



The World Chief Guide

Lady Baden-Powell

Personal

This memory from a Guide

I was fortunate to meet Lady BP when I was one of the hundreds of Guides attending Camp Kumanka at Kindilan, Queensland, in 1967. We were all as excited about meeting her as we would have been to meet our favourite pop star.

I actually got to shake her hand and I still remember two special things about her: she had a lovely smile and very soft hands. Those poor hands must have been very sore that night from squeezing so many enthusiastic girls like myself.

I remember too how I felt (by then a Guide Leader myself) when I heard of her death. It was the feeling of losing a very close friend.

Juleen Sippel, Queensland.

Steal Away to Bed!

Visiting Brisbane at the time of Camp Kumanka in 1967, rovers and rangers put on a dinner for Lady Baden-Powell at Riverside Ballroom. After dinner she took part in the campfire, taught and conducted one song which was well known to all the rovers and rangers present. None of the boys or girls let on they already knew it, such was her magnetism and charm. She conducted it standing at the front edge of the stage, vigorously waving her arms much to the concern of the two rovers who stationed themselves nearby ready to catch her should she fall. They tried very successfully to hide their concern but told me afterwards that they were sure she would launch herself off the stage in her vigour.

Visiting the camp, she spent the whole day there and with reluctance took a short rest after lunch. She was determined to meet every one of the 500 guiding people in camp. She stayed on for part of the campfire to which busloads of guiding and scouting people had come from as far away as Roma, Gladstone and northern New South Wales. Several thousand had gathered for the event. At the campfire she told a story about 'Hands' and what they could do, with everyone present hanging on her every word. At the end of the talk she mentioned that during some of the subsequent singing she was 'going HOME TO BED' — she 'DIDN'T LIKE IT anymore than any of YOU DO when you are TOLD TO GO TO BED! BUT I am going to STEAL AWAY during your singing AND I DO NOT WANT ANYONE TO GET UP OR EVEN NOTICE THAT I DO IT. JUST KEEP ON SINGING WHILE I STEAL AWAY TO BED!' (She talked in 'capital letters') Lady B.-P. did just that and not one brownie, cub, guide, scout or older person stood up or waved. It was magic!

Heather Beedell Queensland

Catch my Hat

Three times the Gympie brownies and guides were in Brisbane to see Lady-Baden 1947, 1958 and 1967. What a thrill to meet her and feel they belonged, and that she was speaking to each one of us!

The 1947 visit was marked by tragedy on the railway, just north of Gympie, when the train carrying guides and brownies from division ploughed head on into a stationery train. Apart from and some bruises, the children suffered no serious injury, but were taken back to their homes. Mrs Theile who was in charge, assisted the injured, and Gympie leaders waiting for the train went out to offer help, but returned to continue their journey on another train.

Lady Baden-Powell was concerned about the incident but the rally, and meeting her, were something to remember. The next visit was the Chief's birthday in 1958 and nineteen Centenary Certificates were awarded, one coming to Gympie. Again there was a great crowd of children all with one accord, welcoming their Chief. In May 1967, Lady Baden Powell arrived at Eagle Farm Airport to a tumultuous welcome, and again we were all there. Her personality attracted the love and respect of countless folk everywhere.

One occasion stands out in my mind when she climbed onto a table and flung her hat across the room, 'Here catch', she said and talked as a personal friend to everyone. To me she said 'How old are you? You must be the youngest commissioner I've met'. I didn't tell her that when I toured around Hampton Court London I saw her nameplate on the door of her apartment, but probably missed a great opportunity of speaking to her when I was too shy to knock on it.

Jean Cornes, Queensland

The Last Impression

The Chief was always such an enthusiastic person, warm friendly and so very interested in people. She was what we'd call a 'joiner'. This incident relates to the last time she visited Western Australia. It rained. It always rained when she came to Western Australia. It was cold as well.

A rally had been organised for Saturday 25 June at the Perry Lakes Stadium. Girls had come from widespread country areas and there was the concern that as they assembled at the stadium, they would be very wet and very cold. So it was decided to have a warm-up activity in which everyone could join. The Chief — always greeting people: 'How are you? How are you?' — could see that the people were being asked to stand and they weren't, so she got up, and of course, then every one got up and did 'heads, shoulders, knees and toes'. When it was through the Chief called 'again' and everyone did it again. And so everyone was warm and happy and they sat down and the rally proceeded.

Now the next day the Chief was to leave by plane for London. All the goodbyes had been said, all the hands shaken and all the V.I.P.s kissed and she went up the gangway, stood at the top and waved, and of course everyone waved to her. One would think that that would be the end, but there at the doorway to the plane the Chief started 'heads, shoulders, knees and toes' and those back on the ground joined in.

That was the very last impression Australia had of her.

From the diary of the late Lorna Collins Western Australia, quoted in Guiding in Australia, May 1989.

The World Chief's magic

I was a new patrol leader in England in the mid-1950s and my patrol had to practise marching in a horizontal line. The big day arrived and all thirteen of us valiantly marched across an open area Lady Baden-Powell, at a rally in Chester, England.

What is your patrol name? she asked. To which I replied proudly, "We are the Forget-me-nots". With a twinkle in her eye, Lady Baden Powell said, / *certainly won't!* We marched away very proudly.

Ann Lee, South Australia, from Guiding in Australia May 1989

Christmas card

Lady Baden-Powell was not a wealthy person. She gave much to others and it cost a lot to travel to visit us all. She had been granted a Grace and Favour apartment at Hampton Court, so that for her lifetime she had a place to live.

Many folk in Australia had been in the habit of sending her a Christmas card and then it was thought that if they all joined together and sent her one card they could put money in it and so help out. But it was decided not to send the money to her as she would spend it on others. So a money order was sent to the grocer's shop near where she lived, and used against her account.

Extract from the diary of the late Lorna Collins, Western Australia. Guiding in Australia July 1989

At Foxlease

In 1944, I was fortunate to attend a leaders training week at Foxlease, Hampshire, as a new leader. During my time there, Lady Baden-Powell came to stay for three days. Meal times were especially interesting with her telling all kinds of stories from other lands, of international gatherings, strange foods and amusing incidents. On the three evenings we enjoyed her company and infectious laughter, we sat up very late listening to tales of her family, her travels, and her wonderful family of girl guides, of whom she was very proud. When we met again two years later, at a rally in Grimsby, Lincolnshire, Lady Baden-Powell remembered that training, and the young lady she had enrolled there, and me very enthusiastically. A wonderful memory of our Chief Guide.

Olive Kirk, Queensland. Guiding in Australia July 1989

My first meeting with Lady B.-P.

More than half a century ago, Lord and Lady Baden-Powell and their daughters were on a long voyage, and their ship was at anchor out in Cleveland Bay. It did not enter Townsville's harbour, but a small party of scouters and guiders went out to them on a Hayles launch. It was during the Depression. Guiding in Townsville was in the doldrums. We were without commissioners at the time, and our small band was headed by a mere district captain. We were received with typical graciousness and warmth. For a time Lady B.-P. talked to us at one end of the deck, the scouts and their Chief elsewhere. I can still see him coming along our way and asking, 'Who are these creatures'? We had afternoon tea with them. I am sure we were all treading on air. Looking back, I reflect on how fortunate we were to have them all to ourselves. What a joyful memory

Nancy Hopkins Brisbane Trefoil Guild, Guiding in Australia August 1989