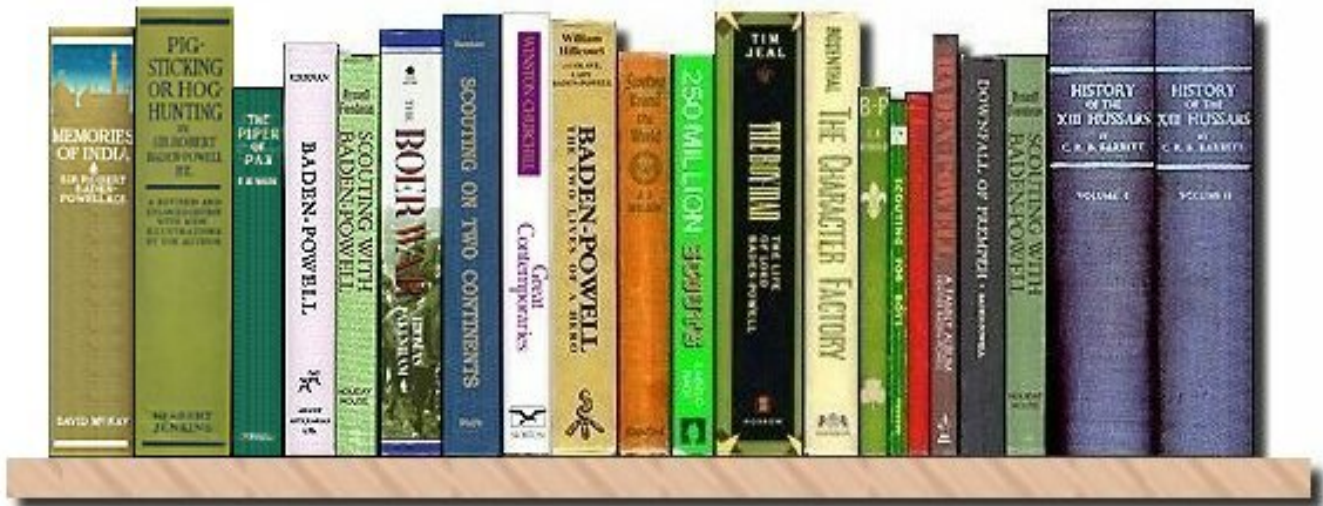


# The Baden-Powell Library

A Selection of excerpts from the works of  
Robert Baden-Powell and works relating to his life and career



By Sir Robert Baden-Powell



[Lessons from the Varsity of Life](#) is Baden-Powell's most complete autobiographical account. Here he presents interesting and enjoyable stories of his "two lives" in Soldiering and in Scouting.



Lessons from the Varsity of Life  
Chapter I: [My Education](#)



Lessons from the Varsity of Life  
Chapter II: [Art: Acting](#)



Lessons from the Varsity of Life  
Chapter III: Sport.  
[Boatsmanship and Fishing](#)



Lessons from the Varsity of Life  
Chapter III: Sport.  
[Shooting, Fox-Hunting and Polo](#)



Lessons from the Varsity of Life  
Chapter III: Sport.  
[Pig-Sticking](#)



Lessons from the Varsity of Life  
Chapter III: Sport.  
[Big Game, Hippos and Lions](#)



Lessons from the Varsity of Life  
Chapter III: Sport.  
[Pets, Stalking, Mountaineering and the School of the Jungle](#)



Lessons from the Varsity of Life  
Chapter IV: [Spying and Scouting](#)



Lessons from the Varsity of Life  
Chapter V: Soldiering. [Early Days in India](#)



Lessons from the Varsity of Life  
Chapter V: Soldiering. [Zululand, 1896](#)



Lessons from the Varsity of Life  
Chapter V: Soldiering. [With a Native Levy in Ashanti](#)



Lessons from the Varsity of Life  
Chapter VI: [Matabeleland](#)



Lessons from the Varsity of Life  
Chapter VII: [The South African War](#)



Lessons from the Varsity of Life  
Chapter VIII: [The South African Constabulary](#)



Lessons from the Varsity of Life  
Chapter IX: [As Inspector-General of Cavalry](#)



Lessons from the Varsity of Life  
Chapter X: [The Boy Scouts & Girl Guides](#)



Lessons from the Varsity of Life  
Chapter XI: [The War](#)  
and Chapter XII: [Looking Back](#)



Baden-Powell, [Memories of India](#). A collection of stories from B-P's diaries and letters home. Chapters on the Afghan War and its aftermath and on skirmishes on the Northwest frontier. These stories are full of B-P's personality and capture the adventuresome spirit of the Chief Scout in his early days in the army.



From [Chapter III. The Sport of Kings and the King of Sports](#). B-P tells an amusing story of [Young Winston Churchill](#), his devotion to the sport of polo, and early evidence of his talent for public speaking.



[Chapter VIII. When the Tribes are Out](#). The Afghan War—The Great March—Ordered up to Kandahar—A Warlike Atmosphere—The Expedition of 1842—The Camel and His Ways—Kandahar—A Dangerous City—Theatricals Under Difficulties—A Serious Mistake—Afghan Nerve—Attacked by Ghazis—The Crack of Doom—The Field of Maiwand—A Broken Square—A Heroic Chaplain—A Narrow Escape



[Chapter IX. The Aftermath of War](#). The Image of War—Patrols and Picnics A Curious Superstition—Jock Fights a Wild Cat—Afghan Depredations—Relics of Alexander the Great—Camp Rumours—Abdurrahman Waits—The Horses Stampede—A Subaltern's Opinion of the Government—A Study in Contrasts—Rifle Stealing—An Ingenious Plan—Further Losses—I Shoot Myself—I Hear my Death Announced—Digging for the Bullet—Convalescence—Stalked by a Leopard—A Rough and Tumble

[Chapter XI. Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright](#). A Possible Interrogation—I Go in Pursuit of Tigers—Smith-Dorrien at Work—The Party Meets—The Old Hands—A Native Weakness—How to Beat for Tigers—A Dead Enemy—A Native Village—Nearly a Fatality—Camp Literature—I Become Doctor—I Get a Bear—Camp Life—A Tiger's Wings—The Mahout—The Tables Turned—Table Delicacies—Jungle Yachts—The End of the Ghost

[Chapter XII. A Frontier Row](#). The Value of the North-West Frontier—Village Warfare—Readiness and Efficiency—How an Irishman Got a Dog and a Breakfast for Nothing—Trouble in the Buner Country—The Subaltern in War-time—The Pessimistic Afridi—A Terrified Jehu—Sniping—The Morning of the Fight—Sir Bindon's Dispositions—The Artillery Triumphs—Touching the Button—Rock-rolling—An Exciting Race—The Bravest Man I Ever Saw—The Enemy in Retreat—An Exhausting Climb—The Tribute of a Foe—The Trophies of War—Our Casualties





[Chapter XIV. The Elephant as Gentleman.](#) Sentiment About the Elephant—His Mathematical Mind—"Dandelion's" Idiosyncrasies—Her Courage in the Face of an Enemy—The Elephant Who Died—A Problem in Sanitation—The Jungle Ship—Sea Legs— The Genius of the Elephant—His Timidity—Jock's Victory—The Duchess of Connaught's Adventure— The Elephant's Caution—He Utilises Human Material— A Malefactor Flogged by Elephants—The Elephant in War—An Elephant Fight



[My Adventures as a Spy](#) by Sir Robert Baden-Powell was published in 1915 during the first years of the Great War. It recounts B-P's experiences in espionage during his military career and is full of adventure. It is a short book, an exciting story, and one of my personal favorites.



[Part One.](#) Introduction—The Different Degrees of Spies—Strategical Agents—Tactical Agents—Residential Spies—Officer Agents—Commercial Spying—Germany's Invasion Plans—Field Spies—Catching a Spy.



[Part Two.](#) Conveying Information—Secret Signals and Warnings—Spies in War Time—The Pluck of a Spy—Traitorous Spying—The German Spy Organization—The Value of Being Stupid—Concealing a Fort in a Moth's Head—Butterfly Hunting in Dalmatia.



[Part Three.](#) How Spies Disguise Themselves—The Sport of Spying—The Value of Hide-and-Seek—Spying on Mountain Troops—Posing as an Artist.



[Part Four.](#) Fooling a German Sentry—A Spy is Suspicious—Hoodwinking a Turkish Sentry—Tea and a Turk—Sore Feet—Austrian Officers—An Interesting Task.



[Part Five.](#) An Interesting Task—Encounter with the Police—Success with the Balloon—How to Enter a Fort—How We Got the Secret Light—How the Big River was Swum—Caught at Last—The Escape—Conclusion.



One of B-P's more popular books was [Rovering to Success](#), published in the 1920's. It was addressed to older Scouts in the "Rover Branch" of Scouting. In his preface, B-P outlined the book and, defined "what is meant by success."



[What Scouts Can Do: More Yarns for Scouts](#) is one of several books of "yarns" -- stories about subjects he thought would be of interest to Scouts. It was first published in 1921 and reprinted a number of times. It was one of B-P's more popular books.





[Chapter IV. Getting Good Sport—Life in the Wild. Part One:](#) Knowing the Language — Deduction — Why He Was Fat and Rich — Mountaineering: The Right Way to Climb Hills — Maxim for Scouts — Observation — Close to the Enemy — What the Indian Saw — An Envelope for a Boy — African Tribes



[Chapter IV. Getting Good Sport—Life in the Wild. Part Two:](#) On the March — Camping — Hunting — Fire-Lighting — Initiation of Boys — Discipline — Chivalry — Salutation of Friendship — Totem — Signalling —The Rally — Elephant Hunter and Scout — Two Narrow Escapes — The Boy Hunter —The End of a Great Career.



[Yarns from Chapter VII.](#) Techniques of stalking, the Scout's staff, and the "Thanks Badge," surprisingly in the form of a swastika.



Baden-Powell traveled widely. He enjoyed the open road and had a keen sense of adventure. In [What Scouts Can Do: More Yarns](#), he says "I want every Scout to be happy, and one of the best ways I know of being happy is to go for a good bike ride. In [Biking in Bosnia](#) he provides a fascinating picture of this war-torn land before the two World Wars.



["Be Prepared," an interview with Baden-Powell](#) describing the beginnings of Scouting, published in *The Listener* in 1937.



[The Chief's Closing Address at the 3rd World Jamboree](#), Arrowe Park, Birkenhead, England, 1929



In 1919, B-P summarized his thoughts on the game of Scouting in [Aids to Scoutmastership](#). This remains his clearest explanation of the theory and method of Scouting. Though some material had been dated by the passage of time, there is much in this little book that seems written for today and can be helpful to Scouts and Scouters in understanding the foundation of our Movement.



[Baden-Powell, Scouting for Boys, 1908.](#) Russell Freedman describes the background and contents of the first Scout handbook, written by B-P and published in magazine installments in 1908. Here are the covers B-P drew for each installment along with an excerpt from each.



[Baden-Powell, Scouting for Boys, 1908.](#) Here is B-P's Preface to an early edition of *Scouting for Boys*. Norman MacLoed writes: "If anyone should ever ask you to provide a short summary of what B-P was all about and why we should still follow his advice and methods, all you really need to remember is: He cared." (From Norman MacLoed's [The Serious Side of Scouting](#)).



[Baden-Powell, Scouting Games, 1910.](#) Here is B-P's own compendium of games for Scouts. The language may be dated and the games somewhat antique, but this book remains a fine source for games and contests for today's Scouts. (From Steve Tobin's [Networks Virtual Campsite](#)).

## About Sir Robert Baden-Powell



["B.-P." from Great Contemporaries by Sir Winston S. Churchill.](#) Perhaps one of the finest portraits of the significance of the life and work of Sir Robert Baden-Powell.



Published at the end of the first year of the war, H. W. Wilson's [With the Flag to Pretoria](#) devotes portions of three chapters to the [Siege and Relief of Mafeking](#). "Illustrated mainly from photographs and authentic sketches taken in South Africa," it includes several rare photos of Baden-Powell. *New for October, 1999.*



"This small place, which sprang in the course of a few weeks from obscurity to fame ..." opens Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's retelling of [The Siege of Mafeking](#). Author of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries, Conan Doyle provides an excellent contemporary account of the siege in his history, [The Great Boer War: A Two-Years' Record, 1899-1901](#). *New for October, 1999.*



Eileen K. Wade, [The Piper of Pax: The Life Story of Sir Robert Baden-Powell, 1924](#). Eileen Wade served Baden-Powell as Confidential Secretary and assistant until his death in 1941. [The Piper of Pax](#), written is an excellent short biography of B-P. It includes an account of his early career in the army and the founding of the Scout Movement. Of special note are many selections from his diaries and his letters to his mother.



[Chapter VII. Swaziland, Malta and Home.](#) A shooting trip to Knysna—first encounter with an elephant—a mission to Swaziland—an interview with Oom Paul—life in Malta—adventures in many countries—maneuvers in Ireland.



[Chapter VIII. Ashanti.](#) The Ashanti Expedition—experiences of a native levy—the wages of a king the night march to Bekwai—hoisting the British flag— how to avoid fever—Kantankye receives promotion.



[Chapter IX. Matabeleland.](#) Special service again—troubles in Matabeleland—Sir Frederic Carrington arrives—scouting in the Matoppos—the Wolf that never sleeps—the case of Uwini—home with Rhodes.



[Chapter X. Old Places and New Faces.](#) India revisited—Officer Commanding 5th Dragoon Guards—work and sport in plenty—a shooting trip with Sir Baker Russell—on special service to South Africa—ready for war.



[Chapter XI. The South African War, 1899-1902.](#) The declaration of war—beseiged in Mafeking—seven months beseiged—the story of the stamps—food shortage—arrival of the relief column.



[Chapter XII. The South African Constabulary.](#) The hero of Mafeking—Lord Roberts' despatch—a new job—the South African Constabulary—home at last—an interview with King Edward—appointed Inspector-General of Cavalry.



Eileen K. Wade, [27 Years with Baden-Powell, 1957](#). With extensive quotations from B-P's diaries and letters, [27 Year with Baden-Powell](#) provides some special insights onto the life of B-P.



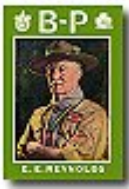
[Chapter 5: Pax Hill](#)



[Chapter 12. Why the Uniform?](#)



[Chapter 19: Kenya](#)



E. E. Reynolds, [B-P: The Story of His Life](#), is a major source of biographical information about B-P. It is one of several works by E. E. Reynolds documenting the life of the Chief Scout and the early days of the Scout Movement.



[Chapter I. The Training of a Tenderfoot](#)  
Early Days. India to 1883



[Chapter II. First Experiences in South Africa](#)  
South Africa 1884-1889. Malta.



[Chapter III. The Testing of a Scout](#)  
Ashanti, 1895-1896



[Chapter IV. "The Best Adventure"](#)  
Matabeleland, 1896-1897



[Chapter V. India Once More](#)  
5th Dragoons, India, 1897-1899



[Chapter VI. Mafeking](#)  
Defense and Relief, 1899-1900



[Chapter VII. From the Army to the Boy Scouts](#)  
South Africa and Home, 1901-1907



[Chapter VIII. Brownsea Island](#)  
The Beginnings of Scouting, 1907-1909



[Chapter IX. Forging Ahead](#)  
The Growth of Scouting, 1909-1914



[Chapter X. The War Years](#)  
1914-1919



[Chapter XI. Early Jamborees](#)  
Olympia, Wembley, Gilwell, 1920-1924



[Chapter XII. The Man](#)  
A Character Sketch of a Great Man



[Chapter XIII. Coming-of-Age](#)  
Arrowe Park, Rovers, Kanderstag, 1929-1931



[Chapter XIV. Overseas](#)  
1932-1934



[Chapter XV. Last Years](#)  
1934-1941



[Appendix--Last Messages](#)



E. E. Reynolds, [Boy Scouts, 1944](#). This short history of Scouting gives an account of the early years of the Movement, its origins and growth, its chief activities, achievements and aims. Reynolds was the editor of *The Scouter* and a biographer of Baden-Powell.



[The Cruise of the Calgaric](#), relates the story of a 1933 cruise to the nations of the Baltic by Lord and Lady Baden-Powell and a contingent of 650 Guides and Scouts. This "Argosy of Peace" carried them from England to the Netherlands, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Norway and home. Words and photos from the cruise provide a rare picture of Scouting in these countries prior to the Second World War.



["Enterprise" by Hilary Saint George Saunders](#). This short biography of B-P is much the idealized version of his life. Written shortly after World War Two, it forms part of a testimony to the contribution of Scouts in Occupied Europe and England during the dark days of the war. While occasionally relying more on drama than on fact, this chapter on B-P provides a good capsule biography and introduction to his "Two Lives." Excerpted from Hilary Saint George Saunders, *The Left Handshake*, 1948.



Burnham's account of [Scouting with B-P](#) in the Matopo Hills during the Matabele Campaign.  
From Frederick Russell Burnham, *Taking Chances*, 1944



[Scouting in South Africa, 1884-1890](#). Russell Freeman's *Scouting with Baden-Powell* provides an easy to read and enjoyable account of B-P's two lives -- as a serving officer in the British Army, and as the Founder of the World Scout Movement. His chapter on B-P in South Africa in the 1880's gives a good second-hand account of B-P's service there. It includes a description of his pursuit of Dinizulu during the Zulu civil war of 1883-1884.



["B-P's Ladder of Life."](#) A Chronology from Eileen K. Wade, *Baden-Powell*, 1944.



[A Baden-Powell Bibliography](#). Laszlo Nagy, who was the Chief Executive of the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM), developed this detailed bibliography for his book *250 Million Scouts* published in 1985.



Resources for B-P Biography & Bibliography from Randy Wooster's [Scouting History and Traditions](#).



[Stevens Publishing](#) of Kila, Montana has a wonderful selection of reprints of many of B-P's writings. These include, among others: *Aids to Scoutmastership*, *Lessons from the Varsity of Life*, *Memories of India* and *My Adventures as a Spy*. Stevens also publishes reprints of works by Ernest Thompson Seton and Dan Beard, two founders of the Boy Scouts of America. They are a unique source of information on Scouting.



---

[Return to the Baden-Powell Home Page](#)



---

[Return to the Pine Tree Web Home Page](#)

Your feedback, comments and suggestions are appreciated.



Please write to: [Lewis P. Orans](mailto:lporans@texas.net)  
(lporans@texas.net)



## THE PINE TREE WEB

Copyright © Lewis P. Orans, 1998  
Last Modified: 6:00 AM on March 6, 1998





An Excerpt from:  
E.E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life**,  
London, Oxford University Press, 1943.

---

#### CHAPTER I. THE TRAINING OF A TENDERFOOT

WHEN Charterhouse School was still in London, there was a traditional feud between the scholars and the butcher boys of Smithfield Market just outside. During one of these battles, when brickbats and other missiles were being flung over the wall, a group of smaller boys were cheering on the seniors. Suddenly the door of the school opened, and out stepped the head master, Dr. Haig Brown, or "Old Bill." He too watched for a minute or so, then he said to the onlookers, "If you boys go out by that side gate, you could take them in the flank."

