

THE ROCKALL MYSTERY DISTRICT BADGE.

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When the first issues of SCOUTING FOR BOYS were on sale all over Great Britain, youngsters started practising and formed patrols. The Boy Scouts Association registered these patrols as members. The first troop founded was the 1st Birkenhead YMCA when a number of local YMCA patrols united. An example followed all over the country. Later, when Rover Scouting and Cub Scouting were added, the groups were created. At first the troops, as later the groups, united in Districts, which in turn combined in Scouting Counties that matched the administrative, historical and geographical Counties that had come to being during the ages.

During the twenties of the previous century, the Scouting Counties introduced their County Badges to be worn on the shirts. The Boy Scouts Association's National Council fixed the measurements of these badges (1½ x 2 inches) in order to avoid that other measurements or shapes would be used which might lead to a messy impression.

Of course every local administrative County had, it's sometimes ages old Coat of Arms. Nothing was simpler than putting this, or parts of this on the Scout County Badge. The London County Council did not object when the London Scout Council introduced its County Badge with the London County Council's Coat of Arms to which was added a ribbon with the text London Boy Scouts. However, in 1956 the College of Arms, that registers and guards all official British Coats of Arms, stated that it was not correct when Scouting used the official County Coats of Arms. Whereupon the London County Council withdrew London Scouting's privilege and a new Scout County Badge had to be introduced.



1930 -1947



1947 – 1956



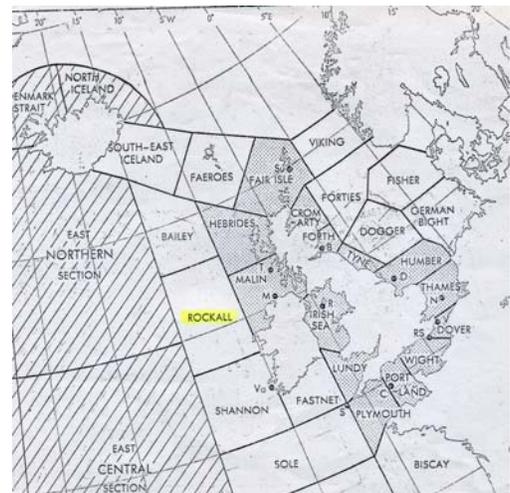
after 1956.

The London Scouts were not the only ones who – which regret - had to take leave of their particularly nice old badge. In the sixties and seventies, many Districts designed and introduced their own District Badges to be worn in combination with the Country badges. All 1½ x 2 inches as per the Scout Association's regulations. Later still, it was decided to combine the two badges as one.

There was a brisk “ changing” or “swopping” of these badges, not only in the British Isles but also in the other countries of the British Commonwealth which had followed the British example by introducing their own badges but also collected the British Badges.



In 1978, the collectors got confused. The official British SCOUTING MAGAZINE of April that year announced the introduction of a new District Badge for Rockall. Which one could order. The price was 25 pence. The news also reached the Australian, New Zealand, Canadian and other collectors. Every one went looking for the location of Rockall. Where might it be? The name was familiar in particular in the UK's and in the adjoining countries' Shipping circles.



The British Meteorological Service had divided the seas surrounding the British Isles in regions. For each region, a weather forecast was drafted to the benefit of international shipping. Outer space was not yet teeming with satellites and so daily – at fixed times – the Shipping Forecast was broadcast by means of the BBC's long wave radio station. At the time this station – on 1500 metres – was so powerful that its programs could be heard all over the Northern part of the Atlantic, from America's East Coast to far into Europe, from the equator to the Arctic. That is how the name Rockall passed by several times a day.

Originally, collectors supposed the new mystery district would have to be in either Northern Ireland or in West Scotland. Meanwhile the badge was in great demand and sold well.

Some weeks later, the riddle of the Rockall District Badge was solved when in an article in British Scouting Magazine it was revealed that the original April story was an All Fools' Day joke in favour of – a British Movement's approved – Scottish Third World Project to promote and support Ghana's Scouting. The proceeds of the badges very successful campaign were for this project. Even there after the collectors bought the badge and even now, it is often in demand but hardly available. It has been registered as being one of the "fun, fake, money raising badges" as Scouting has known more.



Rockall is in fact the summit of an under seas North Atlantic mountain tot the south of Iceland and about 450 kilometres to the west of Northern Ireland. The small, impassable rock towering about 20 metres above the battering Atlantic waves. Throughout the ages a dark, deep cemetery for countless ships and those who sailed in them. Consequently feared and shunned by shipping. The British government since 1810 claimed it as being the most western point of the UK. Because of the surge of the waves and underwater risks involved, it was impossible to come close to the steep rock, let alone to climb it.

However, on September 18th, 1955 a helicopter put a British Royal Navy officer and a Royal Marines sergeant accompanied by a civil servant on top of the rock. They hoisted the national flag and attached a plaque confirming its British property.