

'But what do we use our staves for, sir?'

In *Scouting for Boys* published in 1908, Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the Boy Scout Association, recommended that scouts should carry "a strong stick, about as high as your nose, marked in feet and inches for measuring".

Official scouting rules stipulated that the staff must be "marked in feet and inches, five feet six inches". The markings can be seen on the cover photograph of the Reepham Life 2018 Calendar.



Some recommended uses of the scout staff:

- making an improvised stretcher
- holding back a crowd
- jumping over a ditch
- testing the depth of a river
- helping another scout over a high wall
- construction of a light bridge
- stopping a car by jamming a staff through the spokes of the wheel
- self-defence
- a tent pole for a small tent
- feeling your way over rough or marshy ground
- measuring distances
- estimating the height of trees or tall buildings
- linking scouts together on a night hike
- making a splint for an injured leg
- stopping an aggressive dog
- beating out bush fires.

Although they have not been a standard part of the scout uniform for many years, modern, commercially produced scout staves are still available and generally made from coppice-grown ash.



Closer inspection of the second photograph reveals that the scout on the pony on the far left is actually a young girl with long plaits. This is Amy Rump, youngest daughter of John Abel Rump, a butcher in Reepham, whose shop was possibly in Magpie House, Church Hill, Reepham.

*Janet Archer, Reepham Archive Volunteer*