"The gate is locked, sir!"

"True, but I have brought the key."

In a few minutes the sortie was made, and the enemy routed.

Amongst those younger scholars was a slightly-built, sandy-haired, freckled boy who, in after life, was to achieve fame as the defender of Mafeking, and founder of the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. Everyone came to know him as "B.-P." His full name was Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell.

He was born on 22nd February, 1857, in London. His father was a clergyman and a professor at Oxford, well known as a distinguished scientist. B.-P.'s mother was the daughter of another scientist, Admiral William Smyth, who claimed descent from the same family as Captain John Smith, the Elizabethan adventurer who helped to found the colony of Virginia in America.

When B.-P. was seven years old he lost his father. The family was not too well-off. There were seven children, of whom the eldest was Warrington, aged thirteen, and

the youngest, Baden Fletcher, aged one month. B.-P. was the fifth child; he had four older brothers. of whom one died in 1862, and a younger sister and brother. They were a very happy crowd of children and their leader was Warington; they may be thought of as a Patrol, for the brothers were a real band of adventurers. Fortunately their mother believed in letting them find their own amusements as soon as they were old enough, though she must have had some anxious moments.

Warington was very keen about everything to do with the sea; he was trained on the Conway, and it was therefore natural that much of the early training the brothers got with him was in boats and small craft. They could not afford to buy anything very big or very good, but by using their own skill in improving what they could get, they made their craft seaworthy, and had many adventures. Some of these came very near to disaster.

On one trip they were using a 10-tonner called the Koh-i-noor; in this they had cruised round our coasts and had crossed to Norway. On this occasion they were off Torquay when a gale sprang up from the south-west. At first they tried to make Dartmouth, but both sea and wind were too strong. Warington decided that they must wear ship and run before the gale for Weymouth. Night was coming on and the storm showed no signs of dying down. Accustomed as the boys were to the sea, they all, except for the skipper, turned sick. They were lashed with sufficient length of rope to get to their jobs, and Warington kept to the helm and shouted his orders against the noise of wind and towering seas. Through the night and following day they battled on, and at last found refuge under the lee of Portland Bill.

On another occasion they went out from Harwich in a storm to try to find a ship in distress, and they had, as B.-P. said, "a perfectly vile time of it." Warington had the idea that if only they could get to the ship they could claim salvage money, and so afford a better vessel for their own use. They failed to find the ship, but they added to their experience.

In addition to sea-trips the brothers did a good deal of tramping about the country; they carried as little as possible with them, slept in barns or under hedges and haystacks, and cooked their own meals. They all had very practical natures, so whenever possible they would visit a factory or a workshop to see how things were made. One of their most interesting trips was made partly by canoe and partly on foot. Their mother had taken a cottage in Wales for the holidays. The boys decided that the railway was too tame a way of travelling, so they got a collapsible boat and set off up the Thames. They camped each night and, as usual, looked after themselves completely. When they had gone as far up the river as possible, they hiked across country with the canoe to the Avon, which took them down to Bristol. Here, greatly daring, they crossed the Severn, and then went up the Wye, and so eventually joined their mother.

As one of the younger members of the party, B.-P. got many of the odd jobs to do on these trips, such as the washing-up. One experiment he made in cooking was not favourably received. A soup he concocted was so repulsive that he was ordered to "eat this muck himself," and made to do so.

In all these adventures he was picking up useful ideas on how to look after himself and how to take his share of the work—a good foundation for his training as a Scout.

These expeditions took place during the holidays. In 1872 Charterhouse School moved from London down to new buildings at Godalming, and there B.-P. had further opportunities for his early scouting. A stretch of woodland near the school was out of bounds, but it drew B.-P. with his love of the out-of-doors like a

magnet. Here he enjoyed stolen hours watching birds and animals and learning their ways; he snared rabbits, skinned and cooked them over small fires, for he knew that too much smoke would give him away. He learned how to climb trees and conceal himself from inquisitive schoolmasters, and he soon came to know that the first lesson in stalking is to be able to "freeze," for a motionless creature is rarely noticed.

He was popular at school, but he did not stand out either as a scholar or as a player of games. He took part in every activity and was generally above the average. In sport his best achievements were as goalkeeper, but he had his own peculiar ways. Thus he would at times let off a great war-whoop, and he always took a spare pair of boots on to the field with him, as he discovered that by changing at half-time his feet got less tired. He never did things simply because other people did them; he liked to experiment with his own ideas and did not bother very much about what criticisms were made. It is not surprising, therefore, that his fellows thought him a bit odd.

The head master, Dr. Haig Brown, encouraged his boys to accept responsibility; he was not very fond of rules and regulations, and he trusted the boys to carry on without a great deal of interference. B.-P. afterwards expressed his gratitude for this, because it meant that each boy had the chance to follow his own bent, and possibly Dr. Haig Brown knew more about those visits to the copse than B.-P. suspected! One side of the school life was very congenial to B.-P. The head master was a great believer in theatricals and concerts, and these were regularly organized. It was not long before B.-P. showed his talent as an actor and singer. He had a great fund of humour, and this found full expression on the school platform. In addition to taking part in the plays, he sang and recited—the humorous monologue was his strong point, and frequently this would be made up on the spot.

Another skill of his also gave pleasure. He could make funny sketches as well as do more serious kinds of drawing and painting. From his earliest days he found that he could use either hand equally well, and sometimes as a trick he would draw the picture with his right hand and shade in with the left at the same time. From his handwriting it is difficult to tell which hand he was using.

He certainly enjoyed his schooldays, but by the time he had to leave—he was then in the VIth Form and second Monitor in his House—he had not really made up his mind what he wanted to do. His chief idea was that he would like to travel, and it was this more than anything else which took him into the army. While it was being discussed whether he should go up to Oxford as his elder brothers had done, he sat for an army examination, and to his surprise—and to that of those who knew him—he passed so high up on the list that he was excused the usual training course at Sandhurst, and received a commission straight away as a Sub-Lieutenant, or Ensign, in the 13th Hussars. As the regiment was then stationed in India, he immediately got his desire to travel. He sailed from Portsmouth on the 30th October, 1876, and landed at Bombay on the 6th December.

He quickly settled down to his new life, for his lively spirits and good humour made friends for him wherever he went. The children of the officers found in him a cheery companion ever ready for fun. They were always welcome in his bungalow, and liked to watch him painting a picture; then he would march them out to the music of his ocarina and encourage them to use their eyes. He himself was particularly keen on observing the ways in which animals lived, and this habit was lifelong; he would go off to some quiet spot in the jungle and lie concealed to see the wild beasts come down to a pool to drink—the deer, the jackals, tigers, elephants, and the boars. The knowledge he gained in this way was later to prove



of value in his scouting.

Although he was popular with his fellow-officers, he did not make the mistake of doing things just because they were in the fashion. He took an independent line, for instance, in the matter of expenses. At that period a subaltern received a salary of £120 a year, and it was assumed that any officer in a crack cavalry regiment had private means. B.-P. knew that his mother was not too well-off, so he was determined to become self-supporting as quickly as possible. He cut out all needless expense; thus amongst other economies he gave up smoking because of the cost, and later on, when he could afford to smoke, he did not do so because he found that the habit affected his sense of smell in scouting. He used his skill as an artist to add to his income, and wrote and illustrated many articles for magazines.

B.-P. was a first-class horseman, and this is not unconnected with his love of animals, for a good horseman must have a real liking for his mount. It is not therefore surprising that he took quickly to the two great sports of polo and pigsticking. Good horses trained for these activities are expensive, so B.-P. would go to out-of-the-way places and buy up raw ponies and then break them in, and train them for polo. The task was not an easy one, but he learned a great deal about horses in the process; then he had the added satisfaction of selling a well-trained animal with advantage to his own purse. In pigsticking he became so expert that in 1883 he won the Kadir Cup—the most coveted trophy for the sport.

In days when there were no wireless or gramophones, regiments had to make their own amusements, and entertainments and theatrical shows of all kinds were popular. Here B.-P. was always in demand. He could sing a comic song, or act, or make up topical skits that would bring down the house. His skill as an artist also came in useful as a designer and painter of scenery, and it was not long before he became the producer of comic operas and plays. Rehearsals had sometimes to be carried out under difficulties, and on one occasion *The Pirates of Penzance* was prepared out of doors with swords stuck in the ground to mark the stage area; in case of sudden attack by tribesmen, the swords could then be quickly seized.

All this was the lighter side of life; B.-P. devoted himself to his military career with the thoroughness with which he did everything. His first eight months in India were spent at Lucknow, where he took an intensive course, passing out with a first class, with a special certificate in surveying. At the end of two years he was sent home on sick leave, and this was extended so that he could take a musketry course; again he was placed in the first class.

On his return to India in 1880 he rejoined his regiment, which had been moved up to the North-West Frontier; this was the year of Lord Roberts's famous 300-mile march from Kabul to Kandahar, but by the time B.-P. reached the regiment the fighting was over. He did, however, get the useful experience of active service conditions. One part of military work had early captured his enthusiasm—scouting; and he had taken every opportunity of making himself more efficient and of passing on his knowledge to his men, who found this new kind of soldiering more exciting than drill. This training proved its value, for attacks might be made by the Afghans at any time of the day or night, and constant scouting was necessary to detect their whereabouts. Then one day the horses broke loose in a storm; all but one were recaptured, but B.-P. was determined to find the missing horse. He rode round the camp in a wide circle until he came across the tracks of a galloping horse; these he followed up into the mountains where the tracks were difficult to distinguish, but at last he found the horse, and brought it back to camp.

When the order came to march back to the base, B.-P. told his Colonel that he knew a short cut that would save the men and horses both time and fatigue. The Colonel accepted this suggestion and found it was correct. Incidents such as these

drew attention to the young officer, and when special service was needed his name naturally came to mind. Quick promotion followed, and at the age of twenty-six he was gazetted Captain. This meant more office work, which he did well although it was little to his taste; as it kept him indoors a good deal there was not so much time for his various interests, but he still managed to get away for occasional trips into the mountains, alone save for a few native servants.

In maneuvers B.-P.'s skill as a scout—especially at night—was always useful to his regiment. On one occasion, for instance, he was with the attacking party; the scouts managed to find out where the defenders' outposts were, but were unable to get through. They settled down for a few hours' sleep, but B.-P. decided he would make one more effort to find out the disposition of the forces. So he crept through the outposts in the dark and crawled along until he discovered where both the main body and the reserve were stationed. At the farthest point he left a glove behind a bush, then he crept back to his men. The next day he was able to give an exact account of the position, much to the surprise of the defenders, who had claimed the day. They thought at first he had made a lucky guess, but when he told them where to find his glove, they had to admit defeat.

He was, as ever, in constant demand for all entertainments, and at one of these he completely deceived his Colonel and the other officers when he arrived in the disguise of a visiting General. His joke was only revealed when he went up to the platform and sang the Major-General's song from *The Pirates of Penzance*.

In 1883 the Duke of Connaught came out to India, and B.-P. was appointed to his staff, and this was the beginning of a lifelong friendship. The regiment was ordered home in the following year.



E. E. Reynolds, [B-P: The Story of His Life](#) is a major source of biographical information about B-P. It is one of several works by E. E. Reynolds documenting the life of the Chief Scout and the early days of the Scout Movement.



[The Baden-Powell Library](#). A Selection of excerpts from the works of Sir Robert Baden-Powell and works relating to his life and career



[Sir Robert Baden-Powell, Founder of the World Scout Movement, Chief Scout of the World](#). A Home Page for the Founder. Links Relating to Baden-Powell on the Pine Tree Web and elsewhere. [Text Only Index](#).



[Return to the Pine Tree Web Home Page](#)



# THE PINE TREE WEB

Your feedback, comments and suggestions are appreciated.  
Please write to: [Lewis P. Orans](mailto:Lewis P. Orans)  
[lporans@texas.net](mailto:lporans@texas.net)

Copyright © Lewis P. Orans, 1997  
Last Modified: 4:24 PM on August 31, 1997





An Excerpt from:  
E.E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life**,  
London, Oxford University Press, 1943.

---

## CHAPTER II. FIRST EXPERIENCES IN SOUTH AFRICA

As trouble between the Boers and the British was brewing in South Africa, the regiment disembarked at Port Natal (Durban) instead of sailing straight home. This was B.-P.'s first visit to a country which he was to know so well—a country, indeed, which he loved only second to England. As South Africa was to play such an important part in his life, it is necessary for us to know something about it.

In 1884, the year in which the 13th Hussars landed at Port Natal, the British colonies were Cape Colony and Natal. There were two Boer Republics, the Orange Free State bordering Cape Colony between the Orange River and the Natal River, and the Transvaal, beyond the Vaal, as the name implies, and bounded on the north by the River Limpopo. North again lay Matabeleland, the Southern Rhodesia of to-day. On the west the Boer Republics were bordered by Bechuanaland, a country inhabited by natives, but coveted by farmers and settlers who wished for more land. This was where trouble had come to a head in 1884; a British force under Sir Charles Warren was sent up from Cape Colony to fix the frontier. Between the Boer Republics and the Indian Ocean was Natal; the frontier was marked here by the Drakensberg Mountains, which rise steeply from Natal to a height of over 10,000 feet, with a few passes at 5,000 feet. A glance at the map will make all this clear, and will also show where lay the other native countries of Basutoland, Zululand and Swaziland. It will be seen that it would not have been an easy task for the British in Natal to join up with Sir Charles Warren on the Bechuanaland frontier, some 400 miles to the west. The first big obstacle was the Drakensberg. The few good passes would be well guarded, and might prove death-traps which could be held by a few Boers.

The Colonel of the 13th Hussars naturally realized the problems, and he therefore decided that someone should be sent out to find, if possible, other ways of crossing the Drakensberg than by the known passes. For this task he selected



B.-P. His skill as a scout and as a surveyor as well as an actor made him the ideal man for the task. He laid his plans carefully. First of all he grew a beard; then he studied the kind of civilian clothes men usually wore in that part of the world, and dressed himself in the same fashion. He decided that he would play the part of a newspaper-man collecting information about the country for the use of possible settlers. This would explain why he was wandering about, the number of questions he asked, and also his sketching.

He set off on horseback and did a tour of about 600 miles. He ran no unnecessary risks—no good scout does that—because there were quite enough dangers without looking for them. One incident will show how he could make deductions from the simplest signs. Once towards nightfall he was searching for somewhere to spend the night. At last he reached a hut, and after off-saddling and knee-haltering his horse, he went up to the door. There was no sign of any one about, but he noticed two toothbrushes in a glass on the windowsill. He argued that the owner was an Englishman, and probably a decent kind of fellow; so he took the risk, and he was not mistaken when the settler returned and welcomed his unexpected guest.

B.-P. collected some very useful information and was able to add many details to the existing maps of the country; he had also got to know the Boers and to like them. One of his characteristics was the ease with which he made friends. This was partly because he was so interested in everything and everybody; he was always keen to learn about people's work and how they lived, and, as he was such good company himself, it was very difficult to be offended with him.

Sir Charles Warren was able to settle the Bechuanaland dispute without needing the aid of extra troops, so the 13th Hussars were ordered to continue their passage to England. B.-P., with some fellow-officers, obtained six months' leave for a hunting expedition in Portuguese East Africa. This gave him an opportunity of adding to his knowledge of wild animal life, and also of getting to know more of the African native. As was his custom, he kept an illustrated diary for the benefit of his mother. Some of the notes in it for this period show how he was always on the watch for fresh ideas. Here, for instance, are two specimens. Both explain how to overcome a shortage of water, the first in washing, and the second in cooking dampers.

"The correct way to wash your hands in this country (owing to the scarcity of water) is to fill your mouth with water and then let a thin stream trickle on to your hands while you wash."

"Dampers we made very light by using bachem (toddy made from palms) in making the dough instead of water and putting in lots of baking-powder— let stand for an hour and then fry or, better, bake them by inverting an earthenware pot over a plate of them and standing them on hot wood-ashes and lighting a pyramid fire over the pot. If left all night they come out hard and crisp like husks and can be kept for days."

After this expedition B.-P. returned home, and for the next two years followed the usual round of regimental life in barracks, first at Norwich, then at Colchester, and later at Liverpool. As always, he worked hard at his profession, but he found time for his many other interests, especially for theatricals; he formed one of a party of amateurs who used to give plays at country houses. He took a great deal of trouble to make his parts as real as possible; thus on one occasion he was to act the role of a plumber, so he dressed in suitable clothes and spent some time amongst the workmen of the Commercial Road district in London to get local colour. Even this recreation had its bearing on his work as a scout and in secret service, for, as was shown in Natal, his ability to assume another character convincingly enabled him to deceive the most expert eye.

Then in 1887 came the opportunity for a change of work and of scene. His uncle, General Henry Smyth, a Crimean veteran, was appointed G.O.C. South Africa, and he invited his nephew to join his staff as his A.D.C. So B.-P. went to South Africa for the second time. His duties were not particularly interesting; in fact at times he was rather bored with the round of official engagements and functions; but he was soon called to action. Trouble had broken out in Zululand with the Chief Dinuzulu, and British troops under General Smyth, with B.-P. as Military Secretary, embarked for Natal. There was a brief preliminary expedition to rescue some British settlers up-country. It was then that B.-P. for the first time heard the Zulu impi chanting their Een-gonyama chorus; this so impressed him that in after years he adapted it for the use of the Boy Scouts, as can be seen in *Scouting for Boys*.

B.-P. next organized Intelligence work at G.H.Q., and then took part in the final rounding up of Dinuzulu, who had retreated to his stronghold, the Ceza Bush. This was a formidable place to attack, as it was situated on a steep mountain slope with the natural protection of bush and huge boulders and a ramification of caves. B.-P. did much of the preliminary scouting for information, and on one occasion narrowly escaped with his life. As he was scanning a valley from the cover of some rocks, his Basuto orderly suddenly called to him. He turned and found himself facing a Usutu warrior who had crept up from behind. In his note on the incident, B.-P. commented on the fine picture the man made "in all the glory of glistening brown skin, with his great shield of ox-hide and his bright assegai."

The Usutu warrior, seeing two men where he expected to find only one, fled. B.-P. followed him down and came to the uppermost entrance to a deep gully crammed with women and children and at the far end a group of warriors. B.-P. called to them to surrender, a summons which was quickly obeyed when a detachment of British soldiers came in sight. When he began to squeeze his way down, the women screamed with fright, but they were at once quietened when he picked up a small boy, perched him up on a rock and gave him something to play with.

Dinuzulu did not wait to be taken; he slipped out of the Ceza Bush with some of his warriors and crossed into the Transvaal; later he surrendered to the British.

For his part in this short campaign, B.-P. was promoted Brevet-Major. Soon he had another opportunity of getting to know the natives at close quarters. He served as Secretary on a Commission set up by the Boers and British together to settle disputes in Swaziland between the queen of that country and some unscrupulous white men who were grabbing land without giving just payment for it. The experience proved most interesting, for B.-P. was again brought into contact with leading Boers like General Joubert, and also came to know some of the strange customs of the Swazis. The king had just died, and it was usual for some of his wives and councillors to be executed at the same time so that their souls could attend him in the next world. The chief executioner was named Jokilobovu, and B.-P. drew a portrait of him. It was with some difficulty that the Commissioners persuaded the queen not to order the usual deaths, and even more difficult to stop the liquor traffic which was ruining the natives—as the land-grabbers well knew. But in the end a satisfactory settlement was reached.

