



Scouting - 100 Years Old in 2007

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There are more than 28 million Scouts, young people and adults, male and female, in 160 countries and territories. Some 300 million people have been Scouts, including prominent people in every field.

This is impressive considering that Scouting began with 20 boys and an experimental camp in 1907. It was held during the first nine days of August in 1907 at Brownsea Island, near Poole in Dorset, England.

The camp was a great success and proved to its organiser, Robert Baden-Powell, that his training and methods appealed to young people and really worked.

In January 1908, he published the first "Scouting for Boys", a book issued in fortnightly parts at four pence each. It was an immediate success. Baden-Powell had only intended to provide a method of training boys, something that existing youth organizations such as the Boys' Brigade and Y.M.C.A. could adopt. To his surprise, youngsters started to organise themselves into what was destined to become - and is today - the world's largest voluntary youth movement.

Baden-Powell's Background

Robert Baden-Powell was born 22 February 1857. He was, therefore 50 years old when the Brownsea camp took place. His many experiences as a boy and as a soldier played a part in the formulation of this training methods.

As a youngster - one of ten children (six brothers) - he spent his holidays camping, hiking and sailing.

Tent pitching, map and compass use, and wood-fire cooking were but a few of the skills he acquired. Near his school at Charterhouse, England, he used to sneak into the forest, which was off-limits; here he learned how to hide his tracks, climb trees and "freeze" to escape attention if any of the school masters entered the woods.

In 1876 he went to India as a young army officer and specialised in Scouting, map-making and reporting. His success soon led to his training other soldiers for the work. B-P's methods were unorthodox for those days; small units or patrols working together under one leader, with special recognition for those who did well. For proficiency, B-P awarded his trainees badges resembling the traditional design of the north compass point. Today's universal Scout badge is very similar.

Later he was stationed in the Balkans, South Africa and Malta. He returned to Africa to help defend Mafeking during its 217-day siege at the start of the South African war. It provided crucial tests for B-P's Scouting skills. The courage and resourcefulness shown by the boys in the corps of messengers at Mafeking made a lasting impression on him. In turn, his deeds made a lasting impression in England.

Returning home he found that he had become a national hero. He also found that the small handbook he had written for soldiers was being used to teach observation and woodcraft to members of Boys' Clubs and Boys' Brigade. B-P decided to rewrite the book especially for boys. The 1907 camp on Brownsea Island was to test his ideas in practise.

[Read more about Robert Baden-Powell.](#)

Growth of the Movement

The success of "Scouting for Boys" produced a Movement that quickly ? automatically it seemed ? adopted the name of The Boy Scouts and necessitated the establishment of an office to administer it.

By 1909 the Movement had taken firm root. "Scouting for Boys" had been translated into five languages. A Scout rally in London attracted more than 11,000 Scouts. As a result of B-P taking a holiday in South America, Chile was one of the first countries outside Britain to begin Scouting. In 1910 he visited Canada and the United States where it had already started.

The coming of the war in 1914 could have brought about the collapse of the Movement, but the training provided through the patrol system proved its worth. Patrol leaders took over when adult leaders volunteered for active service. Scouts contributed to the war effort in many ways; most notable perhaps were the Sea Scouts who took the place of regular coast-guardsmen, thus freeing them for service afloat.

The first World jamboree took place in 1920 with 8,000 participants, and proved that young people of many nations could come together to share common interests and ideals. Since that first World Jamboree at Olympia in London, there have been 17 others at different locations.

During the Jamboree the first International Scout Conference was held with 33 national Scout organizations represented. The Boy Scouts International Bureau was founded in London in 1920.

In 1922 the first International Committee was elected at the 2nd International Conference (Paris), where 31 national Scout organizations were represented. World membership was just over 1 million.

[Read about the Milestones of World Scouting.](#)

The Early Scout Programme

Scouting began as a programme for boys 11 to 18 years of age. Yet almost immediately there were demands by others to participate. The Girl Guides programme was started in 1910 by B-P. His wife Olave, whom he married in 1912, became Chief Guide.

A Wolf Cub section was formed for younger boys. It used Kipling's "Jungle Book", to provide an imaginative symbolic background for activities. For older boys, a Rover Scout branch was formed.

The names and characteristics of programmes vary from country to country: Cub Scouts, Beavers, Rovers, Explorers, Senior Scouts and many more. In some countries boys can start when they are six years old. Some programmes are open to girls and boys.

The World Wars

Between the two world wars Scouting continued to flourish in all parts of the world - except in totalitarian countries where it was banned. Scouting is essentially democratic and voluntary.

The war came in 1939, Scouts again carried on under their patrol leaders; they undertook many national service tasks ? messengers, fire watchers, stretcher bearers, salvage collectors and so on. In occupied countries, Scouting continued in secret with Scouts playing important roles in the resistance and underground movements. After the liberation, it was found that the numbers of Scouts in some occupied countries had, in fact, increased.

The '60s, '70s and '80s

Many countries gained their independence during these years. Scouting in developing countries gradually evolved to be a youth programme which was designed by Scout leaders in each country to better meet the needs of their communities.

Scouts, particularly in developing countries, became more involved with issues such as child health, low-cost housing, literacy, food production and agriculture, job skills training, etc.

Drug abuse prevention, life skills training, integration of the handicapped, environmental conservation and education, and peace education became issues of concern to Scouts around the world.

Post Communistic Era

In the 1990s Scouting has been reborn in every country where it existed prior to World War II, and it has started throughout the newly independent countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (formerly the USSR). Since 1993, 35 countries have joined, or rejoined, the World Organization of the Scout Movement.

What started as a small camp on Brownsea Island is today a growing Movement with members in nearly every country in the world. What started as an outdoor camp to teach skills is today a programme that is used successfully in such diverse settings as developing countries and metropolitan inner-cities.