



The First Boy Scout Camp

The first Boy Scout camp actually was held before there were Boys Scouts. General Robert S. S. Baden Powell was now an established British hero with his fame from the siege at Maefking, but he now was more interested in an outdoor program for boys. He thought he could build a program that could build their character and strength while they learned the skills of scouting he had been teaching soldiers for years. He decided to do a test on an island owned by friends of his. This island was Brownsea Island, 1 ½ miles long and ¾ miles wide with woods, thickets, open space and beach. It was located in Poole Harbor in the South of England.

The only current organized boy's group at that time was the Boys' Brigade – a church group which featured military style uniforms and practiced drill and did athletics. He felt this would be a good group to draw from, but he also wanted boys from a higher economic basis to make sure they all could come together in a group. He got boys from many of his Army friends who typically were attending some of the finest schools in England. With 9 boys from the Boys' Brigade and 12 from his friend's families and his own nephew, they all came together on July 31, 1907.



With the start of each day with a blast from a Kudu horn by B-P they raised the British flag (the very one that had flown over Maefking) and then started their day of skills and activities. A typical day included training in some scoutcraft skill, such as knot tying, lashing, building camp gadgets, tracking, nature observations or first aid. Once they had mastered a new skill, they practiced it with games and tested their new knowledge in inter-patrol

competitions. Some of these games are still practiced today; such as, Kim's game, tug-a-war, tracking contests and rescue/first aid contests. Other games were adapted for their time like the harpooning the whale. This was done by throwing a harpoon at a log 'whale' while standing in a rowboat.



With the patrol method an integral part of this first camp, they also had appropriate names and insignia – a shoulder knot (two pieces of cloth) with a given color for each patrol. So yellow for the Curlews, red for the Ravens, blue for the Wolves and green for the Bulls. Night time was special at Brownsea for two reasons – picket duty and campfires. Now picket duty may not be something practiced today, but the spirit of the campfires lives on. B-P was the lead for the campfires with many stories, songs and dances learned from his many adventures. The last day was another Scout tradition – visitor's day. Parents came and saw the camp and watched their boys show what they learned in competitions. By August 9th when they all returned to their homes, B-P knew the camp was a success and he was ready to formally start the Boy Scouts.