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QUEEN'S SCOUT AWARD . . .

This year is a special year, as it marks the fiftieth anniversary of the accession of Queen Elizabeth II, following the death of her father King George VI in February, 1952. It is, therefore, also fifty years since the first Queen's Scout awards were made.

In October, 1909 the then Lieutenant-General Robert Baden Powell was spending the weekend with the Royal family at Balmoral Castle. At a private interview with King Edward VII, Baden Powell was told that, for all his services to the country, and especially for founding the Boy Scouts, he was to be made a Knight Commander of the Victorian Order.

During the after dinner conversation, BP told the King a good deal about the Scouts, and suggested that boys who passed special tests for efficiency should be ranked as King's Scouts. The King agreed to this, and suggested that Sir Robert should bring the Scouts to Windsor for a Royal Review.

No doubt BP would have told the King that badges formed an important part of Scouting's system.

A trained Scout was a man of many trades. As an experienced camper, he would have gained the proficiency badges for Camper, Naturalist, Prospector, Stalker and Woodman. His self dependence was shown in the badges for Athlete, Cook, Engineer and Healthy Man. To prevent boys going into factories as untrained workers, BP encouraged boys to get badges such as Basket Worker, Blacksmith, Carpenter, Electrician, Plumber, etc. Many times the local examiners found a good apprentice in the young Scout they were testing, giving a job for life.

Once a boy had become a First Class Scout, he could progress through further tests to become a King's Scout.

These tests included earning four Service badges, such as Fireman, Interpreter, Handyman or Swimmer. (Interestingly, a Scout who earned 24 badges, and performed a service to the Boy Scout Association could gain the Silver Wolf).

The first official announcement about the King's Scout appeared in the November 1909 "Headquarters Gazette". Baden Powell wrote "A new badge with the rank of King's Scout has been approved for those Scouts who prove themselves able and willing to serve the King, should their service at any time be required by him".

The Review at Windsor was to have taken place in June 1910, but the death of King Edward VII changed the plans for a



year. King George V asked the Scouts to stage the rally as soon as they could, and 4th July, 1911 was chosen, a fortnight after his Coronation on 22 June, 1911.

Over 30,000 Scouts were present, including 100 from Canada and detachments from Malta, Gibraltar, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. 229 Scouts present wore medals showing they had saved lives.

And there were 2,397 King's Scouts!

In 1934 King George V established, as an annual event at Windsor, the Royal Review of Scouts who had gained the King's Scout Badge or who had been given an award for lifesaving.

For more than 30 years the same requirements had applied for Scouts gaining the King's Scout Badge, but the conditions of society in post-war Britain in 1945 were very, very different from lifestyles prevailing in Britain of 1909. As a result of some

concern that was felt in the early 1940s for boys in the older age range, a Commission was set up to look into the training given to older Scouts. After careful consultation with the Movement, the Senior Scout Section was formed in 1946. At the same time the whole proficiency badge system was also reviewed and this resulted in a change in the requirements for the King's Scout Badge.

The first King's Scout certificate in this new system was presented at a reception held in B-P's room at Imperial Headquarters on Saturday April 26 1947. The following day those King's Scouts who had been presented with their certificates went to Windsor and joined many King's Scouts for the Annual Review which was followed by the service in St. George's Chapel.

When King George V died in 1952, his daughter, who became Queen Elizabeth II, gave her approval for the King's Scout Badge to be known as the Queen's Scout Badge and for the Royal Certificate to bear her facsimile signature. The message remained the same, but the design of the Certificate was changed.

In 1990 the Royal Certificate was redesigned for Australian Venturers and is the one presented today.

The original King's Scout Badge design was based on the crown of Edward VII and it has remained relatively unchanged since its inception in 1911.

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