

The Spirit of the Fire Ceremony

At the very first Scout camp, on Brownsea Island (in the UK) in 1907, Scouts founder Lord Baden-Powell saved some of the ashes from their ceremonial campfire. Legend has it that Baden-Powell would always take a small amount of ashes from a ceremonial campfire and then spread those ashes into the next campfire.

The tradition of gathering ashes from one campfire to add to the next spread to other scouters, and these ashes here, have been to over 700 countries. They have been to Cub Scout day camps, Order of the Arrow ceremonies, training conferences, Scouting America and Girl Scouts of the USA camps, high adventure bases, 16 US national Jamborees, 6 World Jamborees, 145 Wood Badge courses, and the Scouting Centennial Celebration at Gilwell Park. And our last pack campout, of course.

It is a tradition that after the fire has died down, the ashes are stirred, and all those present at the ceremony carry ashes away from the campfire. Seeing how special these ashes are you might be tempted to set them in a place of honor and never open them or use them again, but the richness of this tradition is not in keeping the ashes; but in the sharing of ashes.

I now call upon Lord Baden-Powell with his own words:

“We carry friendships with us in these ashes from other campfires with comrades in other lands. May the joining of past fires with the leaping flames of this campfire symbolize once more the unbroken chain that binds Scouts and Guides of all nations together. With greetings from our brothers and sisters around the world, I add these ashes and the fellowship therein to our campfire.”

<pour the ashes in>