

The World Membership Badge



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Scouts around the world wear the World Membership Badge but questions are often asked about the origins of this Scout emblem.

The basic design of the emblem is used by Scouts in all the 216 Scouting countries and territories. The Scout emblem is one of the most widely recognised symbols in the world, because it has been worn by an estimated 300 million former Scouts and is currently used by more than 28 million present Scouts.

There is evidence that the basic arrowhead design was being used as a direction symbol by the Chinese as early as 2000 B.C. The Larousse Encyclopaedia notes that some Etruscan bronzes and Roman ornaments carried the design. Also, it has been found on ancient monuments in Egypt and India.

Marco Polo brought it to Europe when he returned with a compass from Cathay at the end of the 13th Century. The Grand Encyclopaedia credits an Italian marine pilot named Flavio Giojo of Amalfi for drawing it as the north point of the primitive compass he built.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica gives another interesting version. It was that the "wind rose", which is much older than the magnetic maritime compass, first appeared on the charts of Mediterranean pilots. The eight main wind directions were shown by Greek letters. One wind was marked with a "T" for Tramontana, the north wind. In time the "T" was embellished or combined with an arrowhead and the "T" was no longer recognisable.

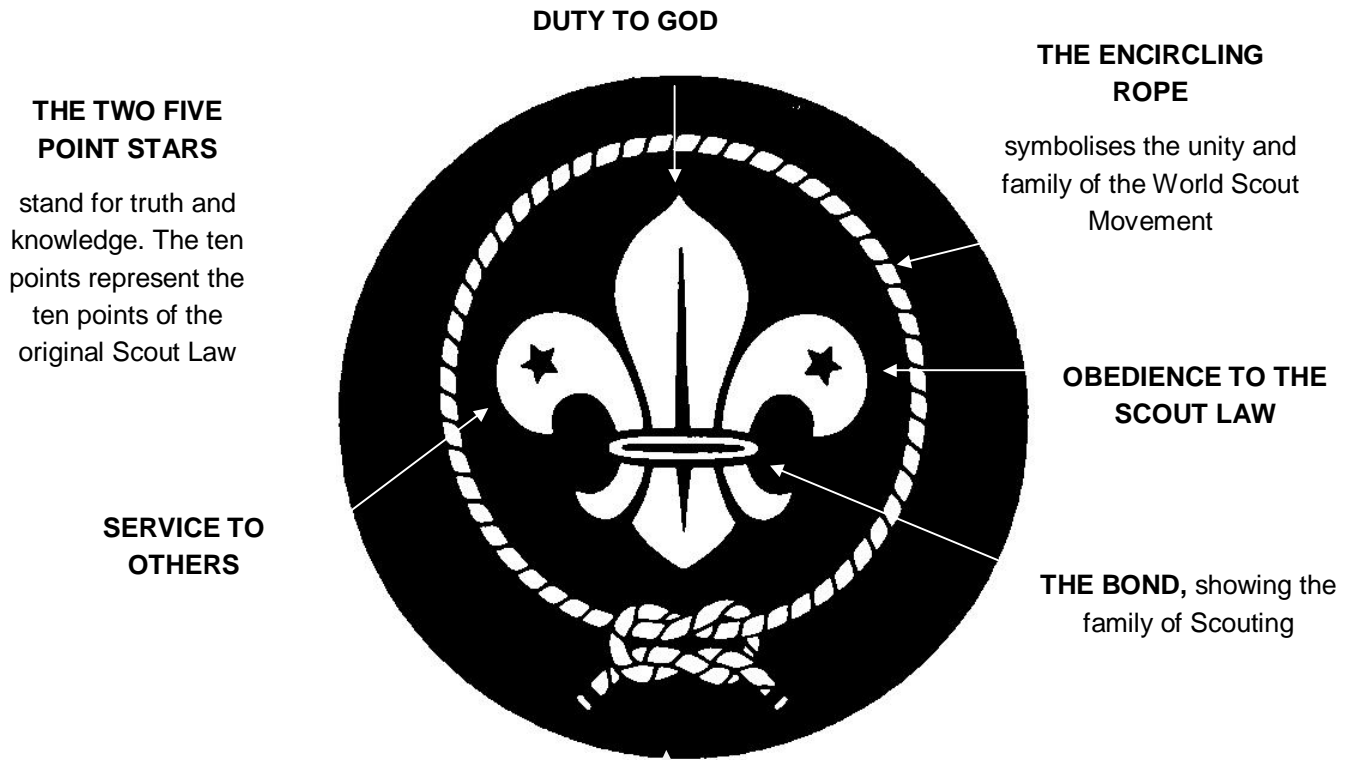
Direction-pointing is only one traditional use of the arrowhead design. It has also been used in very ornate versions on the coats of arms of old, wealthy families. Sometimes the design was intended to represent a lance or spear, a lily (fleur-de-lys), and even a bee or a toad.

So today, even as the arrowhead continues to point the way for compass users around the world, the same arrowhead, selected by Scouting's Founder, points the way to service and unity for Scouts.

An explanation of the meaning of the World Scout Emblem appears overleaf.

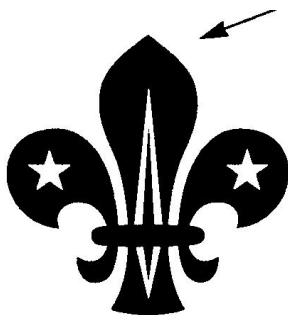
The source of this historical Scouting information was as recorded in the World Scout Bureau Factsheet June 1985

THE WORLD SCOUT EMBLEM - ITS MEANING



THE REEF KNOT which can't be undone no matter how hard it is pulled, is symbolic of the strength of world scouting's unity and family

THE WORLD EMBLEM IS WHITE, ON A ROYAL PURPLE BACKGROUND, IN HERALDRY, WHITE (OR SILVER) REPRESENTS PURITY, AND ROYAL PURPLE DENOTES LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE.



THE ARROWHEAD:

Lord Baden Powell, Our Founder said:
"Our Badge we took from the 'Northpoint' used on maps....."
Lady Olave said later:
"It shows the true way to go"

