



The World Chief Guide

Lady Baden-Powell

Paxwold

Lady Baden Powell at Paxwold , Western Australia , 1957
A Personal Encounter

Written on 22nd February 2008 by Joan Small - former Girl Guide (Western Australia), Brownie Pack Leader – Grey Owl, and Guide Captain (Tennant Creek , Northern Territory)



Olave and Camp Leader

I met Lady Baden- Powell at 'Paxwold' in the Western Australian Darling Ranges - an area set aside for guides to camp.

I was selected to participate in the special camp in 1957, the centenary of Sir Robert's birth, to celebrate Lady Baden- Powell's visit. I was 13 years old, and I wrote in my diary:

It was not very long before a big crowd was assembled. Soon Lady Gairdner arrived, and then Lady Lee Steere.

At about 3.00 Lady B-P arrived and walked down the long line of guides, rangers and brownies lining the road, smiling and saluting. When she reached the guard of honour she shook hands with us all, and also saluted the rangers, making some nice comment in doing so.

We all went around to the back at that stage and joined the others from our camp. I had seen Grandma previously, and now she had a seat.

First of all, Mrs Somebody-or-other got up and told us the history of Paxwold, how it had been given by Mr Johnson and how all the people had done something in the way of donations of money or articles.

There were two representatives of Malaya and one of Ceylon . Each gave a present to Paxwold. The Malaysians gave a lovely picture, and the Ceylonese, a dish the shape of Ceylon . There were also several telegrams which had been sent for the opening of the building. One was from a new camping site in England called Paxwood.

It was then Lady B-P.'s turn to speak, but before doing so she re-organised the group so that nobody would be looking into the sun. She said, 'I'm not very popular at the moment. Somebody said Lady B-P was a person who came along and messed up all the arrangements.'

After we were all settled and sitting down, Grandma passed over Betty's camera, and while Lady B-P was talking I took several photos of her.

At last the key was presented by a nine-year-old brownie, and Paxwold was opened. Lady B-P. will 'keep this golden key and will always have it'.

As soon as the ceremony was over, all the camp girls returned to camp to await the arrival of Lady B-P. She was trying to make her way over to the site, but every time she got a little way she was stopped. However, at about 4.30 she eventually arrived. Cap Hosie, Q.M., First Aider, Cooky and Cap Johnson went to meet her, and after she'd spoken to them she came to us, first posing for photos for us all. She came round and shook hands with everyone, and when she came to me she commented on my pack leader's stripes (as she'd done at the Guard of Honour) then realised that she'd already seen me.

Inspection of tents was next and she began to walk over towards ours. We just about had heart failure. However, she didn't look in. She wanted to know if we had Kookaburras on our site, and did her best to imitate one. She told us that one of the world's most popular songs was 'Kookaburra'.

We all enjoyed her company immensely and when she had gone we unanimously agreed that she is a lovely person.

I have many more stories about the time I spent as a Girl Guide, and the way it helped me grow in confidence, leadership skills, and appreciation of our wonderful world and the need to always 'do my best'.

Today, on Thinking Day, I will remember Lady Baden-Powell and Lord Baden-Powell who, with their energy, enthusiasm and determination to contribute to the world, have inspired many to do the same.



Josie & Susie, who attended the camp

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Girl Guide, Joan Small (right) with Deidre Mulligan, reading to children at Princess Margaret Hospital