In 1889 Sir Henry Smyth was transferred to Malta as Governor and Commander-in-Chief, and B.-P. again went with him. Once more he was engaged in the wearying round of official duties, diversified with theatrical shows and sports. It was by means of these entertainments that B.-P. raised enough money to help with the foundation of a Soldiers' and Sailors' Club, for he had noticed that the men had few opportunities for social life outside the barracks.

He found more attractive work when he was appointed Intelligence Officer for the

Mediterranean; on holidays in foreign countries he had amused himself collecting information of military interest, and possibly his uncle thought it as well for him to have some official standing in case of trouble. His actor's skill enabled him on many occasions to escape from awkward situations. Thus in Dalmatia he was trying to find some new batteries which had been constructed in the mountains. His disguise of a butterfly-hunting Englishman allayed any suspicions, and as he made his notes in the form of drawings of butterflies, there was nothing to betray him when his sketch-book was examined.

He studied the defences of the Dardanelles with the help of the Scotch captain of a grain ship. At places of importance anchor was dropped while the skipper's "nephew" went fishing and took the opportunity of noting the positions of the forts. When patrol boats came to inquire why the ship was anchored, the officials were deafened by the sound of hammering from the engine-room and were told that the engines had broken down.

As an artist he was able to avoid arrest when he wanted to get some information about the Austrian Alpine troops. He found from a talkative soldier that maneuvers were to be carried out on the slopes of a mountain known as the Wolf's Tooth. During the night he managed to slip through the sentries that had been posted to warn off strangers. As dawn broke he took up a concealed position that gave him a good view of the country, but unfortunately he was in the direct passage of a group of officers; so he boldly began sketching, and when questioned, explained that he was making studies for a picture of "Dawn among the Mountains." His skill was so obvious that the explanation was accepted. The officers shared their breakfast with him, and soon he was able to follow operations with the aid of their maps. By the end of the day he had learned all he wanted to know about the special methods devised for mountain warfare.

But exciting as such expeditions were, he had to think of the future, and on the advice of his old Colonel he resigned from his appointment as Military Secretary in Malta and set off to rejoin the 13th Hussars, then stationed in Ireland. On the way he visited Algeria and Tunisia; from Souk-el-Abra in Tunisia he wrote home:

"Here I am getting homewards by very small degrees, for, having got as far as this, I find maneuvers going on behind me and am just off back again to Tunis and Kairouen." He never missed an opportunity of adding to his knowledge of soldiering.



E. E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life** is a major source of biographical information about B-P. It is one of several works by E. E. Reynolds documenting the life of the Chief Scout and the early days of the Scout Movement.



The Baden-Powell Library. A Selection of excerpts from the works of Sir Robert Baden-Powell and works relating to his life and career



Sir Robert Baden-Powell, Founder of the World Scout Movement, Chief Scout of the World. A Home Page for the Founder. Links Relating to Baden-Powell on the Pine Tree Web and elsewhere. Text Only Index.



[Return to the Pine Tree Web Home Page](#)



## THE PINE TREE WEB

Your feedback, comments and suggestions are appreciated.  
Please write to: [Lewis P. Orans](mailto:lporans@texas.net)  
[lporans@texas.net](mailto:lporans@texas.net)

Copyright © Lewis P. Orans, 1997  
Last Modified: 4:24 PM on August 31, 1997







An Excerpt from:  
E.E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life**,  
London, Oxford University Press, 1943.

---

### CHAPTER III. THE TESTING OF A SCOUT

B.-P. rejoined his regiment in Ireland in June, 1893, and was soon busily occupied with the duties of a keen officer. His resourcefulness at maneuvers and his efficiency in all that he undertook soon attracted the attention of the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Wolseley, who was always on the watch for young officers who showed that they could think for themselves. B.-P. certainly satisfied this condition, for he never hesitated to put rules and regulations on one side if he thought immediate action was needed; nor did he play for safety—he took risks, made his mistakes, and learned from them.

It was not therefore surprising that in 1895 he was chosen by Lord Wolseley for special duties in an expedition to Ashanti. This country lies behind the Gold Coast of West Africa. There were a number of trading stations on the coast under British control, but peaceful development inland was hindered by the king of Ashanti, Prempeh. He roused the local tribes against the British and did all he could to prevent trading. In addition to this he carried on the blood-sacrifices and the slave trade, which had been forbidden. At last it was decided to send an expedition to his capital, Kumassi, to bring him to reason and to show the native chieftains that they could not carry on in the old lawless ways.

B.-P.'s job was to organize a levy of natives to do the necessary scouting and pioneering work. Most of the country that lay between the coast and Kumassi, 145 miles away, was dense forest with innumerable streams and stretches of swamp. There was no proper road but only a few paths, and these were mostly overgrown.

The officials at Cape Coast Castle had already collected together some hundreds of natives ready for this levy by the time B.-P. landed in December, 1895. He had a difficult task before him; the natives were quite willing to earn money, but their

ideas of work were primitive and they were apt at the first difficulty to give up all effort. Here his previous experience with African natives was of great value to B.-P. First of all he decided that they must be given some kind of uniform to promote a sense of pride; the uniform consisted solely of a red fez, which appealed to the native's sense of colour. Then he divided the men into groups each under its own chief, who was held responsible for seeing the tasks carried out; it was really a kind of Patrol system, but the Patrol Leaders were kings in their own country.

He was quick to see that it was no good trying to bully them, and found a good guide in the West African proverb, "Softlee, softlee, catchee monkey"—a saying which he often quoted in after years. The natives responded to this treatment, especially when they found that there was little use in trying to "put one over" on their commander; they thought he had eyes in the back of his head!

In Scouting for Boys B.-P. gave a brief account of the kind of work his men had to carry out.

"When I was on service on the West Coast of Africa, I had command of a large force of native scouts, and, like all scouts, we tried to make ourselves useful in every way to our main army, which was coming along behind us. So not only did we look out for the enemy and watch his moves, but we also did what we could to improve the road for our own army, since it was merely a narrow track through thick jungle and swamps. That is, we became pioneers as well as scouts. In the course of our march we built nearly two hundred bridges of timber over streams. But when I first set the scouts to do this most important work I found that, out of the thousand men, a great many did not know how to use an axe to cut down the trees, and, except one company of about sixty men, none knew how to make knots—even bad knots. So they were quite useless for building bridges, as this had to be done by tying poles together."

The scouts of the levy were drawn chiefly from the Adansi tribe; they showed remarkable ability in finding their way through the forest by day and by night. They went ahead of the main force in order to give warning of any ambushes or the approach of an enemy. But the British were not attacked. There was one alarm from a friendly chief at Bekwai who expected to be attacked by Prempeh's men; so B.-P. took off a party from the main route to forestall any such plan.

As they neared Kumassi everyone was more on the alert, for it was not certain how far Prempeh was prepared to go in opposition. The British heard the drums throbbing out, and at first thought this was the signal for battle; but the natives knew it for "drum-talk" and the message was that Prempeh was willing to palaver. Forty years later B.-P. was to hear that "drum-talk" again, but this time at the Wembley Empire Jamboree, when some Boy Scouts from Ashanti came to London with their drums. They greeted B.-P. as "Kantankye," which means, "He of the Big Hat," for it was in the Ashanti expedition that he first adopted the cowboy hat because it proved so practical; the broad brim shielded the face and the back of the neck from the hot sun, and kept the face and eyes from being scratched in the low bush of the jungle. Some of those boys at Wembley brought him messages from fathers who had served in the levy that reached Kumassi in January, 1896.

B.-P.'s special task at Kumassi was to see to the picketing of the town, and above all to prevent any attempt Prempeh might make to escape in the night. As a first step, B.-P. had the bush, which grew right up to the palace area, cleared for a good distance; then he posted his scouts, and during the night he himself kept close watch. As a signal to his men he used the "quit-quit-quit" of the frog with the timing of the letter K in Morse. When darkness fell, first one then another native came out of the palace to reconnoitre; these were the king's scouts looking to see

if the way was clear. They quickly found it was not, for when they entered the bush they were seized and gagged. Others followed and were disposed of in the same fashion. Then came two men, evidently of superior rank, who took more care; one of them came to the bush where B.-P. himself was concealed and stood there for some minutes, absolutely still, peering into the darkness. As soon as he moved, B.-P. seized him round the neck and they rolled over in a desperate struggle. Just as the man had managed to draw his knife—a wicked-looking weapon—one of the Adansis came up and probably saved B.-P.'s life. This careful watch undoubtedly prevented the escape of the king and further trouble. The aim of the expedition was achieved without bloodshed; Prempeh was deposed and sent into exile. Years later he was allowed to return to a peaceful country. Kumassi had grown into a fine town and was flourishing. The returned king could not have recognized the old site where the blood-sacrifices had been carried out. Perhaps he too thought of "Kantankye" when he became President of the Kumassi Boy Scouts!

Another link between the Boy Scouts and Ashanti is the Scout staff. B.-P. was struck by the usefulness of a long staff which the chief engineer officer carried with him. It came in useful for testing swampy ground, for pole jumping streams, and for making quick measurements, as it was marked off in feet and inches. This practical idea was stored up in B.-P.'s memory for future use.

The expedition returned to the coast—taking Prempeh with them—in seven days. B.-P. went on board the hospital ship Coromandel to get some breakfast. He sat down and immediately fell asleep; twenty-four hours later he awoke to find that he had been put comfortably to bed. When on active service he could manage with very little sleep, as he preferred to do his lone scouting at night.

He brought back to England the Blood Bowl which was used in the Kumassi sacrifices, and this grim relic can now be seen in the United Services Museum in London.

For his services, B.-P. was promoted, at the age of thirty-nine, to Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel; he rejoined his regiment in Ireland, but within a few months he was once again chosen for special service, this time for what he called "the best adventure of my life ."



E. E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life** is a major source of biographical information about B-P. It is one of several works by E. E. Reynolds documenting the life of the Chief Scout and the early days of the Scout Movement.



**The Baden-Powell Library.** A Selection of excerpts from the works of Sir Robert Baden-Powell and works relating to his life and career



**Sir Robert Baden-Powell, Founder of the World Scout Movement, Chief Scout of the World.** A Home Page for the Founder. Links Relating to Baden-Powell on the Pine Tree Web and elsewhere. **Text Only Index.**

---



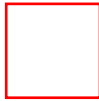
[Return to the Pine Tree Web Home Page](#)



## THE PINE TREE WEB

Your feedback, comments and suggestions are appreciated.  
Please write to: [Lewis P. Orans](mailto:lporans@texas.net)  
[lporans@texas.net](mailto:lporans@texas.net)

Copyright © Lewis P. Orans, 1997  
Last Modified: 4:24 PM on August 31, 1997





# Impeesa

## "The Wolf Who Never Sleeps"



An Excerpt from:  
E.E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life**,  
London, Oxford University Press, 1943.

---

### CHAPTER IV: "THE BEST ADVENTURE "

AT the end of March, 1896, the Matabele rose in rebellion. This warlike race lived in the part of South Africa just north of the River Limpopo, which we now call Southern Rhodesia. As white men had gradually spread themselves northwards, many covetous eyes had been fixed on the rich lands of the Matabele, and the last Chief, Lobengula, had made grants to some settlers and prospectors. At length the British South Africa Company, whose leading spirit was Cecil Rhodes, came into control. A war had been fought with Lobengula, but after his death in 1894 there seemed little chance of further trouble. By 1896, however, the natives had been driven desperate by disease amongst their cattle—their only wealth—and by what was in practice forced labour in mines and on farms. Their witch-doctors worked upon their feelings until they suddenly rose and murdered the men and women on outlying farms.

The British South Africa Company was responsible for law and order, but it was soon realized that no local force could cope with the problem. Major Herbert Plumer (later Field-Marshal Lord Plumer) was authorized to raise a Relief Force, but it was not until the end of May that he entered Bulawayo—the chief town—with his men. Meanwhile it had been decided that Imperial forces would also be needed, and Sir Frederick Carrington was put in command, with B.-P. as his Chief of Staff. They arrived in Bulawayo in June

The task was a difficult one, for the Matabele worked in small groups without any central command, and they took full advantage of the nature of their country. They did not come down into the plains if they could avoid doing so, but preferred to fortify positions in the mountains. This is how B.-P. described one of these strongholds.

"It is a long mountain, consisting of six peaks of about 800 feet high, its total length being about two and a half miles, and its width about a mile and a half. On the extreme top of five of the peaks are perched strong kraals (collections of circular mud huts), and in addition to these there are three small kraals on the side of the mountain; underneath each of the kraals are labyrinths of caves. The mountain itself has steep, boulder-strewn, bush-grown sides, generally inaccessible, except where the narrow difficult paths lead up to various strongholds, and these paths have been fortified by the rebels with stockades and with stone breastworks, and in many places they pass between huge rocks, where only one man can squeeze through at a time."

Bulawayo itself was near the Matoppo Hills, which provided just the kind of natural protection which the Matabele found most useful. It can easily be imagined from this that pitched battles were out of the question; each stronghold had to be taken in turn as a separate job, and before this could be attempted the position had to be most carefully examined by the scouts. This was work after B.-P.'s own heart. There were no trained scouts amongst the troops, but they had with them a famous American scout, F. C. Burnham. He and B.-P. worked closely together, and Burnham was so struck with B.-P.'s skill in reading sign that he nicknamed him Sherlock Holmes. When Burnham left, B.-P. did most of his scouting alone or with one native, Jan Grootboom.

His method of scouting has been described by a journalist who was in Bulawayo.

"Wearing soft rubber-soled shoes, B.-P. used to spend his nights prowling about the Matoppo, spying on the rebels, calculating their numbers and locating their camping grounds. On four separate occasions he led Plumer's troops to attack rebel strongholds in the hills, and on every occasion he brought us out right on top of the enemy, surprising the Matabele and enabling Plumer to give him what the latter used to describe as 'a good knock'.

"One night, after much persuading, he took me with him. We left Plumer's camp at about 9 o'clock. Walking with an easy swing, B.-P. stepped out into the darkness. Soon we were amidst the great giant boulders of the Matoppo, where he seemed completely at home. He led me by a rough footpath on to a kopje (or hill). Peering over this, we could see, not 500 yards distant, the fires of an impi (a band of warriors). Signing to me to be silent, we watched a few minutes, and then, on a sign from Baden-Powell, we moved off by another path. 'Never return by the same road you took.' This has become a scouting platitude, but in the Matoppo it was a very necessary precaution. It was with a sigh of relief that I found myself once more safely in Plumer's camp. Once was enough. I never asked to be taken again."

The Matabele soon came to know that B.-P. was a most skillful scout, and they named him "Impeesa", which means "the wolf who never sleeps"; at the sight of him they would shout out his name with all kinds of threats of what they would do if he fell into their hands. It was this kind of danger which added a thrill to B.-P.'s soldiering, some parts of which were rather dull. As Chief of Staff he had considerable responsibility. Office hours took most of the day; he had to write out

orders, and make many of the arrangements for putting them into action. B.-P.'s instructions were always brief and to the point. One officer has described the orders he received: "They were exactly seven short lines in length, but contained all one wanted to know, and in other things left me a free hand. "That was always B.-P.'s method; having given the main facts, he left it to the man on the job to work out the details for himself. Occasionally he himself took charge of operations. Here is an account written by one of the troopers.

"On our journey up to Mashonaland in 1897 from Bulawayo, we had a deal of trouble with one of the native chiefs, who was firmly lodged with his followers in a rocky kopje. Our Colonel, Harold Paget, sent into Bulawayo for a gun of some sort, and after a while who should come to our little column—about 100 men with native levies—with an old 7-pounder— but Colonel Baden-Powell and the escort, mostly natives. When we first saw him we were rather astonished for he was remarkably dressed. He wore the typical 'Baden-Powell' hat, a blazing red shirt with a large neckerchief, the knot at the back, breeches and leather gaiters, in which was a sort of pocket containing a revolver, so that when mounted on his pony he only had to stoop down to draw a revolver from either leg. Colonel Baden-Powell being posted to our column, and being senior to our Colonel, took over command and started to 'smarten us up'. The first order was that no man was to take his boots off at night, when we rolled ourselves up in our blankets. To enforce this he used in the middle of the night to come around the sleeping men and tap the bottoms of our blankets with his cane, to see whether we had our boots on or not. We got cunning eventually and used to take off our boots and put them at the bottom of our blanket, so that if they were tapped all would be well."

B.-P.'s quickness of observation of details often saved difficult situations. On one occasion, for instance, he was taking a troop of men across country to a river; but unfortunately the maps were at fault, and the river was not where it was marked as being. The sun during the day was so hot that they did most of their riding in the evening and at night, as it was moonlight. Lack of water was a serious matter in such a climate. At last, when men and horses were almost exhausted, B.-P. halted for a rest while he and another officer rode on in search of the river or at least of water. They carried on until the moon set, when they had to stop and wait for the dawn. Then on they went with their search. Suddenly B.-P. noticed a place where a buck had been scratching for water; he argued that an animal would not do that without some good reason; so he got off his horse and began digging with his hands. Soon the soil became damp, and presently as he got lower water began to trickle into the hollow. Then he noticed two pigeons fly up from behind a rock farther off; he went there and behind the rock found a small pool. An hour later the rest of the men joined them, and during the heat of that day they rested by the tiny pool: "a scorching hot day," he recorded, "flies innumerable which are stopping all our efforts to sleep, and the prospect of another night march before us."

In Scouting for Boys he gives another good example of observation and deduction.

"I was one day, during the Matabele War, with a native out scouting near to the Matoppo Hills over a wide grassy plain. Suddenly we crossed a track freshly made in grass, where the blades of grass were still green and damp, though pressed down; all were bending one way, which showed the direction in which the people had been travelling; following up the track for a bit it got on to a patch of sand, and we then saw that it was the spoor of several women (small feet with straight edge, and short steps) and boys (small feet, curved edge, and longer strides), walking, not running, towards the hills, about five



miles away, where we believed the enemy to be hiding.

"Then we saw a leaf lying about ten yards off the track. There were no trees for miles, but we knew that trees having this kind of leaf grew at a village fifteen miles away, in the direction from which the footmarks were coming. It seemed likely therefore that the women had come from that village, bringing the leaf with them, and had gone to the hills.

"On picking up the leaf we found it was damp, and smelled of native beer. The short steps showed that the women were carrying loads. So we guessed that according to the custom they had been carrying pots of native beer on their heads, the mouths of the pots being stopped up with bunches of leaves. One of these leaves had fallen out; but we found it ten yards off the track, which showed that at the time it fell a wind was blowing. There was no wind now, i.e., seven o'clock, but there had been some about five o'clock.

"So we guessed from all these little signs that a party of women and boys had brought beer during the night from the village 15 miles away, and had taken it to the enemy on the hills, arriving there soon after Six o' clock.

