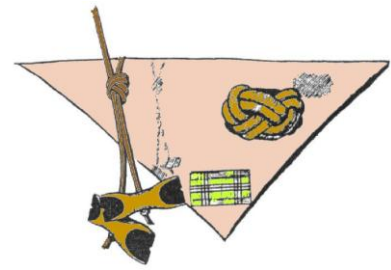


What is the Scout Wood Badge?

Early in the history of the Scout Movement, the founder, Robert Baden-Powell, developed and ran the first practical Advanced Adult Leader Training Course, in 1919 at Gilwell Park, England for Scouters.



BP designed the course so that Scouters could learn, in as practical way as possible, the skills and methods of Scouting. It was first and foremost, learning by doing. The course participants were formed into Patrols and these again into a Troop. The entire Troop then lived in the out-of-doors, camping, cooking their own meals and practical Scout skills. The Wood Badge was later adapted to accommodate other sections, like Cubs and Rovers, but the basic concept of learning by doing has remained the same.

Before the completion of the 1919 course, the participants asked B-P if he could give them some token to indicate that they had now been trained. He had not given this any thought, but on receiving the request, improvised by taking two little wooden beads from a string of beads he had, threaded them onto a leather thong, and hung these around the neck of each Scouter. Thus the course name also became known as the Wood Badge, for its symbol was literally a badge of wood.



Scouter training at Gilcape Diep River 1938

Ever since then, every Scouter who has successfully completed this advanced training course, receives two similar beads on a leather thong. Scouters around the world who have gone through Wood Badge training proudly wear the Gilwell scarf, woggle and beads. Wood Badge holders are our 'cream of the crop' adults who stand out and lead merely by example.

The Origin of THE WOOD BADGE

A Worldwide symbol of a trained Scouter

The conferring of wooden beads as a sign of recognition, is actually an old Zulu tradition. John Ross, shipwrecked off the Zululand coast in 1825 writes; 'The most curious part of a Zulu warrior's decoration consisted of several rows of small pieces of wood... strung together and made into necklaces and bracelets. On enquiry we found that the Zulu warriors set great value on these apparently useless trifles, and that they were orders of merit conferred by the Zulu King Shaka. Each row was the distinguishing mark of some great heroic deed'.



Then 63 years later, in 1888, a British war expedition was sent to Zululand (KwaZulu-Natal), South Africa, to defeat Dinizulu, King of the Zulus and the grand-nephew of Shaka - a clever, well built man, 1,97m in height. On state occasions, Dinizulu wore a necklace about 4m in length. It consisted of 1 000 or more wood beads strung on a rawhide lace. They were made of South African Yellowwood which has a soft pith (centre) – that when the beads were shaped, this pith made a natural little nick at the end of each bead. The necklace was a distinction conferred on royalty and outstanding warriors. The British eventually defeated the Zulu nation at war and annexed Zululand as a British Colony. Captain Baden-Powell, the man who was to later become the founder of the Scout Movement, gained possession of Dinizulu's necklace, which he had left behind during his hasty escape from the final attack, and placed it amongst his many war souvenirs.



There can be no doubt that the beads of Dinizulu were identical to those which Ross saw Shaka wearing. It is most extraordinary that Baden-Powell should have later chosen those beads as an award, without knowing that Shaka had used them in much the same way.

Much later (1899-1900), during the Siege of Mafeking, Baden-Powell met an elderly African, who queried his unusual depression during the siege. The man took from his neck a leather thong, placed it on BP's hand, and said: "Wear this. My mother gave it to me for luck. Now it will bring you luck."

Many years on, after Baden-Powell had founded Scouting in 1907, he instituted Wood Badge Training for Scouters in 1919 at Gilwell Park in England, and that Training got its name and emblem in the following way;



Seeking a badge that successfully trained Scouters could wear, Baden-Powell remembered Dinizulu's Necklace, and the lucky leather thong the elderly African had given him.



Taking two small wood beads from Dinizulu's necklace, and knotting them on a thong, he created the now world famous Wood Badge - to be worn around the neck and the only proficiency badge worn by Scouters. Of course, the supply eventually ran out, and replicas were then made of Beech Wood at Gilwell Park. These are now worn by tens of thousands of men and women around the world, who, through taking Wood Badge Training, have equipped themselves to confidently serve young people through Scouting.

The specially woven grey and red scarf may also be worn by a Scouter who has qualified for membership of the 1st Gilwell Group by completing the Wood Badge Training Course (Practical and Theory) and a period of application. The Tartan patch on the scarf is of interest, because it perpetuates the Movement's thanks to Mr. W. de Bois MacLaren who bought Gilwell Park and then gave it to the Scout Association.

The scarf is proudly worn by a trained Scouter, with a leather two strand Turks Head Woggle and of course draped with the now famous Wood Badge beads.

Dinizulu's Replica Necklaces



To mark the 12th World Jamboree and the 60th Anniversary of Scouting, the Boy Scouts of South Africa decided to make four authentic replicas of Dinizulu's Necklace. After much research and months of hard work by European Rover Scouts in Natal, and Zulu Scouts from Natal Troops, four reproductions of the original necklace were completed.

Three of them were taken to the 12th World Jamboree in Farragut State Park, Idaho, U.S.A., in August, 1967. This was the first World Jamboree in North America with 12 011 participants from 105 countries – ironically as well, the theme was 'For Friendship'. The necklaces were for museum purposes, one was presented to the Chief Scout Executive of the host country, Boy Scouts of America; one to the Acting Director of the Boy Scouts World Bureau and one to the Camp Chief, International Training Centre, Gilwell Park, London. The fourth necklace remains in South Africa as an historic memento of the land of origin of the original Wood Badge.



The Beads symbolic return to the Zulu's



Today thousands of Zulu boys and girls are Scouts. In 1987 Chief Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi of KwaZulu was the guest of honour at a huge Scout rally. Chief Buthelezi's mother, Princess Mahoho, was a daughter of Dinizulu. At the rally, the Chief Scout of South Africa, Garnet de la Hunt, took from around his neck a thong on which four Wood Badge beads were hung, and handed it to Chief Buthelezi, in a symbolic act of returning the beads to their rightful heir – making history complete a full circle.

Now read the amazing 2002 Scout Rally [Buthelezi's speech!](#)