



PIONEERING PRINCIPLES

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Editor's Note:

The reader is reminded that these texts have been written a long time ago. Consequently, they may use some terms or express sentiments which were current at the time, regardless of what we may think of them at the beginning of the 21st century. For reasons of historical accuracy they have been preserved in their original form.

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To Bill Campbell,

Deputy Camp Chief attached to Gilwell Park, whose help and encouragement have enabled Gilwell to continue to pioneer.

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INTRODUCTION

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

THERE are few activities which, properly presented, have a greater appeal to the Scout and Senior Scout than Pioneering and ever since the introduction of Wood Badge training, Pioneering has been given a full share in the programme of Scouters' training. In the summer months when Scouters at Gilwell are building bridges, towers, and rafts, and boys are in camp it has been all too common to hear from the boys such remarks as, "I wish we did that in our Troop" or "We never do anything like that".

I said in the opening sentence "properly presented". This book is designed to help you, the Scouter, to plan and present Pioneering in a practical and effective way. The main snags, I think, are: –

- a) Lack of knowledge and the consequent fear on the part of the Scouter,
- b) Lack of equipment,
- c) Lack of a suitable place where Pioneering can be carried out.

I hope that as the book evolves I shall be able to deal with all these problems and, indeed, I propose to return to them from time to time.

Let me say at the outset that Pioneering without preparation is no proposition for Scouting. Preparation always means thought, effort and work. Perhaps some of us forget that one of our continuing tasks is to provide the necessary facilities. Obviously, for some it is very difficult, but it is always possible to try. What I regard as unforgiveable is sitting back and saying, "We have no money; therefore we have no equipment: therefore we cannot do Pioneering."

Why Pioneering? To me the over-riding reason for presenting Pioneering is that boys like it. Some years ago we started providing simple equipment which Troops in camp at Gilwell can use. The demand is insatiable. Year by year we add more, but we never provide enough; because as one Troop sees another using the equipment and building a bridge they want to try it also and the desire to do Pioneering spreads like a contagious disease throughout the camp.

But there are reasons for Pioneering other than the fact that boys like doing it. B.-P. wrote: "I am inclined to suggest to Scouters that in addition to the technical details of knotting, lashing, and anchorages, there is an educative training in Pioneering since it gives elementary training in stresses, etc., and it also develops initiative and resourcefulness to use local material. Additionally, it gives practice in team work and discipline." In other words, Pioneering is

practical and character building: the two essential ingredients of any programme material for Scouts.

The modern cynic may think it is all very old-fashioned but the short answer to this is, “Yes, of course it is, but so is breathing and sleeping and other things that mankind has been doing for a long time.” It does not follow that because an activity has been used for a long time it is out-dated and, in fact, I am prepared to say that there is more interest in Pioneering today than ever before, perhaps because facilities have improved and perhaps because some of us have made an effort to present Pioneering to the Movement in a more imaginative and varied way. Quite apart from that, though, Pioneering is not old-fashioned in its purely technical sense.

I was showing a Managing Director of a large civil engineering firm round Gilwell when a Wood Badge Course was pioneering near the Bomb Hole. He displayed very great interest in the Pioneering and looked closely at all that was happening. From our point of view there was nothing unusual going on; this was a usual routine exercise with two or three bridges being built, a couple of towers, and a raft. As we walked away my civil engineering friend said, “I am delighted that the Scout Movement is still doing this: it is tremendously important. Despite the fact that modern machinery and equipment is magnificent there often comes a time when a man has to use ingenuity and improvise in order to move the job forward and the engineer who has the spirit that your kind of training produces is the man we want in our business.”

Those of us who can think back to the war years remember with pride the Bailey Bridge and the Mulberry Harbour which, when you analyse them, were really nothing more than an imaginative extension of Boy Scout Pioneering.

Perhaps a final story at this point will not come amiss. Soon after the end of the war when we had the first German Scouters at Gilwell, I had just devised for the sheer fun of it a paddle steamer raft (which appears in “Pioneering Projects”) and I watched with interest and amusement a young German Scouter who, seeing this monstrosity making its ungainly way around the Bomb Hole, observed it closely and was obviously thinking very deeply. When he saw me watching him he turned and said, “Now I understand why Great Britain won the war.” Taken aback, I replied, “What has this contraption to do with winning the war?” He smiled and said, “This thing is ridiculous, but it works!”

Well, that is Pioneering. It is good fun, practical, character training, and within the reach of every Troop if the Scouters will only make the effort.

Now what is this book all about, and why another book, anyway?

In the last ten years I have produced – and the Movement seems to like them – “Pioneering Projects” and “Fun with Ropes and Spars”. These books are concerned primarily with individual projects. This book in a sense is more elementary: it replaces the old book “Preparing the Way: Pioneering” in the *Gilcraft* series, and it owes a great deal to the original compiler of that book. Why replace it then? Simply because I have a host of new ideas and a lot of experience that I have been lucky enough to gather from my visits overseas and from working at Gilwell, and, as I think you know, I like few things better than giving away ideas because I can give them to you and still have them for myself. This book, then, is up to date with all the basic skills, lashings, anchorages, etc., that are essential for effective Pioneering. Over and over again I see Troops start Pioneering in a muddle which often leads to ending in a muddle and probably also leads to ending in the middle of a stream.

The truth is that you cannot hope for success in a technical sense or in a character training sense unless you start by mastering the essentials, the knots and lashings, the choice of equipment, how to reeve a block, when to use a snatch block and when not to do so, how to choose a picket, drive it in, and get it out again, which way up to put an oil drum, and how to