"The men would probably start to drink the beer at once (as it goes sour in a few hours), and would, by the time we could get there, be getting sleepy and keeping a bad look-out, so we should have a favourable chance of looking at their position.

"We accordingly followed the women's track, found the enemy, made our observations, and got away with our information without any difficulty.

"And it was chiefly done on the evidence of that one leaf."

The most serious operation B.-P. carried out was against one of the Matabele leaders named Wedza, who had taken refuge with several hundreds of warriors in just such a stronghold as has already been described. Wedza's kraals were perched along the crest of a mountain some three miles long, and a neck or pass connected this with the main range. B.-P. had with him only 120 men, so he had to play a game of bluff, a game at which he was an expert.

He began operations by sending twenty-five mounted men to the neck with orders to act as though they were ten times as strong; the guns were to bombard the crest, and the rest of the force, some hussars, were to demonstrate against the outer end of the mountain and against the back of it. After some skirmishing the mounted infantry pushed their way up to the chosen point, leaving their horses below with seven horse-holders; but the enemy began to assemble in force and to threaten the hill party.

B.-P. saw their critical position, and sent a message to the gunners and hussars to make a diversion. But these had been unexpectedly delayed on the road and were not yet near enough, so he took the seven horse-holders, and with them moved round in rear of the position; then, scattering the men, he ordered magazine fire so as to give the idea that there was a large attacking force on this side. The ruse was completely successful. The rebels who had been pressing over towards the neck hastily spread themselves all over the mountain, and the arrival of the rest of the troops at this moment completed the illusion. The hussars moved round the mountain, and were scattered to a certain extent so as to represent as strong a force as possible and to impress the enemy. It was decided that no assault should



be delivered that day; but the deception practiced by the attackers was carefully kept up during the night. Fires were lighted at intervals round a great part of the mountain, which were fed by moving patrols, and the men forming these patrols had orders to discharge their rifles from time to time at different points. Everything was done to make Wedza and his followers believe that a whole army was against them; and the next day the kraals were captured with ease, most of the enemy having slipped off in the darkness.

The main campaign was settled when, through the efforts of Jan Grootboom—who was B.-P.'s chief native scout—the Matabele leaders were persuaded to meet Rhodes for a palaver. It took some months to get the whole country, and Mashonaland to the north, really settled, and it was not until the beginning of 1897 that B.-P. was free to return home. For his services in the Matabele Campaign he was promoted Brevet-Colonel; a high rank to have reached by the age of forty.

From: E.E. Reynolds, Baden-Powell: The Story of His Life, London, Oxford University Press, 1943.

---

The ribbon to the left depicts the ribbon of the [British South Africa Company Medal](#) for the Matabele Campaigns of 1896-1897.

---



Major Burnham's own account of [Scouting with B-P](#) in the Matopo Hills during the Matabele Campaign.  
From Frederick Russell Burnham, *Taking Chances*, 1944



Baden-Powell describes his experiences in Matabeleland in *Lessons from the Varsity of Life*, Chapter VI: [Matabeleland](#)



Baden-Powell Photo Gallery:  
[Early Years and Military Career, 1878-1898](#)  
[Thumbnail Graphic Index](#)



E. E. Reynolds, **[B-P: The Story of His Life](#)**, is a major source of biographical information about B-P. It is one of several works by E. E. Reynolds documenting the life of the Chief Scout and the early days of the Scout Movement.



[Impeesa, "The Wolf Who Never Sleeps"](#)  
Matabeleland, 1896-97



[Mafeking](#)  
Defense and Relief, 1899-1900



[The Beginnings of Scouting](#)  
First Steps. Brownsea Island, 1907



[B-P: The Man](#)  
A Character Sketch of a Great Man



[The Baden-Powell Library](#). A Selection of excerpts from the works of Sir Robert Baden-Powell and works relating to his life and career



[Sir Robert Baden-Powell, Founder of the World Scout Movement, Chief Scout of the World](#). A Home Page for the Founder. Links Relating to Baden-Powell on the Pine Tree Web and elsewhere. [Text Only Index](#).



[Return to the Pine Tree Web Home Page](#)



**THE PINE TREE WEB**

Your feedback, comments and suggestions are appreciated.  
Please write to: [Lewis P. Orans](mailto:lporans@texas.net)  
[lporans@texas.net](mailto:lporans@texas.net)

Copyright © Lewis P. Orans, 1997  
Last Modified: 6:50 AM on July 5, 1997





An Excerpt from:  
E.E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life**,  
London, Oxford University Press, 1943.

---

#### CHAPTER V. INDIA ONCE MORE

ON his return to England, B.-P. settled down to write his account of his experiences; the book was published with the title *The Matabele Campaign*, and it proved very popular; it is still full of interest, as it describes so many of the day-to-day adventures of a practical scout.

He was not long kept idle, for in the spring of 1897 he was on his way to take command of the 5th Dragoon Guards in India; he had left that country thirteen years before as a Captain, and was now returning as a Colonel. It was a wrench to leave his old regiment after his twenty-one years of service, and he now had to face the problem of meeting a new regiment to whom he was almost unknown. But he very quickly captured the loyalty and enthusiasm of the officers and men.

They found, for instance, that he was eager to join in their sports and their entertainments. Indeed, some officers of an older generation must have thought him lacking in dignity; when occasion needed it, he could be as impressive as anyone, but at other times he was always ready for fun. A few months after his arrival at Meerut he invited the officers of the 5th Royal Irish Lancers stationed at Muttra to come over for an evening's entertainment. The programme was of a mixed kind, and one item was "Song by Private Brown of the 5th Dragoon Guards." When this was reached, a dismal looking, black-haired trooper mounted the platform and began to sing a most doleful song, all out of tune, and getting more and more unbearable, until the soldiers at the back of the hall began making cat-calls and other insulting noises. Private Brown then stepped down to the footlights and said that he thought it was a shame to treat a comrade like that; after all, he was doing his best, and if they went on jeering at him, he would report them to the Colonel. Suddenly one of the officers exclaimed, "It's B.-P.!"—as indeed it was, and then "Private Brown" went on to keep the company rocking with laughter at his jests and comic songs.

The officers found too that their Colonel had lost none of his skill at pigsticking. On

his first hunt he instinctively knew that the younger officers had their eyes on him to see how he shaped. Once the boar was afoot, he forgot all this and followed as eagerly as in his early years in India. The beast got into a strip of jungle, and the beaters went through to find him, but they declared that there was no sign, and he must have slipped away. So B.-P. dismounted and went in himself to make sure. Suddenly the boar rushed at him out of a dense bit of bush; B.-P. took him on foot, but so fierce was the attack that he was knocked over with his spear transfixing the animal.

The officers rushed in and were amazed to find the Colonel on his back struggling with a fine boar. One of them quickly killed the animal and then asked, "Do you always go on foot, sir?" To which B.-P. airily replied, "Of course; why not?" The result was that after that, hunting on foot became a recognized part of the sport of those officers, and B.-P.'s prestige went up enormously.

He gave a great deal of time and thought to the health and happiness of the men. The life of a private in India in those days was rather uninteresting, and B.-P. devised all kinds of new activities, for he felt that a soldier who is feeling bored will not be a good soldier or really keen on his work. A refreshment room was opened where good food could be eaten in pleasant surroundings; games of various kinds were supplied, as well as books and magazines. All this sounds very ordinary to-day, but fifty years ago it was unusual for the officers, especially for the Commanding Officer, to be genuinely keen on making the men happy.

The general health of the regiment was another matter which needed attention. Many men used to go down with enteric fever, and there were far too many deaths from its effects. B.-P. began to make experiments. First he made sure that the milk-supply was pure by starting a regimental dairy; not so much was known, of course, in those days about the dangers of impure milk or of the best ways of safeguarding the supply, but B.-P. was instinctively working on the right lines. Then he persuaded the men to keep away from the native quarters, where they undoubtedly picked up diseases, and here his schemes for their leisure time were of great importance.

He started a bicycling club as another source of health and pleasure, and soon found that the bicycles could be used on maneuvers for messengers, and so save the horses. One day his own bicycle was stolen, but instead of making a fuss, he got up as soon as it was light and tracked the marks of the tyres in the dew to a bungalow where a company of another regiment was quartered; there he found the bicycle by the bed of a private. Such incidents added to his popularity with his own men they felt that they had a commander who was no figurehead, but a really active man who did not bother too much about his position.

The most important change he made, however, was in the training of the men. He worked hard himself and he expected others to do the same. There was a saying in the regiment that he never slept, but one of his officers records that he often went to sleep during the mess dinner, but would be up and about at two o'clock the next morning.

He trained his men by frequent realistic maneuvers, and he insisted on preparedness at all times, and at short notice a squadron might be ordered to entrain complete with supplies for some unexpected exercise.

One of his methods was to give responsibility to officers and N.C.O.s alike and to expect much from them. It was rare for anyone to let him down. One result was that the regiment never feared inspections from visiting Generals; the horses would be in splendid condition, for B.-P.'s own love of horses ensured that they were well looked after all the time; every trooper would be fully prepared with his



kit in order; there would be no need for window-dressing.

This is what one of his officers wrote many years afterwards:

"I think that I found the confidence he placed in those he had to deal with, made him more beloved than anything else, and I cannot bring to mind a single instance in which his instinct ever failed him. I remember particularly the way he dealt with one of the young officers who had a bad name as a soldier and took no interest in soldiering. B.-P., soon after he took over command, sent for this young man and placed him in a position of considerable responsibility. The officer was so surprised at being thought fit to undertake the work that he became a changed character, and nothing could exceed his zeal for the task given him. The effect lasted, for in the South African War he obtained a Brevet Majority for good work performed under difficult circumstances with the Scouts of the regiment. I never saw B.-P. lose his temper or do anything hastily which would have to be repented later. He took men as he found them, and had that great and good gift of getting the best out of them without recourse to disciplinary methods. Officers and men would do anything for him. I know no one who had a greater influence for good than he had. By his consideration of the wants of his subordinates, by his sense of justice, he earned their devotion and gratitude."

One of the first things he did with his new regiment was to train some of the men as scouts. This was a most neglected branch of soldiering at that time, and his experiences in Matabeleland had proved to him how important scouts could be in warfare. The army usually relied on natives to do this work, under the impression that they were more suited; but B.-P. argued that more was expected of a scout than just finding the enemy; he should be able to make a good report of all information which would help the commander, and this would mean an ability to draw maps giving accurate details. The maps he had made during the Matabele Campaign had proved invaluable, and he was confident that the same kind of work could be done by men through careful training.

Two things were, he felt, necessary. First the men must have some kind of visible award for efficiency. So he got permission for those who qualified to wear a fleur-de-lis badge on their sleeve; he chose this as the badge because it appears on the north point of a compass—an essential instrument for a scout. The men got very keen on winning these badges, and the system was afterwards widely adopted in the army for other kinds of achievement. Secondly, he knew that the work must be made as interesting and enjoyable as possible. So he devised games and competitions which would provide practice at the same time as being enjoyable. This was a very welcome change from the old drill, drill, drill. Some of the games he used, such as Flag-raiding and Dispatch-running, are now well known to all Boy Scouts.

In training his scouts he divided them into small groups or Patrols each under an N.C.O., who was given full responsibility for the efficiency of his men. Then by competitions between these groups he roused their enthusiasm for every detail of the work. One of the results of this training which greatly impressed B.-P. was that the men became more self-reliant and gained in self-respect. Instead of always relying on an officer to tell them what to do, they began thinking for themselves. As a further help in making them resourceful, B.-P. used to send them out singly or in pairs to spend a day or two on their own, making observations and bringing back their reports and sketch-maps.

He worked out a complete scheme of lectures, demonstrations and practices, and during his last months in India he set these down in a small handbook called Aids to Scouting; but before this could be published many important things happened which changed his whole career.

He spent two years in India in command of his regiment. When he could get short leave he would go right away from civilization into the hills. "It was a great delight," he wrote home, "to be in shirtsleeves and cowboy hat, in camp once more." He would take with him a few native servants and his dog; he would travel sometimes by river but more often on foot. His days would be spent in sketching or fishing and sometimes in hunting; but he never seems to have taken hunting—except for the pot—very seriously; he much preferred to watch the wild animals in their natural surroundings and make sketches of them. In this way he was constantly adding to his extraordinary knowledge of beasts and birds. Sometimes he would have competitions with his servants to test his own powers of observation. Thus on one occasion they were up on a ridge, and on a far hillside could see some sheep. They tried counting them, and no one proved better than another; then B.-P. asked if they could see the herdsman. "I eventually," he wrote, "won the competition in an underhand way." He argued that the herdsman would be sitting in the shade of the only bush visible. When he turned his glasses that way, sure enough there was the man ! Sherlock Holmes again!

It was while coming down this mountain that he had to use his skill in First Aid, as he records in *Scouting for Boys*.

"Some years ago, when I was in Kashmir, Northern India, some natives brought to me a young man on a stretcher, who they said had fallen off a high rock, and had broken his back and was dying. I soon found that he had only dislocated his shoulder and had got a few bruises, and seemed to think that he ought to die.

"So I pulled off my shoe, sat down alongside him facing his head, put my heel in his arm-pit, got hold of his arm, and pulled with all my force till the bone jumped into its socket. The pain made him faint, and his friends thought I really had killed him. But in a few minutes he recovered and found his arm all right. Then they thought I must be no end of a doctor, so they sent round the country for all the sick to be brought in to be cured; and I had an awful time of it for the next two days. Cases of every kind of disease were carried in, and I had scarcely any drugs with which to treat them, but I did the best I could, and I really believe that some of the poor creatures got better from simply believing that I was doing them a lot of good.

"But most of them were ill from being dirty and letting their wounds get poisoned with filth; and many were ill from bad drainage, and from drinking foul water, and so on. This I explained to the headmen of the villages, and I hope that I did some good for their future health. At any rate, they were most grateful, and gave me a lot of help ever afterwards in getting good bear-hunting and also food."

In May, 1899, he left India for England feeling happy in the Commander-in-Chief's praise of the efficiency of the 5th Dragoon Guards. In his two years with the regiment B.-P. had achieved much, and the results of his work were to be seen later in South Africa, though he himself was no longer in command of that regiment.



E. E. Reynolds, ***B-P: The Story of His Life*** is a major source of biographical information about B-P. It is one of several works by E. E. Reynolds documenting the life of the Chief Scout and the early days of the Scout Movement.



[The Baden-Powell Library](#). A Selection of excerpts from the works of Sir Robert Baden-Powell and works relating to his life and career



[Sir Robert Baden-Powell, Founder of the World Scout Movement, Chief Scout of the World](#). A Home Page for the Founder. Links Relating to Baden-Powell on the Pine Tree Web and elsewhere. [Text Only Index](#).



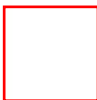
[Return to the Pine Tree Web Home Page](#)



**THE PINE TREE WEB**

Your feedback, comments and suggestions are appreciated.  
Please write to: [Lewis P. Orans](mailto:lporans@texas.net)  
[lporans@texas.net](mailto:lporans@texas.net)

Copyright © Lewis P. Orans, 1997  
Last Modified: 4:24 PM on August 31, 1997



# Mafeking



An Excerpt from:  
E.E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life**,  
London, Oxford University Press, 1943.

---

B.-P. once spoke of the Boer War as a wretched affair. In his previous experiences of South Africa he had come to like the Boers and to respect their independent spirit and their deep love for the free life of the veldt. But for years trouble had been mounting up between the two peoples, British and Boers. Neither side was solely to blame. The opening up of a great country like South Africa to the settler, the prospector and the miner, some of them little better than self-seeking rogues, was bound to lead to clashes, and perhaps if either side had been less stubborn, war would have been avoided.

His knowledge of the country and of the people made B.-P. realize that the struggle would not be the easy business some people expected; he knew, for instance, that almost every Boer was a first-class shot and was a natural scout who would take every advantage of the nature of the country. But his warnings fell on deaf ears.

Soon after his arrival in England in June, 1899, B.-P. was summoned to the War Office, and there Lord Wolseley, the Commander-in-Chief, asked him to go out to South Africa as soon as possible and organize two regiments of Mounted Rifles for service on the north-western frontier of the South African Republic, or the Transvaal as it was usually called.

Here is part of their typical conversation:



Wolseley : I want you to go out to South Africa.

B.-P. : Yes, sir.

Wolseley : Well, can you go on Saturday next ?

B.-P. : No, sir.

Wolseley : Why not ?

B.-P. : There's no ship on Saturday, but I can go on Friday.

At this Wolseley burst out laughing, and went on to explain the nature of the special mission which B.-P. was to carry out. War had not yet begun, but only a miracle then could have prevented it, and the Commander-in-Chief did not wish to leave anything to chance.

The map will explain the situation. Cape Colony and Natal would be the bases from which British troops could operate, but on the west of the two Boer Republics was Bechuanaland, and on the north, Matabeleland or Southern Rhodesia. It would be of the greatest importance that these should be well guarded, not only to forestall any help the natives might give to the Boers, but to keep part of the Boer forces occupied away from the British Colonies.

B.-P.'s job was to raise these two regiments as quickly as possible, and to take up positions on the western frontiers in readiness for any trouble.

He arrived at the Cape in July, 1899. Here he met all kinds of difficulties. The authorities there were still hoping to avoid war, and did not therefore want to do anything to annoy the Boers any further; the public enlistment of men would obviously be regarded with suspicion. So B.-P. decided to go at once north and do his recruiting there. He selected as his two centres Mafeking and Bulawayo. When he had gone out to Matabeleland in 1896 the railway had ended at Mafeking, but by 1899 it had been constructed as far as Bulawayo.

This town was well away from the Transvaal frontier, but Mafeking was just inside the frontier of Cape Colony and just outside the Transvaal. In order to avoid trouble, he at first concentrated on Bulawayo. There he had, as his chief helper, Lieut.-Colonel Herbert Plumer, with whom he had worked so happily in the Matabele Campaign.

It was a stiff task he had to face. He had to recruit his men, train them, and organize the whole force within a few months. It was done by using the methods that had already proved so successful with his scouts in the 5th Dragoon Guards; the men were divided up into small groups each under a responsible N.C.O. There was not time for a lot of drill, so most attention was given to shooting and horsemanship, and the training was mainly carried out by frequent field days and sham fights. So well did this scheme work that within two months the men were ready for the field. By this time war was obviously only a matter of weeks. His own regiment, the 5th Dragoon Guards, had landed in Natal, and he hoped that he would be allowed to return to his command. But he could not be spared; had he done so he would have been besieged in Ladysmith instead of Mafeking.

In making his plans should war break out, B.-P. had decided to divide his forces into two; he put Plumer in command of one regiment to operate in Southern Rhodesia; he himself went with the other regiment, with Lieut.-Colonel Hore in command, to Mafeking. B.-P. knew the importance of this little frontier town, and the Boers also recognized it, for, as soon as war was declared in October, General Cronje with 9,000 men marched towards it.

