

A brief history of Scouting

Baden-Powell

The Scout Movement was started in 1907 by Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell, who was born on 22nd February 1857 in London, UK.

In 1876 Baden-Powell joined the British army and served in India and Africa, where he later became the youngest colonel in the British army. It was during the second Boer War in 1899-1902 that Baden-Powell became a hero.

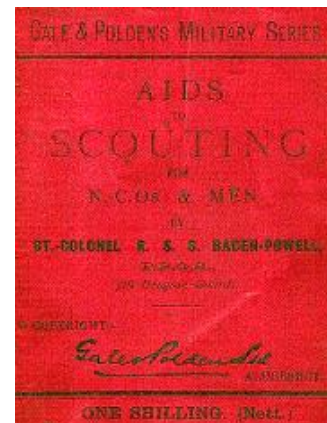


Whilst carrying out his duties he and his soldiers became trapped in the Siege of Mafeking by in excess of 8,000 men of the Boer army. Although Baden-Powell and his men were outnumbered they withstood the siege for 217 days by use of cunning military deceptions.

Aids to Scouting

A few years previously Baden Powell had written *Aids to Scouting for N.C.O.s and Men* which talked about how to train people for the army.

By the time the Boer War was over a lot of interest had been shown in the book thought largely due to the worldwide fame of the "Hero of Mafeking". This led Baden-Powell to believe he could use the book to teach boy's as well as soldiers.



Brownsea Island

To try out his idea's Baden-Powell arranged a camp of 20 boys from different social backgrounds between 1st and 8th August 1907 on Brownsea Island, Poole, Dorset, United Kingdom.

During the eight day event the boys took part in many activities including learning camping skills, cooking skills, first aid, studied animals, swam, signaled, hiked and played games. This was the first ever Scout Camp and signaled the birth of Scouting.

Following the camp Baden-Powell started to write his ideas in a book. Earlier books by Baden-Powell were written for military people but this time he wrote the books ***Scouting for Boys***. The books were published in six installments from January to March 1908 and were priced so that boys could afford them with their pocket money. Scouting for Boys is the fourth best-selling book of all time, behind the Bible, the Koran and Mao-Tse-Tung's Little Red Book.



Scouts

What happened next was incredible. Across the United Kingdom thousands of boys and girls spontaneously formed themselves into Scout troops of their own to try out activities from the book. They met in schools, works canteens, there is even one group documented as meeting under a lamp-post at a certain day and time each week. In 1908 B-P set up an office to answer the enquiries pouring in, and this was the start of Scouting. In 1910 B-P, by then a Lieutenant General, retired from the Army to organise what had become a huge movement for boys and girls.

Scouting for Girls

In 1909 B-P had come across huge numbers of girl scouts at a rally of 11,000 Scouts at Crystal Palace in London. B-P was all for girls in Scouting but society, at the time, was not so sure. So he asked his sister, Agnes, to set up a similar movement, called Girl Guides, in 1910. His wife Olave, later became Chief Guide. However, now, a quarter of Scouts are girls and the movement is fully co-educational.

Wolf Cubs

As the popularity of Scouts increased, younger boys were also wanting to join in and were being organised into troops of their own. In 1916, Baden-Powell started the Wolf Cubs, providing fun and adventure for boys aged between eight to eleven. Activities included lighting fires, how to use a compass, give first aid, how to look after themselves and many other things. In 1967 Wolf Cubs had their name changed to Cub Scouts.

Younger and older Scouts

Scouting for older boys has gone through many changes. In 1916 B-P established Senior Scouts, later Rover Scouts, for those over 18. This has changed over the years. Later Venture Scouts were established for those over 16 and now Explorer Scouts cater for those over 14. In 1982 a new section was established, Beaver Scouts, catering for six to eight year olds.

The spread of Scouting

As early as 1908 Scouting was starting in many of the British outposts of the Empire. After a trip to South America, Scouting started in Chile, and it was already crossing the channel into Europe. The big step across the Atlantic, and into the United States came more by chance. In 1909, an American business man, William Boyce, was lost in the fog of London, when a small boy approached him, and offered to take him to his hotel. Once there, the boy refused any offer of money for the service, saying that it was his "good turn as a Boy Scout". Boyce was so intrigued by this that he tracked down B-P. before he left London to discover more of this. When he got back to the U.S.A. he went about setting up the Boy Scouts of America. By 1918, its numbers had risen to 300,000, and had reached the million mark before the end of the twenties.

Chief Scout of the World

The movement was so successful in its early years that B-P decided to hold world gatherings to bring all scouts from all cultures together in one big celebration. These gatherings became known as World Jamborees, and the first was held in London in 1920. B-P. thereafter spent much of the rest of his life organising Scouting throughout the world, and later attending the World Jamborees, which have become an integral part of international Scouting. Today there are 28 million Scouts across the world, two-thirds of whom are in developing countries and although uniforms differ everyone wears the same purple fleur de lys badge that means we are all part of the same world-wide family of Scouting.



At the 3rd World Jamboree, held in Arrowe Park, Birkenhead, to celebrate the 21st Anniversary of the publication of 'Scouting for Boys', the Prince of Wales announced that B.-P. had been created a Peer. He took the title of Lord Baden-Powell of Gilwell, which had become the headquarters of the movement.

B-P.'s health deteriorated to the point that in 1938 he moved to Kenya to spend the last days of his life in Africa. He finally passed away on January 8th 1941.

In his belongings was his last message to Scouts throughout the world:

Dear Scouts - if you have ever seen the play 'Peter Pan' you will remember how the pirate chief was always making his dying speech because he was afraid that possible, when the time came for him to die, he might not have time to get it off his chest. It is much the same with me, and so, although I am not at this moment dying, I shall be doing so one of these days and I want to send you a parting word of goodbye.

Remember, it is the last time you will ever hear from me, so think it over. I have had a most happy life and I want each one of you to have a happy life too.

I believe that God put us in this jolly world to be happy and enjoy life. Happiness does not come from being rich, nor merely being successful in your career, nor by self-indulgence. One step towards happiness is to make yourself healthy and strong while you are a boy, so that you can be useful and so you can enjoy life when you are a man.

Nature study will show you how full of beautiful and wonderful things God has made the world for you to enjoy. Be contented with what you have got and make the best of it. Look on the bright side of things instead of the gloomy one.

But the real way to get happiness is by giving out happiness to other people. Try and leave this world a little better than you found it and when your turn comes to die, you can die happy in feeling that at any rate you have not wasted your time but have done your best. 'Be Prepared' in this way, to live happy and to die happy - stick to your Scout Promise always - even after you have ceased to be a boy - and God help you to do it.

Your friend,

Robert Baden-Powell

B-P. was the first and only Chief Scout of the World: after that no one person held that responsibility.