

A Blessing Ceremony suitable for Beaver Scouts

A possible format for a blessing ceremony is outlined below:

- A hymn, song or chant that is well known to the Beaver Scouts
- A story to depict the background and/or use of flags and banners throughout time
- The blessing of the flag

Religious Leader: Beaver Scouts, we have come here today to bless this flag. This flag is special to your Colony, which is part of the family of Scouts, who come from all over the world. We are bound together by a Promise in which you promise to love God and to be kind and helpful. Scouts have carried flags for many years, so it is a very special moment when you carry this flag and you should feel very important. Before we bless this flag, it is right that you should make your Beaver Scout Promise again to remind you of what you have promised to do as Beaver Scouts.

Beaver Scout Leader: Leads the Beaver Scouts in their promise.

Religious Leader: Loving God, we ask you to look on these Beaver Scouts in your love and care, bless them and help them to be true to their Promise now and always.

Religious Leader: In trust and faith we bless this flag. May it be a sign of our love of God, and the fun and friendship of our Colony.

The Flag is handed over to the Colony.

Religious Leader: Accept this flag which has been blessed by God, remember to look after it always and to be true to your Beaver Scout Promise.

Laying Up Of Flags

This is a matter for local initiative and consultation with the religious leader. Such an act of worship should be short. The ceremony of laying up of Colours may be preferable during a normal act of worship. Prayer and spoken word very much depend upon local conditions. What has already been said about the dedication or blessing of flags applies also to the laying up of flags. Flags should always be treated with respect because they symbolise important ideals and commitments. That is why we are able to offer them in the first place. It is important that Scouts should understand that this respect derives rather from what they symbolise than for the fact that they are dedicated or blessed.

A final point should be made, if any religious act of worship is to be meaningful to those attending, it must be well planned and geared to their understanding, regardless of whether it is a Scouts' Own, a full ceremonial act of worship in a place of worship, or a simple act of worship or blessing in the open air. Sincerity, simplicity and reality are all keynotes to success.

For information also see:

<http://www.scoutbase.org.uk/ps/fab/>

FS322016 The Promise