Under modern conditions Mafeking could not have been held for a day; a few tanks could have gone right through it; but in 1899 there were no tanks and no aeroplanes, and the explosives used would now be thought primitive. The town had no natural means of protection. It lay on the open veldt (wild grassland) with

a river, the Molopo, running through it. The population consisted of some 8,000 natives who lived in their own town, and about 1,800 whites. The garrison was made up of the Protectorate Regiment under Colonel Hore (489 officers and men), with a mixed force of B.S.A. Police, Cape Police and Bechuanaland Rifles (in all, 276 officers and men). The Town Guard numbered 300 men. Others were recruited, such as railwaymen and Cape boys (coloured). Altogether, B.-P. had at his disposal 1,250 armed men, but many of these were untrained and some of them were of doubtful loyalty to Britain. All through the siege there was trouble with spies; the natives could be used for sending out messages, as they could slip out at night and were very skilled in hiding any written note.

A system of trenches with small forts was hastily constructed round the town, just in time to face Cronje's army. The Boer general was surprised that the British did not yield at once, for it seemed folly to attempt to defend such a place. He was not anxious to lose many men in direct attacks, and doubtless thought that in a short time the besieged would come to their senses, so he drew a cordon right round the town and sat down to wait for the surrender.

B.-P.'s reputation as a scout was well known to the Boers and they respected him for his skill, but they had yet to learn his other qualities - chief of which were his astonishing ability in inventing means of deceiving the enemy, and his way of inspiring all who came in contact with him, soldiers and civilians alike, with his own gaiety and determination. He was not content to sit still and wait for what the Boers might do; he knew that action was important for keeping up the spirits of his men, and that surprise moves would worry the Boers more than anything else.

The artillery at Mafeking was absurdly out of date. There were four small guns, but the fittings were worn and the fuses so shrunken with age that they had to be wedged into the shells with paper. Two guns were added during the siege. First of all the railway workshops manufactured one out of the steam-pipe of an engine reinforced with some old iron railings melted down and shrunk into it; the whole was mounted on the wheels of a threshing-machine. This home-made affair proved most useful at night. It would be moved as near the Boer lines as possible, with its wheels wrapped in canvas to deaden any sound, and blankets hung round it to hide the flash when it was fired. Locating this mysterious gun became part of the Boers' regular time-table. It was christened 'the Wolf', and is now preserved in the Royal United Services Museum in London.

The second gun was found by accident. Major Godley (later General Sir Alexander Godley, of ANZAC fame) noticed that a gate-post of a farm was an old 18th-century carronade; it was dug up, and on it were the maker's initials - B.P.! It fired a shot like a cricket ball, but it helped to keep the enemy at a respectful distance.

At the beginning of the siege good use was made of an armoured train. A few days after war broke out a party of Boers was observed approaching from the north. The train set out, and, supported by some troops, a useful small action resulted which heartened the besieged and discouraged the enemy. But this could not be repeated often, for soon the Boers had cut the railway line on each side of the town. One of the last exploits of the train was unintentional. There was a store of dynamite in the town which B.-P. felt was dangerous, as it might be blown up by a chance shell; so he ordered it to be loaded into two trucks, which were then pushed out of the town by an unattached engine to the top of the gradient. As the trucks slid down the line, the enemy opened fire; they thought it was another armoured train, and were considerably astonished when their firing blew up the whole lot. This made them more cautious than ever.

B.-P. called the siege a great game of bluff; he was full of ideas for ruses, and his example encouraged others to invent schemes for outwitting the besiegers. Thus a

number of apparently explosive mines were laid all around the town. Notices were put up explaining that it was dangerous to go near them; B.-P. knew that this information would be quickly passed on to the Boers by spies. Then he announced that they would be tested, and he and an engineer went out and set one off. Actually the mines were boxes full of sand, and the one that went off was a specially prepared one - B.-P. pushed a stick of dynamite into an ant-bear hole, lit the fuse and then took cover. It produced the most satisfying explosion, and again helped to make the Boers more cautious of approaching the town at night. That was B.-P.'s main purpose, for he knew that darkness was his chief enemy.

Another ruse was invented by a commercial traveller in the town - anyone with special knowledge was soon enlisted in the defence. This man sold acetylene lamps, and he had a small store of acetylene with him. A lamp was fixed on top of a pole and a big reflector made with a biscuit tin. Then one night it was taken to one of the forts and suddenly switched on like a searchlight. It was then hurriedly moved to another fort, and again the light shone out. The Boers got the impression that there must be a whole series of searchlights, so they were still further discouraged from making night attacks.

B.-P. himself was the chief safeguard against such attempts, for he would spend most of the night scouting beyond the lines, peering into the darkness and listening for any sign of movement from the enemy.

Major Godley said:

"Had it not been for B.-P.'s amazing energy, personality and ubiquity, I think that there would have been a good deal of alarm and despondency in the garrison. But he was always thinking of various stunts to keep up our spirits, and there was nobody and no part of the defences that he did not visit continually. Frequently, after spending, as one did, most of the night wandering around and visiting the outposts, I have lain down for a little sleep, and have been awakened at daybreak - to see B.-P. sitting at the edge of my dug-out, having walked out before the sun rose. It really was a rather strenuous time, and it is curious to reflect that one never had one's boots off for eight months, except in the daytime."

And again:

"His courage was unbounded, his versatility was extraordinary, and his sympathy with all sections of the community most marked."

It was during one of his night prowlings that B.-P. found he was stalking one of his own scouts. He was reconnoitering the position of a gun, and as he lay hidden among some rocks, he noticed a man with a black face cautiously approaching. B.-P. froze, but as the man came nearer he recognized him as one of his own scouts who had blackened his face by way of camouflage.

During the day-time B.-P. spent much time on a lookout tower which had been erected near his headquarters. Here he would search the surrounding country with his glasses for any movements of the enemy, trying, as it were, to read the intentions of the Boers from any signs he could notice. When did he sleep? That was rather a mystery. He seemed able to do with a few snatched hours from time to time; and occasionally passers would notice him stretched out on a long chair on his veranda during a lull, but as often as not he would be sketching rather than sleeping. This constant wakefulness encouraged the inhabitants; they felt that as long as the Colonel was on the watch, they had little to fear.

The greatest source of danger was a 94-pounder siege gun which the Boers



brought up towards the end of October. It was christened 'Old Creaky', and by a system of warnings from the look-out, the people were able to take cover before the shell arrived. Fortunately many of the shells did not burst, and then there was a rush for souvenirs.

In November Cronje made one determined attack from the south, but this was beaten off after heavy casualties on both sides. Soon afterwards Cronje withdrew with 6,000 men and left General Snyman in command with 3,000 Boers. The new commander was reluctant to risk lives in attacking Mafeking, but preferred to draw the cordon tighter in the hope of starving the besieged into surrender. Even by then the siege of this small town had been of great value to the British, for the 6,000 men who had been kept there for two months might well have made all the difference if they had been free to join the Boer forces in Natal or elsewhere.

Things were not going well with the British. There had been a series of defeats in the field, and Kimberley (with Rhodes inside) and Ladysmith were also besieged. The way in which Mafeking held out came as one of the bright spots in an otherwise gloomy picture.

B.-P. knew the value of keeping people cheerful. His own habit of whistling popular tunes - sometimes done when he was feeling annoyed - was itself encouraging to others, but he also set to work to organize all kinds of entertainments and sports. By unwritten agreement on both sides, Sunday was observed as a truce. Even here a bit of bluff was carried out. It had been noticed that when the Boers came out of their camps, they carefully stepped over the barbed wire that surrounded them. The British had no barbed wire, but they went through all the motions of stepping over it just to make the Boers think that it was there !

In addition to sports of all kinds, there were competitions. One of these was for the best life-sized dummy figures representing men of the Defence Forces; these had to be equipped with mechanical arms. They were then placed in various forts, and moved from time to time to give the enemy the impression that all forts were fully manned. Actually some of the forts themselves were only dummies.

B.-P. himself took a leading share in these pastimes; he would play the part of a meditative coster, or his favourite role of a sergeant-major, or he would appear as a circus-director to organize a mock circus. Far from lowering his authority as commander, these very human activities added to his influence, and helped to spread confidence.

As the siege dragged on, with food getting short and little news coming from outside, there was need for encouragement. Every scrap of news was published in the 'Mafeking Mail'; this newspaper, 'issued daily, shells permitting', was another source of good fun. It had, for instance, a daily list of quotations for the price of souvenirs. As the time passed it had to be printed on an odd assortment of paper; but it managed to carry on in spite of bombardment.

In January, 1900, Lord Roberts, with Lord Kitchener, arrived in Cape Town to take over supreme command. At once a new spirit entered the conduct of the war. Roberts sent encouraging messages to Mafeking, but wisely did not raise false hopes. The little town was a long way from Cape Town and the main enemy forces were between the two. Relief would not be possible until these had been defeated.

On Boxing Day an attack was planned on one of the Boer forts; spies, however, did their work well, and the enemy received full information of the scheme. The result was a bad setback for the defenders, but it did not shake their determination to hang on to the end.

Food supplies were carefully rationed. B.-P. and his staff lived on a smaller ration



than the rest of the population 'to judge', as he explained, 'how little was necessary for keeping us going'.

One by one the horses, and later the donkeys, had to be killed for food. Nothing was wasted. The mane and tail were used for stuffing pillows and mattresses in the hospital. The shoes were melted down for shells. The flesh became sausages. The skin and hoofs and head were boiled for hours and ultimately became a kind of brawn. The bones were used in soup. Horses' oats were made into biscuits, and the husks after soaking became 'a paste closely akin to that used by bill-stickers.' This was called sowens, a sour kind of mess, but very healthy and filling.'

Money, too, was needed, so they printed their own bank-notes from a design drawn by B.-P. Then stamps were required for the town post. The first issue had B.-P.'s head on them, but this had been done without his knowledge and as a pleasant surprise for him. It was indeed a surprise; and although he had it altered to a boy riding on a bicycle, the legend still lasts that his head was used for his own glorification!

The boy on the bicycle is important, because he is one of the links between scouting for soldiers and scouting for boys. The man-power of the town was very fully employed in the defence, but the boys were organized by Lord Edward Cecil, the chief staff officer, into a cadet corps. They ran messages and did all kinds of odd jobs. Their leader was a boy named Goodyear - he might also be called the first Boy Scout. They were dressed in khaki, and wore either a forage cap, or a 'smasher' hat - that is, a cow-boy hat with one side turned up. For a time they used donkeys and bicycles, but gradually the donkeys had to disappear into the kitchens. They had competitions of their own, and the following one will be recognized by many a Boy Scout of to-day.

"Each cadet will receive a letter on the Recreation Ground. He will carry it to the Staff Officer; route via Carrington Street. He will there receive a verbal answer and return to the Recreation Ground to the sender, and repeat the verbal message to him in a loud, clear tone of voice."

The tide of war turned at the end of February, 1900, when Cronje surrendered to Roberts at Paardeberg. Kimberley had been relieved a fortnight earlier, and Ladysmith a few days later. Now all eyes were turned on the little town which was still besieged. Plumer was making every effort to reach it from the north, but his force was too small.

On the 1st April Queen Victoria sent the following telegram to B.-P.: "I continue watching with confidence and admiration the patient and resolute defence which is so gallantly maintained under your ever resourceful command."

In the middle of April more Boer troops arrived to join the besiegers; with them was a young Field Cornet, Sarel Eloff, a grandson of President Kruger. This young officer was eager to make an attack on Mafeking, but General Snyman was cautious. Eloff sent in a message to B.-P. suggesting that the Boers should bring a cricket team into the town to play the defenders. B.-P. replied, "Mafeking, in the game it is playing at present is 180 [the days the siege had then lasted] not out against the bowling of Cronje, Snyman and Eloff. Don't you think you had better change the bowling?"

At last, however, Eloff persuaded Snyman to launch a great attack. It started on 12th May. The scheme was for Eloff to attack from the west along the river and through the native town, while Snyman would at the same time attack from the east. Eloff carried out his part of the plan; he fired the native town and even captured some of the British. B.-P. was watching the battle from his tower, and calmly gave his orders as he saw how events were developing. His counter-attack

ended with the capture of Eloff and his men, who were escorted into the town by the cadets who had been on duty all day. Meantime Snyman had carried out his share of the scheme in a half-hearted fashion and was repulsed.

That very day news at last came through from Lord Roberts that a determined effort to relieve Mafeking was to be made. A force of some 1,000 men was assembled at Barkly West, some 200 miles south-west of Mafeking; this was to co-operate with Plumer's regiment, which was to the north-west. These two forces had to fight their way before they could meet; and then between them and their goal lay a strong force of Boers under one of their best commanders, Delarey. A hard-fought battle dispersed these, and in the evening of the 16th May an advance party of the relieving force rode into Mafeking. Amongst them was Major Baden Baden- Powell of the Scots Guards. He immediately went to greet his brother and, for once, found him asleep ! It was as if, feeling confident of the result, he had decided that at last he could safely relax his watchfulness.

The next day B.-P. rode out to meet the main relieving force and to bring it into Mafeking. The siege had lasted 217 days, and some 20,000 shells had been fired into the town. Casualties numbered 813, and half the officers had been killed or wounded.

The news of the relief was greeted with an outbreak of wild enthusiasm throughout the Empire, which reached its climax in London. Crowds assembled outside the house of B.-P.'s mother, and were not satisfied until again and again she had appeared in answer to their cheers. Then London went mad with delight, and the word 'mafficking' was coined to describe the scenes.

I was a boy at the time, but I vividly remember the news of the relief appearing on the placards - there was, of course, no wireless in those days. In honour of the event, boys wore a button badge with B.-P.'s portrait on it, showing him with the hat which will always be connected with his name. He became the hero of us all.

Queen Victoria sent the following telegram:

"I and my whole Empire greatly rejoice at the relief of Mafeking after the splendid defence made by you through all these months. I heartily congratulate you and all under you, military and civil, British and native, for the heroism and devotion you have shown."

B.-P. received the C.B. for his achievement, and he was at once promoted to the rank of Major-General - the youngest officer in the army to be a general. He was forty-three.



Lessons from the Varsity of Life  
Chapter VII: The South African War  
Mission to South Africa



Lessons from the Varsity of Life  
Chapter VII: The South African War  
Mafeking: Defense and Relief



[The South African War Virtual Library](#) contains a wide selection of research data related to the South African War. This site presents an archive of easily accessible and concise material concerning the War. It is not intended to be a new historical 'front', but instead an organised amalgamation of a wide variety of available material.



[Baden-Powell Photo Gallery:](#)  
[Military Career & Final Years, 1899-1937](#)  
[Thumbnail Graphic Index](#)



E. E. Reynolds, [B-P: The Story of His Life](#) is a major source of biographical information about B-P. It is one of several works by E. E. Reynolds documenting the life of the Chief Scout and the early days of the Scout Movement.



[The Baden-Powell Library.](#) A Selection of excerpts from the works of Sir Robert Baden-Powell and works relating to his life and career



[Sir Robert Baden-Powell, Founder of the World Scout Movement, Chief Scout of the World.](#) A Home Page for the Founder. Links Relating to Baden-Powell on the Pine Tree Web and elsewhere.  
[Text Only Index.](#)



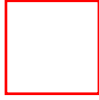
[Return to the Pine Tree Web Home Page](#)



**THE PINE TREE WEB**

Your feedback, comments and suggestions are appreciated.  
Please write to: [Lewis P. Orans](#)  
[lporans@texas.net](mailto:lporans@texas.net)

Copyright © Lewis P. Orans, 1997  
Last Modified: 8:06 PM on June 16, 1997







An Excerpt from:  
E.E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life**,  
London, Oxford University Press, 1943.

---

## CHAPTER VII. FROM THE ARMY TO THE BOY SCOUTS

DURING war there is not much time for resting, and B.-P. was soon active again in the field. Lord Roberts asked B.-P. to meet him at Pretoria; there the defender of Mafeking got some idea of what people thought of him and the siege; he was a popular hero, and many a man might well have become swollen-headed at the enthusiastic reception he had from everyone. But B.-P. took it all in his own good-natured way as part of the day's work. He was only too eager to get on with the next job.

Roberts paid B.-P. the unusual compliment of riding part of the way with him when he returned to take up his new command. He had now to join in the pursuit of the most elusive of the Boer leaders—De Wet. The period of pitched battles was practically over, but the Boer Commandos—a name to become even more famous forty years later—were skilled in the art of dealing quick and effective blows at unexpected points, and in dodging the troops sent to round them up. The best account of this period of the war is given in Colonel Denis Reitz's book *Commando*; he himself as a young man took part in the drawn-out guerrilla warfare, and finished it under the command of General Smuts.

B.-P.'s immediate task was to watch the Magaliesberg—a range of mountains with a few passes, by one of which it was believed De Wet must go to get clear of the encircling troops. For a time there was a risk that B.-P. would be besieged again,

this time in Rustenburg. De Wet came close enough to send a message. He demanded the surrender of the British. B.-P.'s reply was typical. He said that he felt sure the messenger had made a mistake; he must have come to offer the surrender of the Boers. If so, he would gladly make the necessary arrangements!

Soon afterwards he was asked to undertake a bigger job. Already the authorities were looking ahead to the end of the war—actually it went on for a longer period than anyone expected. One thing at least was clear: there would have to be a well-trained body of police to take over control until things settled down. When Lord Roberts was asked to recommend a man to organize such a force, he at once suggested B.-P. "He is far and away the best man I know," he said. "He possesses in quite an unusual degree the qualities you specify, viz., energy, organization, knowledge of the country, and a power of getting on with its people."

So B.-P. was summoned to Cape Town to discuss the formation of the South African Constabulary. On his way he found himself the centre of attraction at every stopping-place; crowds gathered to cheer him; they swarmed into his carriage and lavished gifts on him; it seemed that nothing could be too much to mark their esteem for the hero of Mafeking. He was warned that great preparations were being made for a reception at Cape Town; he tried to avoid this by telegraphing that he would be two days late, but this fiction was not allowed to defeat his admirers. The station and all the approaches were massed with people; an attempt to give the Mayor and Corporation their due rights soon broke down, and B.-P. was seized by the crowd and carried to Government House. He gratefully recorded that "two excellent fellows seized hold of my breeches pockets on either side to prevent my money from falling out".

On the long train journey B.-P. had already sketched in outline a scheme for the S.A.C., and this was approved when he submitted it to the Government. He then went off to Cecil Rhodes' house, "Groote Schuur", now the residence of the Prime Minister of South Africa. Here he settled down in peace to work out the hundred and one details of his scheme. It was a great undertaking, for there was nothing to guide him, and he had to think out such problems as recruiting and staffing, equipment, transport, supplies, horses, uniform, training, and so on.

He had a clear idea of the kind of recruits he wanted young men who would be willing to settle in the country when their terms of service expired. He wrote to friends in the Dominions and Colonies for help, and he soon had thousands of applications from farmers' sons, planters, cowboys, stock-riders, and constables from all over the Empire.

They found that they could not easily bluff their new commander—he was too skilled at that kind of thing himself! For instance, he knew that, for the various tests, a man who was not sure of passing any particular one would get another man to act for him. To stop this B.-P. introduced the finger-print method instead of signature.

