

Freemasonry And Scouting

By: W.A. Bainbridge

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Sir Robert Baden-Powell (1857-1941), returning from the Boer War which had lasted from 1899 to 1902, was suddenly a public figure. During this war he became famous in Britain for the defense of Mafeking. This town, under his command, had withstood a siege of 215 days, in spite of famine and sickness in his ranks. Baden-Powell maintained the defense successfully and earned the rank of Major-General. On his return to England he felt most strongly that the courage and skill of the scouts in the army should not be lost. These scouts had made such a significant contribution to the successful outcome of the war, that their skills should be passed on. Simultaneously he was convinced that the young people in Britain were not receiving enough physical exercise and experience in the outdoor life. He knew that by teaching scouting skills to young people – who would become the leaders of the future – he would be meeting two objectives.

In 1907 he started the Boy Scout movement in Great Britain by working with just twenty boys. To keep track of the many useful facts he was teaching the boys he wrote notes. These developed into a book that was first published in 1908 as the Boy Scout Handbook. In the years that followed, many millions of copies were sold and avidly absorbed by young boys throughout the world. From the sale of this book came the need for leaders and the huge organization which scouting is today. The scouting world is extensive by anyone's standards because scouting is active in over 150 countries and is recognized by the World Bureau in 117 countries with more being recognized each year.

In the 1990s there were more than 23 million scouts and adult leaders belonging to Boy Scout units in countries belonging to the Boy Scout World Conference. While the numbers have dropped in recent years the membership has been broadened to include girls, younger boys and female leaders in all areas. The range of ages in the movement at the present day are Keas from 6-7 years, Cubs from 8-10 years, Scouts from 11-14 years, Venturers from years and Rovers from 18-26 years old. After this leaders may take out warrants from the age of 18 with

apparently no age limit but after many years some leaders join (with ex Guide Leaders) the Baden-Powell Guild for the rest of their lives.

Adult leaders of the organization have, over the years, taken their training in various camp grounds throughout the world but the most famous is Gilwell Park in the south of England. This is the International Training Camp. All leaders who have completed the training courses wear with pride the Gilwell Scarf and woodbeads, all over the world.

With the large number of men in the scouting movement and many common interests it was fairly natural that scouter's lives would become interwoven in different ways. Many attended the same churches and had similar hobbies – most loved the outdoors. Due to the principles inculcated in scouting, which in many ways parallel those in Masonry, many scouters gravitated towards the masonic order and found they attended lodges with other scouters. The common interest in Scouting gave them strong bonds to other scouters within the Craft.

The parallels are easily found and in fact nothing can be found in the Scout Law and Promise that is not found in Masonry. The first important thing is that each scout must make a promise to abide by certain guiding principles and subscribe to the Scout Law in the same way a mason does in his obligation, promising to practice masonic precepts. The scout and mason must both believe in God and cannot be accepted in either organization if they are atheists. Like Masonry, the Scout Movement does not involve itself in any form of political activity.

A meeting of scouters was held at scout headquarters, 19 Elizabeth St., Melbourne on 6th June 1929 for the purpose of forming a masonic lodge. This meeting was chaired by the Chief Commissioner, Arch Hoadley. The idea for such a venture had been a regular topic for discussion between Lord Somers, then Grand Master, Chief Scout and Governor of Victoria, and W.D. Kennedy, C.A. Hoadley and W.E Waters during the years 1927-30 when Lord Somers was able to devote considerable time to his scouting interests and outdoor activities. The ten scouting brethren at the meeting agreed to hold meetings on the 4th Monday of each month and to approach United Service Lodge No. 330 to sponsor a petition to Grand Lodge seeking permission to form a new, and as yet unnamed lodge.

M.W. Bro. His Excellency Lt.-Col. the Right Hon. Arthur Herbert Tennyson, Baron Somers, K.C.M.G., D. S. O., M.C., Governor and Chief Scout of Victoria, and Most Worshipful Grand Master of the day was appointed to be the first Master of the new lodge. W. Bro. Charles Archibald Hoadley was appointed as Deputy Master, for it was realized that Lord Somers would have difficulty in regularly attending meetings. Bro. George Homan Thomas was appointed as S.W. and Bro. William Duncan Kennedy as J. W.

