



*The World Chief Guide*

*Olave Baden-Powell*

*Smile*

Here they come - this was whispered along the row of brownies standing smartly to attention. They - the reason for us standing in the rain for an hour at a scout rally - Lord and Lady Baden-Powell.

We didn't mind getting wet to see that lovely smile that Lady B.-P. flashed in our direction and I was thrilled because the Chief Scout asked me about one of my badges.

The next occasion when that smile came my way was at Brighton in Sussex, United Kingdom, when our guide company attended a special church parade. This time I was able to take photos of the Chief on my Brownie box camera. While in Sussex, I lived close to where the chiefs lived at Bentley.

In 1967 when the Chief visited Australia, I applied for the job as her secretary while she was in Sydney. However, I was turned down - the committee was reluctant to load the job onto a person with young children because of Lady B.-P. 's odd working hours. Instead, because I was able to take shorthand, I was asked to record her speech at the Trocadero luncheon and at the recruiting rally following the Pioneers' function. There was that smile again, charming everyone.

While she was here, I wrote to her enclosing a photo and asked if she remembered the occasion and could identify a lady who was standing next to her. Her reply was

13 May 1967

*Dear Mrs Skillington,*

*How nice it was to get your letter and have this contact with you again here! I am afraid I have no idea who this elderly lady is standing by me, though it might have been the first Guide Commissioner for Brighton (Lady Jennings) who was in office there before I became County Commissioner for Sussex in 1916.*

*'I should think judging by my appearance you must have taken this photograph sometime in the '30s and I am glad to know you have happy memories of your time in your guiding days both in Sussex and my other County of Hampshire. I lived for twenty years between the two wars at Bentley and know what a lovely part of England that is and it is still fairly unspoiled. But what a LOVELY country this is and I would recommend anybody to come to live in Australia if they had the choice.*

*'I hope you are thoroughly enjoying your guide work here and it is WONDERFUL to be back, and to find it all going on SO WELL.'*

*With kind remembrances, Yours sincerely, Olave Baden-Powell*

I treasure this letter - memories of a wonderfully warm lady with a smile that seemed to embrace everyone.

How sad it was walking along Buckingham Palace Road, London, to visit Commonwealth Headquarters, on the morning of 25 June 1977 to see the World Flag flying at half-mast and knowing she had 'gone home'.

*New South Wales Leader*