The supply of horses also presented difficulties; he knew that any good horses would be immediately snapped up by the army, so he ordered a type just below army standards—strong, sturdy cobs that could stand a lot of work. He paid the ships' captains a pound for every horse landed in good condition—this ensured careful transport. Then the horses were first of all trained for several months at a height of 2,000 feet before being put to work at the usual 3,000 to 4,000 feet of the two colonies.

The designing of a uniform was not easy. It must not look too much like army uniform, or the Boers would at once hate it. Khaki was the natural and the uniforms had facings of green and yellow—the colours of the Transvaal and the

Orange Free State and later of the Boy Scouts. The hat was, almost inevitably, the cowboy type he himself had made so well known.

A system of quick training was devised rather like that he had used before Mafeking; again the men were divided into small groups under responsible leaders, and the training was intended to develop each man's initiative and self-reliance to the full.

While the war lasted, the S.A.C. was used in military operations, and distinguished itself highly; the officers and men won an unusual number of decorations.

It was no wonder that following the strain of Mafeking and the intensive work in organizing the Constabulary, B.-P.'s health broke down. He never spared himself, and would often work on when others would quite reasonably have taken a rest. But at last the doctors intervened and he was sent home to England for a much needed holiday.

From the time he landed at Southampton until he left again, B.-P. spent much time avoiding, when he could, the demands of crowds to greet him as their hero. Some invitations he could not refuse; the one which pleased him most was to visit Charterhouse and lay the foundation stone of the War Memorial.

King Edward VII summoned him to Balmoral to confer on him the C.B. he had been awarded and to hear B.-P.'s own account of the siege and of the organization of the S.A.C.

B.-P. learned that on his journey to Balmoral arrangements had been made for big receptions wherever the train stopped. So he worked out an alternative route and arrived at Balmoral without any fuss, much to the king's approval.

When he was leaving, the king presented him with a haunch of venison with the remark, "I have watched you at meals, and I notice that you don't eat enough. When working as you are doing you must keep up your system. Don't forget—eat more."

During his leave B.-P.'s portrait was painted by two famous artists. George Frederick Watts wanted to present a portrait to Charterhouse, and B.-P. sat for the one which can be seen there now. It was one of the last pictures painted by Watts. Sir Hubert Herkomer also asked him to sit to him, and that portrait is now at the Cavalry Club.

It was a custom with B.-P. to pick up useful knowledge wherever he went, and while he was in these artists' studios he got some suggestions from them about modelling. On his return to South Africa at the end of 1901 he took a lump of clay with him; he practiced on the boat, and found modelling a most interesting change of occupation when he got back to work with the S.A.C.

One result was a bust he did of Captain John Smith— who is so often referred to in Scouting for Boys. This was later exhibited in the Royal Academy, and some years afterwards B.-P. presented it to the Boy Scouts of his old school as an Inter-Patrol Competition trophy.

Peace between the British and the Boers was signed in June, 1902, and the S.A.C. were then free to carry out the duties originally laid down for them. They were stationed all over the country, and were soon busily engaged with all the problems that cropped up as farms were re-occupied. They carried out B.-P.'s instructions to make themselves really useful and to act on their own initiative instead of waiting for instructions from someone higher up. B.-P. hated red tape and the practice of "passing the baby" to someone else. As long as a trooper used his common sense,



he would back him up, even if he made mistakes at times; he quoted with approval Napoleon's saying that "The man who never makes mistakes, never makes anything"; the kind of man he had no use for in the S.A.C. was the one who refused to tackle a job because he had no instructions.

The troopers had lots of queer things to do: they carried parcels and letters from farm to farm; they told the people how to get what help they needed for obtaining seeds and cattle to make a fresh beginning; they dealt with all kinds of disputes, so much so that one magistrate complained that he had nothing to do, as the local S.A.C. sergeant settled everything himself.

B.-P. rode thousands of miles inspecting his far-flung constabulary. He had his own railway coach, which was detached at points from which he set out on his tours. Relays of ponies were supplied by the posts. For several months he rarely slept for more than two nights running under the same roof. It was just the kind of life he loved, and his success was considerable.

Then early in 1903 he was offered the highest rank in the cavalry world as Inspector-General. He was at first reluctant to leave the S.A.C., but actually he had laid the foundations so well that there could be no doubt of the future. So he left South Africa to return to England and take up his new appointment, bearing with him the good wishes of his men and of the Government.

B.-P. once said, "I was not built for a General. I liked being a regimental officer in personal touch with my men." His new post of Inspector-General of Cavalry did not appeal to him as much as being Colonel of the 5th Dragoon Guards, or in charge of the S.A.C. But he none the less set to work with his usual thoroughness and enthusiasm. He paid many visits abroad to see how other nations carried out their cavalry training, and from these tours he got many useful hints for his guidance. His inspections were never mere formalities; he liked to spend a few days with a regiment to see their usual methods; he knew that a special visit, announced long beforehand, would mean a lot of window-dressing. Any officer, especially a young man, who showed originality in his methods of training tending to make it more enjoyable to his men, would be sure of his praise.

In 1906 he accompanied the Duke of Connaught on an official tour of South Africa. At Mafeking the Duke wanted to see everything connected with the siege, and amongst other places they visited the Convent. He noticed a number of patches on the walls, each marked with an "S", and asked what they meant. The Mother Superior replied, "Shell, your Highness, and if you'd been here yourself, you'd have spelt it without the S."

After this tour B.-P. came back to England travelling northwards through Africa to Zanzibar and then by sea to Aden and Egypt. He published a delightful book of sketches made on this trip, and these were later exhibited in London.

His appointment as Inspector-General ended in May, 1907, and he retired on half-pay. It was in the August of this year that he held his first Boy Scout camp at Brownsea Island; but we shall come to this event in the next chapter.

He had not quite done with the army, for he was now asked by the Secretary of State for War to take command of the new Territorial Division in Northumberland. Once more he had something new to develop and the kind of training he gave the men was not unlike that given in the Home Guard more than thirty years later. He had a motor caravan built so that he could tour the area and be independent of hotels. His head quarters were at Richmond Castle, where he lived, as a visitor remarked, "in stark simplicity".

By 1909 the Boy Scouts had grown to such great numbers that he had to make up



his mind whether to remain in the army or leave to take control of this new organization. He consulted King Edward, who thought that the development of the Boy Scouts was of first importance. So B.-P. resigned in May, 1910. He had been knighted in the previous year in recognition of his services as a soldier and as the founder of the Boy Scouts

It did not entirely end his connection with the army for in 1911 he became Honorary Colonel of his old Regiment, the 13th Hussars, and he retained that position until after his eightieth birthday.

---



E. E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life** is a major source of biographical information about B-P. It is one of several works by E. E. Reynolds documenting the life of the Chief Scout and the early days of the Scout Movement.



The Baden-Powell Library. A Selection of excerpts from the works of Sir Robert Baden-Powell and works relating to his life and career



Sir Robert Baden-Powell, Founder of the World Scout Movement, Chief Scout of the World. A Home Page for the Founder. Links Relating to Baden-Powell on the Pine Tree Web and elsewhere. Text Only Index.

---



[Return to the Pine Tree Web Home Page](#)



**THE PINE TREE WEB**

Your feedback, comments and suggestions are appreciated.  
Please write to: [Lewis P. Orans](mailto:lporans@texas.net)  
[lporans@texas.net](mailto:lporans@texas.net)

Copyright © Lewis P. Orans, 1997  
Last Modified: 4:24 PM on August 31, 1997



# B-P and the Beginnings of Scouting



An Excerpt from:  
E.E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life**,  
London, Oxford University Press, 1943.

---

## CHAPTER VIII. BROWNSEA ISLAND

Mafeking made B.-P. the boys' hero, and it was not surprising that many wrote to him for advice and help. He took a great deal of trouble to answer these letters. Here is part of his reply to one from a Boys' Club in London:

"You should not be content with sitting down to defend yourselves against evil habits, but should also be active in doing good. By "doing good" I mean making yourselves useful and doing small kindness' to other people -- whether they are friends or strangers.

"It is not a difficult matter, and the best way to set about it is to make up your mind to do at least one "good turn" to somebody every day, and you will soon get into the habit of doing good turns always.

"It does not matter how small the "good turn" may be -- even if it is only to help an old woman across the street, or to say a good word for somebody who is being badly spoke of. The great thing is to do something."

Letters of this kind set B.-P. thinking of how he could do more to help boys and how they could best be trained. He had had many years of experience in training soldiers and, as we have seen, he made some successful experiments. He found in India, for instance, that scouting was a subject that made a great appeal and brought out the best in the men. At Mafeking he had watched and noted the

success of the boy cadets who had done fine work when given the chance and the responsibility. Why not draw up a scheme of training for all boys on the same lines? Why not train boys as peace scouts, ready at all times to help others?

The training would have to be attractive and interesting. Here his own boyhood gave him a clue. He remembered the fun of boating and tramping with his brothers -- the B.-P. Patrol -- and the eagerness with which at Charterhouse he had slipped away into the copse to watch animals and make fires and cook rabbits. To all this he could now add his own experiences as a practical pioneer and scout in the army.

On his return from South Africa in 1903 two things helped to point the way towards the Boy Scouts. First he heard to his surprise that the little book he wrote for soldiers, "Aids to Scouting", was being used for the training of boys in observation. One instance concerned Brigadier-General Allenby -- later Field-Marshal Lord Allenby -- and his son. As he rode home after a field day, the General was surprised to hear a voice call out, "Father, you are shot. I am in ambush, and you haven't seen me. You should look up." The General did so, and there was his son lying along the branch of a tree, and higher up was the boy's governess. It was she who in her work had made use of B.-P.'s ideas on observation. Then the editor of a boys' paper, "Boys of the Empire", had also seen the interest of the book, and had serialized it under the heading "The Boy Scout" -- probably the first use of the term.

The next important fact was that B.-P. was invited to take the chair at the annual display given by the Boys' Brigade at the Albert Hall, and later to review the Brigade in Glasgow. The sight of all these boys, so smart and keen, made him wish that thousands of others would come along and be trained in the same way. He talked of this to Sir William Smith, the Founder of the Brigade; as a result he promised to work out a scheme of training which could be used by the Brigades to add to the attractiveness of their work and so bring in more boys.

The chief subject he suggested was scouting, especially training in observation and deduction. He had no idea of starting a new movement; his aim was to give some ideas to the Brigade officers to help them in their work. They did in fact do this, and found that the boys like it. B.-P.'s first suggestions were published in the "Brigade Gazette" in 1906, and the following tests he put down are of great interest.

1. Look into five successive shop windows, one minute at each. Then write down the contents of, say, the 2nd and 4th from memory.
2. Look at six passers-by and describe from memory, say, the 2nd, 3rd and 5th, and what you reckon them and their business to be.
3. Remember the numbers of the first two cabs that pass, and presently write them down from memory.
4. Describe the compass-direction of certain streets, landmarks, etc., by the sun; or, if dull weather, "box the compass".
5. Read tracks and their meaning -- if in the country (or park) send someone out to make a fairly clear track (using walking stick, etc.). Each boy tracking for a few minutes in turn, or till he fails.
6. The instructor lays a "paper chase" (in town or country), not with paper but with small signs such as buttons, bits of cloth, card, et., all of one colour, some on the ground, some on bushes, trees, etc., to make the boys use their eyes. (Objects all of one colour to be used to prevent confusion with



ordinary rubbish.) Boys follow the track, each one being given the lead in turn for four or five minutes or till he fails.

7. Lay two fires and light them, using two matches only.
8. Cook 1/4 lb. flour and two potatoes without the help of cooking utensils.
9. Draw a sketch of the Union Jack correctly.
10. Scouting race. Instructor stations three individuals or groups, each group differently clothed as far as possible, and carrying different articles (such as stick, bundle, paper, etc.), at distances from 300 to 1,200 yards from starting-point. If there are other people about, these groups might be told to kneel on one knee, or take some such attitude to distinguish them from passers-by. He makes out a circular course of three points for the competitors to run, say, about a quarter mile, with a few jumps if possible.

The competitors start and run to No. 1 point. Here the umpire tells them the compass direction of the group they have to report on. Each competitor on seeing this group writes a report showing:

1. How many in the group.
2. How clothed or how distinguishable.
3. Position as regards any landmark near them.
4. Distance from his own position.

He then runs to the next point and repeats the same on another group, and so on; and finally he runs with his report to the winning-post."

The more B.-P. thought about this training of boys, the more enthusiastic he became. He discussed his ideas with all kinds of people, and he watched how the suggestions worked in those companies of the Boys' Brigade where they were tried. He was never content to sit by and watch other people, so he decided to try out the scout training himself with some boys in camp. He found a site on Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour, and there he pitched his camp on 25th July, 1907 -- a red-letter day for Boy Scouts. The Boys' Brigade helped him to collect a mixed party of boys. They did not, of course, wear uniform; some wore trousers and others shorts with collars and ties. For shoulder-knots they had long twists of coloured wool hanging almost down to the elbow.

It was not an ideal camp-site, but there was plenty of woodland on the island for scouting games. B.-P.'s nephew, Donald, was present as orderly; Major Kenneth Maclaren -- one his fellow-subalterns in the 13th Hussars -- came to help, and Mr. P. W. Everett there saw Scouting in action for the first time.

The following is B.-P.'s report on the camp:

"The troop of boys was divided up into "Patrols" of five, the senior boy in each being Patrol Leader. This organization was the secret of our success. Each Patrol Leader was given full responsibility for the behaviour of his patrol at all times, in camp and in the field. The patrol was the unit of work or play, and each patrol was camped in a separate spot. The boys were put "on their honour" to carry out orders. Responsibility and competitive rivalry were thus at once established, and a good standard of development was ensured throughout the troop from day to day. The troop was trained

progressively in the subjects of scouting. Every night one patrol went on duty as night picket -- that is, drew rations of flour, meat, vegetables, tea, etc., and went out to some indicated spot to bivouac for the night. Each boy had his greatcoat and blankets, cooking-pot and matches. On arrival at the spot, fires were lit and suppers cooked, after which sentries were posted and bivouac formed. The picket was scouted by Patrol Leaders of other patrols and myself, at some time before eleven p.m., after which the sentries were withdrawn and picket settled down for the night.

" We found the best way of imparting theoretical instruction was to give it out in short installments with ample illustrative examples when sitting round the camp-fire or otherwise resting, and with demonstrations in the practice hour before breakfast. A formal lecture is apt to bore the boys.

"The practice was then carried out in competitions and schemes.

"For example, take one detail of the subject, "Observation" -- namely tracking.

1. At the camp-fire overnight we would tell the boys some interesting instance of the value of being able to track.
2. Next morning we would teach them to read tracks by making footmarks at different places, and showing how to read them and to deduce their meaning.
3. In the afternoon we would have a game, such as "deer-stalking", in which one boy went off as the "deer", with half a dozen tennis balls in his bag. Twenty minutes later four "hunters" went off after him, following his tracks, each armed with a tennis ball. The deer, after going a mile or two, would hide and endeavor to ambush his hunters, and so get them within range; each hunter struck with his tennis ball was counted gored to death; if, on the other hand, the deer was hit by three of their balls he was killed."

The boys were roused in the mornings by the koodoo horn which B.-P. had captured in the Matabeleland Campaign.

The camp was not without its amusing incidents. Thus when B.-P. was stalking a Patrol, he failed to observe one of his own injunctions, "to look up", and he was captured by his own nephew who had concealed himself up in a tree. One evening the male members of a house-party which the owner of the island, Mr. Van Raalte, was entertaining, decided that they would try to pay the camp a surprise visit. They had not gone far, however, before two of the boys sprang out from cover and "arrested" them; the prisoners were marched into camp and had to pay a suitable ransom.

The camp was so encouraging, and the boys so enthusiastic -- it was indeed a thrill to be trained by the defender of Mafeking! -- that B.-P. decided to make the general scheme more widely known. While he was looking about for means to do this he met Mr. Arthur Pearson, the head of the publishing firm of that name. He was at once interested, and arranged for B.-P. to go about the country lecturing to audiences of interested people, and at the same time to write a handbook for the boys. Mr. Pearson himself undertook to publish the book, and to start a paper, The Scout, in which B.-P. promised to write a weekly yarn -- this he continued to do for many years, and some of his best articles on Scouting are to be found in old

## volumes of The Scout.

In order to be free from interruptions while writing the book, B.-P. rented a room in the Windmill on Wimbledon Common, London. There he got down to work to produce one of the most popular boys' books of the century. Mr. P. W. Everett supervised the publication, and this early close contact with B.-P. was later to lead to his taking a large part in the growth of the movement.

Scouting for Boys was published in six fortnightly parts, the first appearing in January, 1908, at a cost of four-pence. The first issue of The Scout was published on 14th April, 1908. Then the fun began! B.-P. still thought of Scouting as an extra activity that could be done by existing clubs and other boy organizations, but the boys themselves soon made it necessary to begin a separate movement.

Thousands of boys bought the first part of Scouting for Boys; it was sufficient for them that the magic initials B.-P. appeared on the cover. But they were not content with reading about Scouting; they wanted to do it, and if they were not members of a Brigade or Club, they got together in little gangs, formed themselves into Patrols, and got down to practical, out-of-doors Scouting. Then they would try to persuade some grown-up to become Scoutmaster. In this way Scouting spread, and as the numbers of boys rapidly grew, it was obvious that something would have to be done about it.

Mr. Pearson again helped; he provided a one-room office as a center for the Boy Scouts, as they were soon named. The first Manager of the office was Major Kenneth Maclaren, and he was followed by Mr. J. A. Kyle. The movement grew at a most astonishing rate. By the end of 1908 there were 60,000 Scouts enrolled; there were probably many more actually going through the training, but it took some time for all to be brought into touch with the new head office.

The problem of uniform had to be faced very early, and B.-P. thought out the details in his usual practical fashion. In the following note he set down the whys and wherefores:

"I knew from experience with boys of all sorts in our first experiments in Scouting that one fellow got his trousers all torn and wet going through a scrub, another wearing a small cap got his face -- very nearly his eyes -- badly scratched by thorns in going through the bush at night, and the rain ran down his neck, others got too hot in their coats and waistcoats, another, going bareheaded, got sunstroke, and so on. So it became necessary to suggest some kind of dress that would suit all phases of Scouting and yet be healthy and inexpensive and comfortable. Then everybody would come to be dressed much the same as his neighbour -- in fact, in uniform. So I thought out what would be the best patterns to adopt. Now -- and here is a useful tip for you -- whenever I went on an expedition of any kind I kept a diary and that diary included a list of the clothing and equipment I took with me, with a note of what I need not have taken and also of what I had omitted to take. All this information came in useful when one was going on another expedition. Also I drew a sketch of myself showing what dress I found to be most convenient for the job I happened to be doing. At one time it was in India, another in South Africa, also Scotland, Canada, West Africa, Himalayas, etc., etc.

"From these data I compiled what I thought would be a dress applicable to most countries. I had used it to some extent in dressing the South African Constabulary when I formed the Corps, and so a good deal of the idea came into the Boy Scout uniform when I devised that. But there was nothing military about it. It was designed to be the

most practical, cheap and comfortable dress for camping and hiking, and in no way copied from soldier's kit."

The origin of the Scout staff -- its usefulness in Ashanti -- has already been noted.

