

# Chapter 21 - A Brief History Of Scouting

## B.-P. and History



Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell was born in London, England, on February 22, 1857. To this day, we celebrate his birthday by observing that week in February as Scout-Guide Week. He entered Charterhouse School, London, in 1870. He had boundless energy, but was not much of a scholar or team athlete. Instead, he preferred music, acting and sketching. He could use his left hand as well as his right and, in later years, astounded Scout audiences by sketching two pictures simultaneously with a pencil in each hand.

When his school moved to Godalming, Surrey, he discovered a nearby wooded area known as "The Copse." Here, B.-P. practised many of the backwoods skills he later brought to Scouting.

Given a commission in the army at 19, B.-P. served for many years in India, South Africa and Afghanistan. During his time in Africa, he acquired a long necklace of wooden beads that had belonged to the Zulu Chief Dinizulu. Later, a pair of these beads were presented to each successful candidate at early Woodbadge training courses. Woodbadge beads presented today are replicas of those originals.

The idea of the Scout left handshake was also born in Africa. B.-P. learned that Ashanti warriors extended their left hand as a symbolic gesture of trust. The left handshake required that the shield (their means of defence) be set aside.

Also at this time, B.-P. wrote a training manual called *Aids to Scouting*. It was used to teach soldiers basic survival skills, camping and other backwoods lessons that led to self-sufficiency in the field.

B.-P. was in South Africa when war with the Boers broke out. In 1899, as a colonel, he was ordered to raise two battalions of mounted rifles and proceed to Mafeking, a town in the heart of South Africa. When the town was besieged, he and his 800 men held out for 217 days until they were relieved. This event made him a national hero in Britain. The Manitoba towns of Baden-Powell and Mafeking are named in remembrance of his victory.

During this famous siege, boys as young as nine years old ran messages and served as orderlies, thereby releasing men for the battle line. The boys were organized in groups, each with its own boy leader. These groups were the forerunners of the Scout patrol system.

England greeted B.-P. as a hero when he returned home in 1901 as a Major General. Appointed Inspector General of Cavalry in Britain, he became a prolific writer and illustrator. About this time, young boys all over the country discovered his book *Aids to Scouting* and began using it as a guide for club activities.

In 1904 he visited the annual demonstration of the Boy's Brigade and was asked to apply his camping or "Scouting" skills to youth development. Then came an experimental camp on Brownsea Island in 1907, *Scouting for Boys* in 1908, and the great Crystal Palace rally in 1909 where 11,000 Scouts attended.

When King George V made him a baron in 1929, B.-P. chose Lord Baden-Powell of Gilwell as his title, and continued to promote Scouting all over the world. He encouraged each country to interpret the Movement in its own way. He also continued to write on Scouting subjects, illustrating articles and books with his own sketches.

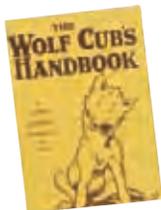
At the age of 80, he retired to his beloved Africa with Lady Baden-Powell. He died four years later in Kenya on January 8, 1941.

The founder of the World Brotherhood of Scouting lived two separate lives:

- Soldier, hunter and man of action until 50,
- Then promoter of world peace, conservationist and youth leader until his death.

## History of Canadian Scouting

The Scouting Movement was officially organized in Canada in 1908. The following year B.-P. and two Scout patrols visited our country and the United States. (An American publisher promoted Scouting in the United States after being helped in London by a Scout doing his good turn.)



By 1914 an increasing number of younger boys wanted to join Scouts. Growth called for new plans. B.-P. believed that these younger boys needed a separate organization with its own uniform, character and activities suited to their age. In 1916, he wrote *The Wolf Cub's Handbook*, using Rudyard Kipling's first *Jungle Book* as a basis for the program.

During two world wars, Scouts proved their worth. In both wars, former Scouts distinguished themselves as soldiers, sailors and airmen. In World War II, Canadian Scouts collected many thousands of tons of paper, rubber and scrap metal. They raised money for war victims, worked for the Red Cross and supported other causes. Since World War II, Scouting has been a leader in youth development.

Every year, Scouts put their first aid and rescue training to work by helping other people in distress. Many thousands of Scouts have received recognition for saving lives or risking their own life. Annually, Scouts Canada presents over 300 awards for acts of meritorious conduct, gallantry and heroism.

