

What Does Traditional Mean For the Baden- Powell Scouts' Association?

Background

As part of the Baden-Powell Scouts' Association (B-PSA) development process in 2011 an action point to clarify what 'Traditional' means was created as there are a number of views held. The obvious starting point was Lord Baden-Powell's 'Scouting for Boys' which was first published in 1908 and the practices and writings and original programme as written by B-P himself. Research into this shows that some parts of the original programme would not be acceptable in the UK today either for Health and safety reasons or through legislation changes and thus some clarity within the organisation needs to be achieved.

Research

Being 'Traditional' is a very difficult concept to define in the shape of an organisation as it is an idea which is enacted in many different ways rather than a fixed object.

1. The dictionary definition of Traditional (avoiding those about word of mouth) is:
 - a. An inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behaviour (as a religious practice or a social custom).
 - b. Cultural continuity in social attitudes, customs and institutions.
 - c. Characteristic manner, method, or style.
2. The general consensus of the group considering this was that the Law and Promise handed down to us from BP was the core of our traditional thinking.
3. It is clear that tradition can mean to some 'not changing'
4. "Tradition simply means that we need to end what began well and continue what is worth continuing" – Quote Jose Bergamin.
5. Skills can be traditional and thus well defined.

Discussion

The simplest form of defining Traditional would be around skills. We can identify a number of them including, camping, backwoods skills, pioneering, estimation, observation and rope work.

As soon as we get to the operation or function of the organisation the loose nature of the concept and the conflict with legislation, safety and cultural practice becomes an issue. For instance, the assumption in the original teachings that Scouting is for males only, the use of hemp rope for safety equipment or the wearing of short trousers and big hats which can be socially or economically prohibitive.

It could well be considered that while not strictly word perfect with the original, our Law and Promise do represent an inherited pattern of thought and behaviour and thus can be considered Traditional.

Conclusions

Traditional for the B-PSA is understood to mean:

1. The Traditional Values embedded in the Law and Promise
2. The Traditional Skills embedded in our training programme

Traditional does not mean:

1. Not prepared to change in the face of legislative, safety or social pressure.
2. Not being prepared to consider new ideas and practices if they do not damage the core values of our Law and Promise.