The question is sometimes asked, "Which was the first Troop?" A number of Troops have claimed to hold that distinction, but it is impossible to make any definite decision because some Troops had been formed long before there was any proper system of registration. The honour of being first is really shared by a number of pioneer Scouts who by their enthusiasm made an organized movement necessary.

The Scout ran competitions in 1909 to select Scouts for B.-P.'s second camp; this was held at Humshaugh in Northumberland in the August of that year.

B.-P. had himself taken a holiday earlier in the year in South America, and found that Scouting had already reached that part of the world. As a result of his visit the first foreign Scout Association was formed in Chile.

In 1909 the movement gathered speed. A party of British Scouts toured Germany -- the first foreign visit of the Boy Scouts. Then came the summer camp under B.-P. This time it was partly on land, at Buckler's Hard, Beaulier, and partly on C.B. Fry's training ship, the Mercury. This was the beginning of Sea Scouts as a distinct activity. B.-P.'s eldest brother, Warrington, wrote the handbook for the new section, and his expert advice was of the greatest value.

The same year saw two rallies. At the Crystal Palace in September 10,000 boys marched past their Chief Scout, and shortly afterwards 6,000 Scotch Boy Scouts were inspected by him at Glasgow in company with Sir William Smith, the founder of the Boys' Brigade.

The Scout competition in 1910 was for a party of Scouts to tour Canada, and the lucky winners crossed the Atlantic with B.-P. They were greeted at Quebec by French-Canadian Scouts -- the first Empire Scouts outside Great Britain to meet B.-P. on their native soil.

By the end of 1910 there were over 100,000 Scouts in Great Britain; the movement had established itself as one of the leading boys' organizations within little more than three years of that first camp at Brownsea Island.



E. E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life** is a major source of biographical information about B-P. It is one of several works by E. E. Reynolds documenting the life of the Chief Scout and the early days of the Scout Movement.



**The Baden-Powell Library**. A Selection of excerpts from the works of Sir Robert Baden-Powell and works relating to his life and career



**Sir Robert Baden-Powell, Founder of the World Scout Movement, Chief Scout of the World**. A Home Page for the Founder. Links Relating to Baden-Powell on the Pine Tree Web and elsewhere. **Text Only Index**.





[Return to the Pine Tree Web Home Page](#)



## THE PINE TREE WEB

Your feedback, comments and suggestions are appreciated.  
Please write to: [Lewis P. Orans](#)  
[lporans@texas.net](mailto:lporans@texas.net)

Copyright © Lewis P. Orans, 1997  
Last Modified: 9:10 PM on January 5, 1997





An Excerpt from:  
E.E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life**,  
London, Oxford University Press, 1943.

---

#### CHAPTER IX. FORGING AHEAD

AT Gilwell Park, the Boy Scout Camp and Training Centre near Epping Forest, there is a statuette of a Buffalo with this inscription:

"To the Unknown Scout, whose faithfulness in the performance of the Daily Good Turn brought the Scout Movement to the United States of America."

This Daily Good Turn was done on a foggy day in London in 1909 two years after the camp at Brownsea Island. An American publisher, William D. Boyce, had lost himself in the fog when a boy came up and offered to help him. Mr. Boyce explained where he wanted to go, and the boy showed him the way, but when he was offered a tip he refused it, because, as he said, "A Scout does not accept tips for doing his Good Turn." Mr. Boyce was so surprised that he exclaimed, "What did you say?" "I am a Scout. Haven't you heard of the Boy Scouts? Wouldn't you like to know more about them?" Mr. Boyce said he certainly would, so as soon as he had finished his immediate business, the boy went with him to the offices, and there Mr. Boyce heard all about the scheme of training. He took back to America with him the pamphlets he had been given, and he was so impressed that he started the movement in the United States.

That is but one example of how the young movement quickly spread to other countries. It has already been noted that Scouts were organized in Chile in 1909, and in November, 1909, it was possible to record that "There are now Scout organizations formed or forming in Germany, Sweden, France, Norway, Hungary, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Singapore and India."

At home the movement was developing at a most astonishing speed, and this kept B.-P. very busy. He was constantly on the move, inspecting Scouts, speaking at public meetings and getting into touch with anyone who could help. For instance,

during the second half of March, 1910, he visited Belfast, Dublin, Cork, Edinburgh, Perth, Aberdeen, Harwich and Leicester. No wonder he wrote, "Although I have travelled hard and have economized time to the best of my power, I find it is quite impossible to visit all the different places to which I have been asked and to which I should like to go." He soon made it clear that he had no use for formal parades, but preferred to see Scouts doing things. He devised a new kind of Rally, which now seems commonplace to us, but was a startling affair in 1910. This was the rush in of Scouts from concealed positions; yelling their Patrol cries and brandishing their staffs, they arrived at an arranged semi-circular line and there stood in dead silence.

This Rally was to have been seen on a large scale on June 18th, 1910, at Windsor Great Park before King Edward VII, but his death on May 6th made this impossible. On May 5th B.-P. had been to Buckingham Palace to receive the king's final approval for the plans. King George V, however, was equally interested in the progress of the movement, and in the following year, on 4th July, 1911, the Rally was held, when 30,000 Scouts were gathered together. An onlooker's account is worth quoting because it contains B.-P.'s own summary of the position the movement had reached.

"I see a picture of the Chief Scout sitting in a deck-chair, on the eve of the Rally, beneath the trees of the officials' quarters in the great camp, writing a letter in pencil with his left hand. It is something important, as he seems not to see you though you go ever so close; and so you wisely go away.

Two copies were taken of the letter or memorandum— one went straight to the King through his Secretary Major Wigram, the other I was given to re-copy here. The document following will be read with interest for what is between the lines—the King's desire for information, on the eve of the Rally, about the Scouts, especially for information which would enable him to recognize badges and distinctions of honour; and the brilliancy of the dispatch written in a few moments amid the distractions of camp stir and bustle—not a word wasted, and a complete guide achieved to the whole Scout Movement and the Rally in a nutshell

There will be between thirty and forty thousand Scouts on parade out of our 200,000. These have all passed some tests in tracking, cooking, first-aid, ambulance, messenger, signalling, field telegraph, pioneering, and other such work.

Numerous cases have occurred of public work being performed by Scouts in aid of police or in accidents, notably last week in the Coronation accident at Barnstaple, and in the arrest of an armed murderer at Red Deer, Alberta.

The Scouts present include 100 from Canada, detachments from Malta, Gibraltar, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, as well as - from all parts of England.

All Scouts wearing medals have saved life. Of these there are 229. King's Scouts wear a crown on the left arm; of these there are 2,397. Badges on the left arm stand for tests passed in various handicrafts. Of these, over 137,000 have been issued. A cord round the shoulder means that

the wearer holds at least six efficiency badges. A silver wolf round the neck means at least twenty-four proficiency badges have been gained.

We have Scouts in all Oversea Dominions. Boy Scouts have been started also in most European countries, as well as in the United States, Chile, Argentine, etc. Sea Scouts form a branch of the Boy Scouts, for coastguard work and seamanship, and some Troops specialize in fire brigade work.

Messages of loyalty and regret at inability to attend the Rally have been received from Troops in the Orange Free State, Natal and Australia.

"As the morning wore on visitors by the thousand wandered through the great camp, and informally inspected the Scouts as they gradually assembled on their respective grounds. At every turn one ran against old friends of the young Scout world. Troops rested under the trees in every kind of picturesque and Scout-like attitude, munching provender at intervals. Prince Christian rode round about with curiosity and interest. The Chief Scout went here and there on his fine black horse, the gift of New Zealand admirers. General Sir Herbert Plumer kept an eye on everyone; and wherever one looked Commissioner Everett's long figure was seen while he went about making sure that every detail of his careful plans was properly carried out. Noon saw most Troops in their temporary positions on the nine assembly grounds, and presently the grand movement to the parade-ground set in without any visible confusion."

Later came the inspection and the Rush-in.

"Back at last, on his black horse, in his original position, Sir Robert sounded his whistle again, and then came the great moment of the day, the charge of the thirty thousand. It was magnificently done; the roaring of the Patrol cries suggested that the zoos of the world had been let loose, the thirty thousand closed in on the King as a great foaming wave, and it seemed that nothing would stop it; spectators trembled lest the King should be enveloped. But at a line, which none but the Scouts knew, the wave stopped dead, as if suddenly frozen—the shouting and the tumult died, and then—silence."

It was a magnificent tribute to the soundness of the new movement; and although such sights were to be repeated in after years, the thrill of Windsor has never been lost by those who were there.

Many leading men of the country gave their support, and amongst them was Lord Kitchener, who, in speaking at a Rally in Leicestershire, used words which have often been quoted:

"There is one thought I would like to impress upon you—ONCE A SCOUT ALWAYS A SCOUT. YOU will find the Scout Law and Scout training very useful through life, so never allow Scouting to be looked upon as a game that is over."

B.-P. was invited in 1910 to visit Russia for the purpose of explaining the Scout method of training. He inspected the boys of the Moscow Cadet School, but was very critical of the harsh discipline and military atmosphere of the institution. There were some Boy Scouts—but really almost the same as Cadets—who realized what kind of man he was, and as the following incident shows, found a way of



expressing their admiration.

"A Guard of Honour of the Russian Boy Scouts was formed up at the station to see me off; rigid as stone they stood in their ranks, but one could see the life and soul of the boy blazing in those excited eyes as one walked down the line.

"It struck me so much that I could not leave them with a mere glance, so I walked back, shaking hands with each. As I neared the finish their feelings became too much for them. There was a sudden cry, they broke their ranks and were all over me in a second, shaking hands, kissing my clothes, and everyone bent on giving me some sort of keepsake out of his pocket. The eager enthusiasm of boyhood was there, ready to respond even to a stranger and a foreigner."

Meantime the girls were demanding that they too should be allowed to join in the game of Scouting. Some turned up at the Crystal Palace Rally in 1909 and explained that they were Girl Scouts! So B.-P. had to do something about them. They were allowed to register at Boy Scout Headquarters, and within a year some 8,000 did so. Then B.-P. persuaded his sister Agnes to organize a separate movement, and so the Girl Guides came into being.

In January, 1912, B.-P. set off on his first world tour to see how the movement was developing. He saw Boy Scouts in the Dominions and Colonies, in America, and in the East. Wherever he went he was received with enthusiasm; former officers and men who had served under him were anxious to meet him again, and he seized such opportunities to urge the value of Scouting.

There was one unplanned part of the tour that was to bring a great change in his life. On board the Arcadian, crossing the Atlantic, he met Miss Olave St. Clair Soames, and before the voyage ended he asked her to marry him. It was agreed not to make an official announcement until he had returned from his tour. The wedding took place on October 30th, 1912, and the Boy Scouts organized a penny collection for a motor-car—perhaps this was one way of saying that they hoped marriage would not prevent the Chief from touring the country to see the Troops. The honeymoon was spent camping in North Africa, and Lady B.-P. soon proved herself a first-class camper.

In after years thousands of Scouters and Guiders, as well as Scouts and Guides, were to enjoy the hospitality of the B.-P.s' home, and all fully appreciated the happiness and friendliness of their hosts.

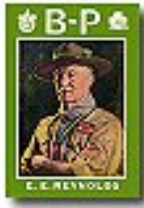
There was rejoicing in the movements at the birth of Peter in 1913, and in 1915, when Heather was born, and again in 1917 for Betty.

The chief event of 1913 was the Birmingham Exhibition and Rally. This showed people something of the variety of things Scouts could do, and there was general surprise at the extraordinary range of activities displayed. The Rally of 20,000 Scouts included boys from ten foreign countries. The event was also notable for the fact that B.-P. was wearing shorts as Chief Scout. Up to that date he had, on official occasions, worn breeches, and sometimes General's uniform; his example was quickly followed by Commissioners and Scoutmasters.

At this period he was exceptionally busy, as he had become Master of the Mercers' Company, to which many generations of his family had belonged. He fortunately had the capacity of making full use of every waking moment, and in this way he was able to do more work than two men usually got through. But even he could not stand such a strain for ever, and his doctor ordered a complete change and rest for the summer of 1914; B.-P. planned to go to South Africa and see

something of his old haunts, and then to introduce Lady B.-P. to the delights of the veldt.

---



E. E. Reynolds, [B-P: The Story of His Life](#) is a major source of biographical information about B-P. It is one of several works by E. E. Reynolds documenting the life of the Chief Scout and the early days of the Scout Movement.



[The Baden-Powell Library](#). A Selection of excerpts from the works of Sir Robert Baden-Powell and works relating to his life and career



[Sir Robert Baden-Powell, Founder of the World Scout Movement, Chief Scout of the World](#). A Home Page for the Founder. Links Relating to Baden-Powell on the Pine Tree Web and elsewhere. [Text Only Index](#).

---



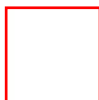
[Return to the Pine Tree Web Home Page](#)



THE PINE TREE WEB

Your feedback, comments and suggestions are appreciated.  
Please write to: [Lewis P. Orans](#)  
[lporans@texas.net](mailto:lporans@texas.net)

Copyright © Lewis P. Orans, 1997  
Last Modified: 4:24 PM on August 31, 1997





An Excerpt from:  
E.E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life**,  
London, Oxford University Press, 1943.

---

## CHAPTER X. THE WAR YEARS

IN June, 1914, Queen Alexandra inspected 11,000 London Boy Scouts, and for the first time the juniors, the Wolf Cubs, were seen at a public Rally. This new development was almost inevitable. The younger brothers of Scouts naturally wanted to join in the fun; sometimes they were allowed to do so because the Scoutmasters were not hard-hearted enough to refuse. But small boys dressed as Scouts and carrying long staffs tended to bring ridicule on Troops and to keep older boys from joining. It was not long before some Scoutmasters began to experiment with Junior Scouts and to write to B.-P. to tell him of their problems. He encouraged them and examined reports on what was being done.

Later a scheme was published in the Headquarters Gazette in January, 1914. A special salute and badge (a Wolf Cub's head), a very simple promise of duty and helpfulness, and some easy tests were devised suited to the age period of nine to eleven or twelve. A handbook by B.-P. was "shortly to be published", but events delayed this for two years. The stroke of genius in the scheme, however, was the use he made of the Mowgli stories from Kipling's *Jungle Book* to provide an imaginative background for the activities. This not only made an appeal to the small boys, but it gave the Wolf Cubs a private world of their own.

The new branch soon proved popular, and by the end of the year 10,000 small boys, wearing a distinctive uniform, were enthusiastic Wolf Cubs.

B.-P. was also thinking of the older Scouts, and for them he founded the Scouts' Friendly Society to link them up with the National Health Insurance Scheme; the members were to be grouped in "Camps, and it was hoped that in this way they

would be kept together and encouraged to go on with their Scouting. The development of this scheme, however, was hindered by the war.

Yet another Scout service occupied B.-P.'s time and thoughts during the early months of 1914. At the beginning of February an appeal was issued for the establishment of an Endowment Fund for the movement; it had the support of the President, the Duke of Connaught. At the end of a letter to the Press, B.-P. said:

If you cannot give yourself for the work, will you give us a donation of such size as will mark your sense of its importance? Let us, in the words of the highwayman, have "your money or your life."

He toured the country to appeal for support; during the first six months the £100,000 mark was passed; then this effort too had to be abandoned on the outbreak of war.

War came at the beginning of August, 1914—so the plans for a South African holiday had to be abandoned. Scouts were at once mobilised, and one of the boys later recorded the following recollections.

On August 4th I was a member of a Sea Scout Troop in a village on the South Coast; for various reasons the village must be nameless, but it may give some clue if I say that it was midway between a very large seaside resort and an important Channel port. On the evening of the 4th the Scoutmaster cycled round to all members of the Troop and told us to be prepared for emergency work. He was unable to say what it would be, but at 5 a.m. the next morning we knew. The coastguards had been called up and we, together with a Troop from the big town, were in sole charge of the two coastguard stations until the military should relieve us. As it happened we were in sole charge for a period of ten hectic days.

No need to ask if we were thrilled—all of us except the Scoutmaster, who happened to be the village dentist. He felt just as unhappy as the coastguard would have felt faced with a painless extraction.

Our duties during those ten days were many and varied. They included the usual work of the station, and a constant patrol along the cliffs and foreshore. We did this in pairs day and night, covering a distance of six miles on each beat, and our eyes were ever open for suspicious customers. Needless to say, everyone we met came under that category, but we did actually have our share of spies.

One day we had news that a yellow car was heading for the village from the direction of the port, and that it must be stopped at all costs. It was— by one of our Patrol Leaders hurling his bicycle at the car as it swept over the cross-roads in the centre of the village. The car swerved and crashed into a house. The two occupants were only slightly damaged and they were speedily removed by some soldiers who were chasing them in another car.

Another day, five of us were rushed off to guard an aeroplane which had made a forced landing in the heart of the Downs.

But quite the most exciting adventure was the capture of three men who had been flashing messages from a small house on the cliffs. This house happened to be used as the local mortuary, and it had a lantern tower from which there was an uninterrupted view towards the harbour. Our orders were to surround the house and await the



military. On no account were we to enter the building, as it was anticipated that the men were armed. The military were over two hours in reaching us—two hours which to us were full of exciting possibilities.

The Scouts were immediately engaged in all kinds of national service jobs: acting as messengers in Government offices and elsewhere; patrolling railway lines; guarding bridges; helping hospitals; collecting waste paper and other salvage; flax harvesting; and as buglers to sound the "All Clear" after air raids. These are but some of the great number of tasks undertaken by Scouts during the four years of the war.

The finest work done by the Scouts, however, was in coastguard service. Lord Kitchener had suggested that Sea Scouts should be used for this work to free the coastguard men for service afloat, where the need for men was urgent. The scheme was organized under the Admiral Commanding Coastguard and Reserves, and it was in force from the 5th August, 1914, to the 7th March, 1920, during which period some 30,000 Scouts passed through the service.

B.-P. inspected as many stations as he could, and he must indeed have felt that all his work was more than fully justified when he found how reliable the boys proved under service conditions. Here is part of an account he wrote at the time of what he had seen:

It revived old memories of night reconnaissance when I found myself walking along for a short spell with the Night Patrol of Coast Watching Scouts. Their energetic Commissioner was with them, nor was it the first time he had turned out to share their nocturnal tramp. Down by devious tracks along by the shore we went, the boys evidently knowing every inch of the ground: and well they might, for the despatch that they were carrying, that is the extract of their day's log and that of the next Patrol beyond them, was numbered 1119. For eleven hundred and nineteen consecutive nights since the war began had these Patrols passed on their despatches all down that rough coast, in foul weather as well as fair, in spite of storms and snowdrifts, until they reached the Naval Base Commander. The despatch carrying is not their only task. As we went along my guide suddenly remarked a light shining in a farmhouse window and thither we made our way. He knocked and politely but firmly desired them to screen the window. When I turned to go I found he remained behind; as he afterwards explained, it was to see that the order was carried out, as 'he did not trust those folk one yard'. The culverts of the railway line where it ran close beside the sea all had to be examined, as also the underground cable and the overhead wire.