In Britain, and many other countries, when a masonic lodge exceeds fifty members, the members begin to discuss whether to start another lodge and split from the mother lodge. Several lodges were in this condition when the Third World Jamboree was held at Arrowe Park in August 1929. During this gathering, a meeting of over one hundred masonic scouters

discussed the possible formation of scout lodges with members being drawn exclusively from the scout movement. In this way they could form a double bond of fraternity. These 100 men with this aim left the Jamboree for homes throughout the world. The leader of the Australian Jamboree contingent, C.A. Hoadley, in conjunction with W.D. Kennedy were charged to mention the proposed new lodge to the newly created Baron Baden-Powell of Gilwell, and to seek his consent to the use of his name for this new Scout lodge. He readily consented.

It is worthy of note that the naming of the lodge after a living person was not only unusual, but naming it after a man who himself was not a Freemason, was a break with tradition. Lord Baden-Powell had often openly expressed his admiration for our fraternity, and while in Melbourne in 1931 he suitably inscribed the flyleaf of their Volume of the Sacred Law, 'With best wishes for the success of the Lodge in its good work. Baden-Powell of Gilwell. 12 May 1931.' (The following issue noted that Baden-Powell had presented this VSL to the lodge.) This most treasured possession is still in regular use. On 22nd August, 1930 the United Grand Lodge of Victoria granted a Charter to form a new lodge to be named Baden-Powell Lodge No. 498. Approval was also received for the proposed Foundation Members' jewel. Apart from the masonic content and traditional scouting green, a yellow diagonal arrow across the jewel was designed to perpetuate the Arrowe Park Jamboree discussions relating to the naming of the lodge. It is noted that this arrow is also part of the design of the Baden-Powell New Zealand lodge.

The first lodge recorded as a scout lodge therefore was Baden-Powell Lodge No. 488, United Grand Lodge of Victoria, Australia. The Australian brethren were single minded in doing what they said and wasted absolutely no time and the lodge was consecrated on 29th September, 1930, just one year later. The foundation Master for this lodge was Lord Somers, Governor of the State of Victoria.

The names of scouting lodges are interesting in their direct relationship to scouting. Some of these names are: Quest, Venturer, Gauntlet, Venture, Pathfinder, Pinewood, Red Scarf, Arrowhead, Kudu (the African Deer), Compass, and Woodsmoke.

Although it has often been argued that Lord Baden-Powell was a mason, there is no evidence of this and Dame Olive Baden-Powell denied it categorically. The confusion may have arisen because his younger brother, Major P. Baden-Powell, was indeed a member of the Craft and Bro. the Hon. David Michael Baden-Powell, (grandson of the founder), is at present Junior Warden of Baden-Powell Lodge No. 488, Victoria. There have, however, been other masons who were also heavily involved in scouting and some of these were: M.W. Bro. H.R.H. the Duke of Kent, Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England and President of the Boy Scout Movement in 1975; V.W. Bro. Archbishop Lord Fisher; Bro. Rudyard Kipling; M.W. Bro. Edward, Prince of Wales – Chief Scout in 1911; M.W. Bro. The Duke of Kent, GM, UGLE 1939-1942, Commodore of the Sea Scouts 1929-1942; V.W. Bro. the Very Rev. Israel Brodie, Chief Rabbi, who was a member of the Boy Scouts Council; and Lord Somers, Governor of

Victoria and foundation Master of Baden-Powell Lodge No. 488, who became Chief Scout in 1941 upon Lord Baden-Powell's death.

Scout lodges differ little from regular lodges except the name and the background of the members. In addition, the members usually have one meeting each year when they attend in scout uniform and wear masonic regalia over their uniform. At the festive board of scout lodges it is fairly common to add to the list of toasts, 'Lord Robert Baden-Powell of Gilwell. ' These lodges often have meetings where Scouters and or Rovers may be asked to attend for presentations. When this happens, and the lodge has been called off for this purpose, the young men see the leaders they admire in a fraternal setting. It is through this first contact with masonry and seeing the principles of masonry in operation that induces many young men to aspire to membership in the Craft.

This is a wonderful opportunity for the Craft to expand its teachings. Indeed in Auckland we also have a short commemoration to Baden-Powell which we adopted from Queensland and through our regular contacts with the Australian lodges we even place the scarves of both countries together on the pavement with the 'lemon squeezer' on the center, all surrounded by the pennants of the four patrols at Baden-Powell's first camp at Brownsea Island in 1907, to represent the going home of our founder.

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