

WOOD BADGE INSIGNIA

When the first group of Scouters completed their training B.-P. believed there should be a form of recognition to identify the level of training achieved. He looked through some of the souvenirs from his military career and came across a necklace of wooden beads and a leather thong.

The necklace consisted of 1,000 or more beads strung on a rawhide lace. The beads were made of a South African yellow wood with a soft pith so that, when they were shaped, the pith made a natural nick at the end of each bead.

Such a necklace was a distinction conferred on royalty and outstanding warriors. This particular necklace was worn by Dinizulu, King of the Zulus, and was given to B.-P. when he defeated the Zulus during hostilities in Natal Zululand.

B.-P. obtained the leather thong during the Siege of Mafeking. Things were not going well. An elderly man who met him asked about his unusually depressed appearance. Then the man took the leather thong from around his neck and placed it in B.-P.'s hand. "Wear this" he said. "My mother gave it to me for luck. Now it will bring you luck."

B.-P. took two beads from the necklace and knotted them on the thong to create what is now known worldwide as the Wood Badge. Replicas of the beads were made from beech wood at Gilwell park in London. Originally, the Wood Badge was worn around the brim of the Stetson, to hold it in place. Later it was removed from the hat to be worn around the neck, and the woggle and neckerchief were added.

The Gilwell Scarf

The neckerchief, known as the Gilwell Scarf, originally was grey (the colour of humility) on the outside and a warm red on the inside. Today the outside of the scarf is earthtone beige.

On the peak of the scarf is a small patch of the MacLaren tartan, a reminder that Gilwell Park was bought and presented to the movement by Mr. MacLaren.

The Woggle

In the early days of Scouting, the scarf was fastened at the throat by a knot but, in 1920 or 1921, the scarf slide came into use. It is said the name "woggle" was invented for it by Gidney, the first Camp Chief of Gilwell.

In those days, the lighting of fires by friction was very much of a novelty and, for many years, was demonstrated on Wood Badge courses. The main piece of equipment for this activity was a leather thong. When not being used for fire-making, the thong was long enough to make a two strand Turk's Head Woggle, which is what we wear today. When you present Wood Badges in the future, consider including some of the history behind the insignia in your presentation.