B.-P.'s own comment on the war was in these words:

It shows how little are the people of these countries as yet in sufficient mutual sympathy as to render wars impossible between them. This will be so until better understanding is generally established. Let us do what we can through the Scout brotherhood to promote this in the future. For the immediate present we have duties to our country to perform.

Some people were rather surprised that B.-P. was not given a command during the War, but Lord Kitchener was strongly of the opinion that the organization of the Boy Scouts was of such great importance that B.-P. could not be spared. Many times it has been said that he did secret service work in Germany during the war,

but there was no foundation for such statements. Actually he was far too busy in other ways to undertake such work. At the other extreme came the news from America that he had been shot as a German Spy !

The announcement in one American newspaper was as follows:

### **BADEN-POWELL SHOT AS A SPY**

January 15th 1916.

Pittsburgh, Pa.

Shot to death by English soldiers on his return to England as a German spy.

That is what happened to Major-General Robertson [*sic*] Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell], hero of the defence of Mafeking in the Boer War, and organizer of the Boy Scouts, when he went back to London and was caught with papers in his possession, showing maps of Great Britain's fortifications that he is said to have been selling to the enemy of England.—This statement is made by a man who says he is a Britisher and that the execution was witnessed by his brother.

"My story is a true one,' he declared to-night. ' I can tell you nothing else. My brother saw the execution with his own eyes. My brother explained that Baden-Powell marched to his place of execution without a quiver, and, as the cover was being placed over his eyes, said only these words: "May God have mercy." If reports be true, and I am sure that my brother is to be relied upon, England has put into his last sleep one of the bravest soldiers who ever headed her armies in foreign lands."

B.-P.'s comment was, "It was really worth being shot as a spy to gain so sweet an epitaph as that."

Those who know how fully occupied he was during the war period realize that there was little, if any, spare time for spying expeditions. He was not only very active in the Scout movement; during 1915, for instance, he gave much time to the provision of huts in France in association with the Y.M.C.A. He was naturally most interested in the Mercers' Hut which he had been instrumental in getting, and later in the Scout and Guide Huts, as well as their Ambulance Cars. By the end of 1916 the Scouts provided four huts in France and seven ambulances. Lady Baden-Powell was very actively engaged in the same work, and together they ran the Mercers' Hut for some months. When the first Scout hut was opened at Etaples, he wrote:

We are awfully busy here. We opened the Scouts' Hut at Etaples yesterday with greatest success. Though supplies are scarce and no Scoutmasters have come to take up work, we thought it best to get the hut under way if only to give the men shelter and warmth in this filthy weather. And I am glad that we did, for it has been a big success. The place was crammed to standing room yesterday the moment that the doors were opened, and has been so all day.

We got a very good concert entertainment for them last night after the Commandant here had formally opened the place—and the trade done at the bar was tremendous. My wife, Miss B. A., a Scoutmaster from

another hut, a man we picked up here, and a helpful ex-Scout or two—as well as myself—had as much as we could do in serving the men in the evening. The men are delighted with the place.

My wife and I gave a tea to ex-Scouts before the place was opened and about 40 turned up.

He paid visits to his regiment in France until they were sent to the Middle East, and then he received long letters from the Commanding Officer telling him how they were getting on. The regiment was proud to have B.-P. as its Honorary Colonel, and knew what a keen interest he took in its welfare.

Meantime, the movement was developing rapidly, and the Chief was full of ideas for the future. The Girl Guides too flourished as never before; Lady B.-P. soon showed that she had considerable organizing powers of her own, and it was not, therefore, surprising that in 1918 she was elected Chief Guide.

At last the war came to an end. The Boy Scouts had proved themselves; 150,000 served in the Forces, and of these 10,000 were killed in action. The long list of awards and decorations included no fewer than eleven Victoria Crosses. The best known of these was Jack Cornwell, who served and died so gallantly in the battle of Jutland. His name is perpetuated in the movement by the Cornwell Scout Decoration for bravery. Another was Piper Laidlaw, who, during the first gas attack in France, rallied the men by marching up and down the parapet of the trenches, playing his pipes.

B.-P. had reason to be proud of the achievements of the movement he had created only six years before the war broke out. But his eyes were always looking ahead, and as the dawn of peace came he sent out this message of hope:

The Boy Scout Movement, though on a comparatively small scale at present, yet has its branches among the boys in practically every civilized country in the world and it is growing every day. It is conceivable that if in the years to come a considerable proportion of the rising generation of citizens of each nation were members of this fraternity they would be linked by a tie of personal sympathy and understanding such as has in the past never existed, and such as would in the event of international strain of difference exert a strong influence on its solution.

The future citizens of the different countries, through being Boy Scouts together, would be habituated to the idea of settling their mutual differences by friendly means.

They would view the situation in terms of peace and not, as heretofore, in terms of war.

To some, that seemed an idle dream, but it is no exaggeration to say that he devoted the rest of his life to its realization.



E. E. Reynolds, B-P: The Story of His Life is a major source of biographical information about B-P. It is one of several works by E. E. Reynolds documenting the life of the Chief Scout and the early days of the Scout Movement.



[The Baden-Powell Library](#). A Selection of excerpts from the works of Sir Robert Baden-Powell and works relating to his life and career



[Sir Robert Baden-Powell, Founder of the World Scout Movement, Chief Scout of the World](#). A Home Page for the Founder. Links Relating to Baden-Powell on the Pine Tree Web and elsewhere. [Text Only Index](#).



[Return to the Pine Tree Web Home Page](#)



THE PINE TREE WEB

Your feedback, comments and suggestions are appreciated.  
Please write to: [Lewis P. Orans](mailto:lporans@texas.net)  
[lporans@texas.net](mailto:lporans@texas.net)

Copyright © Lewis P. Orans, 1997  
Last Modified: 4:24 PM on August 31, 1997







An Excerpt from:  
E.E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life**,  
London, Oxford University Press, 1943.

---

## CHAPTER XI. EARLY JAMBOREES

IT had been hoped that the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the movement could be celebrated in 1918, but the war made this impossible. Soon after the Armistice plans were discussed for a Rally in 1920. B.-P. had an instinct for choosing the right name for things, and he was anxious to avoid such well-known words as Display or Rally. It was at his suggestion that the word Jamboree was used for Scout gatherings on a large scale. He did not invent the word, but he gave it a new meaning and now it has come to mean to everyone a great Scout Camp combined with public displays. It was he too who suggested that Scouts from foreign countries should be invited, and so a Jamboree also means an international gathering of Scouts.

Olympia, London, was chosen as the site for this first Jamborees with a Camp in the Old Deer Park, Richmond, to sleep some 6,000 Scoutmasters and Scouts. Had the gathering been one of British Scouts alone it would have been remarkable, for all parts of the Empire were represented; but there were representatives of twenty-one other nationalities. During twelve years the movement had spread throughout the world, and Olympia saw Boy Scouts from the United States and China, from Norway and Siam, from Chile and Japan—all united by one code of conduct and practicing common activities. B.-P. was frequently reminded of his past adventures; thus amongst the South Africans were three boys whose fathers had been in the forces that besieged Mafeking.

Displays of all kinds were given in the vast arena; each day's events were opened

with an impressive march past of the Scouts of all the nations represented; there were many side-shows giving glimpses of the varied activities of Scouts as craftsmen and lovers of the open air. Many of the thousands of visitors must have felt like saying, as Punch put it in a cartoon: "I was nearly losing hope, but the sight of all you boys gives it back to me."

The final scene crowned a wonderful week. A pageant of the nations, with standards held aloft, entered the arena, and B.-P. was proclaimed Chief Scout of the World. As he passed, each standard was dipped in his honour. Then he turned, and in his ever-youthful strong voice spoke to the vast assembly of Boy Scouts.

Brother Scouts, I ask you to make a solemn choice. Differences exist between the peoples of the world in thought and sentiment, just as they do in language and physique. The war has taught us that if one nation tries to impose its particular will upon others cruel reaction is bound to follow. The Jamboree has taught us that if we exercise mutual forbearance and give and take, then there is sympathy and harmony. If it be your will, let us go forth from here fully determined that we will develop among ourselves and our boys that comradeship, through the world-wide spirit of the Scout Brotherhood, so that we may help to develop peace and happiness in the world and goodwill among men. Brother Scouts, answer me. Will you join in this endeavour?

The answer came with no uncertainty; then the boys took charge. B.-P. was picked up and carried across the arena, and at length released as wave after wave of cheering brought the first Jamboree to a close.

One immediate outcome of the Jamboree was the formation of an International Committee and Bureau, made practicable by the generosity of an American citizen, Mr. F. F. Peabody. During the war an S.O.S. (Save Our Scouts) Fund had proved of great service in helping distressed Scouts in the devastated war areas, and the Jamboree proved that the comradeship thus shown was a very real thing.

It was therefore with B.-P.'s full support that the international work of Scouting was put on a more regular footing. When the first world census was taken in 1922 it was found that there were 1,019,905 Boy Scouts in thirty-two countries. By 1939 this figure had risen to 3,305,149.

Two years after the Olympia Jamboree, a Posse of Welcome was organized to greet the Prince of Wales on his return home from his Empire tour. The word 'Posse' came into use because, when the Scouts formed a Guard of Honour to the Prince at Buckingham Palace on a former occasion, they had broken out into cheers and had waved their hats on their staffs. King George V had been watching the arrival, and he felt that "Guard of Honour" was not the right word for such a youthful company. B.-P. suggested "posse"; he had in mind the sheriff's posse of the Wild West, and also the "posse comitatus" which came to arrest Sir Robert, the Baron of Shurland, as recorded in the Ingoldsby Legends.

On the 7th October, 1922, some 60,000 Scouts and 19,000 Wolf Cubs met at the Alexandra Palace to greet the Prince. Before the Rally, B.-P. was decorated with the French Legion of Honour. In previous years he had received many honours from foreign countries, and on this occasion he wrote to a friend:

Really, between ourselves—I wish they wouldn't! I feel ashamed of the cheap way of winning them—when the whole work is a Joy to me and I only wish I could do more. At the same time, it means that they appreciate the Movement and its possibilities, and that is something.

It was an amazing spectacle. One of the Scouts who was there recalls the following incident:

I was only a young Scout and separated from the rest of the boys I knew—and probably looking frightened ! A crowd of us was moving along when what we thought was a Scoutmaster came along with us. He chatted freely to us, asking where we had come from, how long we had taken to travel there, if it were our first trip to London, and other such small talk, until we arrived inside the room. Then to the overwhelming surprise of each of us, he made a cheery parting and walked up on to the platform. He was the Chief Scout!

A spectator recorded the following impression:

Personally, I shall not easily forget those wonderful boy crowds, nor shall I forget the eagerness of the Prince, who apparently finds it so hard to leave boyhood behind, the smiling interest of the Duke of Connaught, the keen, humorous humanity of the Chief Scout, and the tireless eminently practical enthusiasm of his staff, most of them mature men leading busy professional lives.

When the Empire Exhibition was held at Wembley in 1924, it was suggested that an Empire Rally of Scouts should be organized at the same time. This was a project much after B.-P.'s heart, and he energetically set to work to arrange such a Jamboree. The response was immediate, and amongst the 12,500 Scouts in the camp in Wembley Paddocks were boys from all parts of the Empire. Echoes from his past must have sounded in B.-P.'s ears as he heard the Rhodesian Scouts shout:

WHO ARE YOU ?—MATABELE !

WHO ARE YOU ?—MASHONA !

WHERE DO YOU HAIL FROM ?—RHODESIA—WAH!

Or when touring the Exhibition he met Scouts from the Gold Coast and Ashanti, sons of men who spoke of him still as Kantankye—"He of the Big Hat." With the Gold Coast natives was Captain R. S. Rattray, the head of the Anthropological Department in Ashanti. He was an enthusiastic supporter of Scouting, and he interested B.-P. in the use of the Ntumpane or talking drums, and with some Scouts he made use of them for sending messages in Morse. An African Boy Scout successfully sent messages to Captain Rattray through the dense forest country, and at Wembley an English Scout Troop learned how to use the drums.

Immediately after the Imperial Jamboree, the second World Jamboree was held near Copenhagen. Here were gathered boys from thirty-three nations; part of the time was spent in camp with the usual displays, pageants and competitions, and part was spent by the boys as guests in the homes of Danish Scouts.

Few men have been so hero-worshipped as B.-P. was at these Jamborees, but it had no visible effect on him; he remained as companionable as ever, and the youngest Scout could feel at ease in his presence. His sense of humour was too keen for him to stand on a pedestal. It was that sense of humour, too, that brought laughter at times when it was most needed. Thus, on the final day of the camp when the King of Denmark inspected the Scouts, the rain poured down and all were drenched. When the time came for B.-P. to announce the results of the competitions, he looked at the boys massed in front of him, and with a laugh said, "I have seen great numbers of Scouts in my life, but I have never seen any as wet as you!" Even those who did not understand English recognized the tone, and



faces broke into smiles.

While these spectacular events attracted the public attention, other developments were quietly going on. Two in particular must be mentioned: the Rover Scouts, and Gilwell Park.

For some years B.-P. had been feeling the need for some kind of advanced training for those who would normally leave the Boy Scouts at the age of eighteen. He discussed the Problem with Commissioners and Scoutmasters, and at last the Rover Scouts were formed. The whole scheme was based on the idea of "Service"—all Scouting leads to that from the time when the Cub promises "to do a good turn to somebody every day and the Scout that he will "help other people at all times." The Rovers develop this idea still further, and for their help B.-P. wrote the book *Rovering to Success*.

Gilwell Park fulfilled one of B.-P.'s dreams. He wanted a permanent camp where Scouters could be trained. Towards the end of 1918 Mr. W. de Bois Maclaren, District Commissioner for Rosneath, offered to purchase a camping ground near enough to London to be accessible for East London Scouts. This at once pointed to Epping Forest as the most suitable area, but Maclaren thought it "too near chimney-pots" until the District Scout Commissioner took him up to High Beech. After several estates had been found unsuitable, Gilwell Park near Chingford was found to be just what was wanted. It was away from any main road; the forest bounded it on one side and was close to it on another; it stood high, with a fine view over the King George Reservoir.

A pioneer camp was held at Easter, 1919, by some Rover Scouts of East London, and shortly afterwards parties of local Scouts set to work to clear the gardens and grounds. The formal opening was on the 25th July, and on the 8th September the first Training Camp for Scoutmasters was held under the Camp Chief, Francis Gidney. In him B.-P. had found a man of exceptional personality who carried out the scheme of training as laid down by B.-P. with a touch of genius that ensured its success from the beginning.

B-P himself drew up the details of the training, and once more he showed his imagination in the badge he devised. He did not want anything showy, so he picked on a necklace he had captured from Dinuzulu in 1887; two of the wooden beads which formed this necklace were strung on a bootlace and called the "Wood Badge," and this is awarded to any Scouter who passes the training course.

Another romantic touch was provided by the koodoo horn used at Gilwell for the rousing of the camp and for Flag Down. This horn had been brought from Matabeleland by B.-P. in 1896, and he had used it himself at the first Scout Camp at Brownsea Island in 1907.

In June, 1920, B.-P. held a Commissioners' Camp at Gilwell. I was on the Staff that summer; it was my first close contact with him; previously he had been a figure at a Rally to me, and, like most Scoutmasters, I felt a natural awe of him. It came as a surprise to me to find how easily one could talk with him and how quickly one forgot his prestige and position. Others were also surprised that week-end. I recall how Commissioner after Commissioner arrived by car, or by the station horse-cab, with piles of luggage, and how B.-P. gently chaffed them about coming to camp burdened like Tommy the Tenderfoot. There were more knee-breeches and stiff collars than shorts and scarves. His own gear was small. He pitched his Ashanti hammock tent on the Training Ground, and strolled about in shirt and shorts ready for a chat or a laugh with anyone. Some—if they were awake—must have been amazed very early the next morning to see B.-P. doing his exercises outside his tent; here was a leader who actually practiced what he



preached!

Whenever he camped at Gilwell he liked to wander round the Boys' Camping Field, and to attend the Campfire on Saturday evenings. Many thousands of Scouts came to know him there. Here are some of the memories of one of those lucky Scouts.

"He had a wonderful trick of taking the stiffness out of a rather formal or ceremonial occasion. At a campfire at Gilwell a Troop were to give a display of tumbling, and were wearing brilliant orange shorts. When the Chief arrived, everybody stood in silence, but he suddenly said to this team: ' Where did you get those lovely pants?'

"On the following morning, he was wandering round the Boys' camps with only his two dogs, and cine-camera, at about 8 a.m. He had just ' shot ' a Scout who was lying in the tent with his legs projecting outside, when the boy sat up looking rather embarrassed. The Chief said, ' I've got you for life.' I was wondering whether I could get a ' snap ', when up ran another Scout with a camera, so I dashed for mine. B.-P. stopped, and 'posed' and arranged his two dogs at his feet, but then found that he had his back to the early morning sun, so insisted on turning right round, so as not to spoil the picture."

Gilwell was the first of many Boy Scout Camp Sites and B.-P. rejoiced as each one was opened, as he knew the happiness it would bring to thousands of boys.



E. E. Reynolds, [B-P: The Story of His Life](#) is a major source of biographical information about B-P. It is one of several works by E. E. Reynolds documenting the life of the Chief Scout and the early days of the Scout Movement.



[The Baden-Powell Library](#). A Selection of excerpts from the works of Sir Robert Baden-Powell and works relating to his life and career



[Sir Robert Baden-Powell, Founder of the World Scout Movement, Chief Scout of the World](#). A Home Page for the Founder. Links Relating to Baden-Powell on the Pine Tree Web and elsewhere. [Text Only Index](#).



[Return to the Pine Tree Web Home Page](#)



THE PINE TREE WEB

Your feedback, comments and suggestions are appreciated.  
Please write to: [Lewis P. Orans](mailto:lporans@texas.net)  
[lporans@texas.net](mailto:lporans@texas.net)

Copyright © Lewis P. Orans, 1997  
Last Modified: 4:24 PM on August 31, 1997



## B-P: The Man



An Excerpt from:  
E.E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life**,  
London, Oxford University Press, 1943.

---

### CHAPTER XII. THE MAN

What kind of man was B.-P.? His alert, slightly-built figure was known to countless thousands, and his surprisingly strong voice was equally familiar. Many came to know him more intimately at his hospitable home, in camp, or in the day-to-day work of the movement. One of the first of his characteristics which must have struck most people was his great sense of fun. As a boy at school, and later as a young officer, he was always ready for a joke or a spree. An old Sergeant-Major who was in the 13th Hussars when B.-P. landed in India in 1876, said to me, "On Parade, he was On Parade, but off Parade, he was up to all kinds of devilment." Many are the stories told of his high spirits as a youth, but in much later years he never lost his sense of fun. Even on his first voyage to England after the relief of Mafeking he could not resist the temptation to play a joke on the passengers. It was a luxury ship, and the frequenters of the first-class saloon were very exclusive. B.-P. was quick to sense this, and he decided to test it. When the passengers came into the dining saloon one evening they were horrified to see a most disreputable person fast asleep in one chair with his feet on another. It was enough to shock any first-class passenger. The purser was sent for and asked to remove the objectionable intruder. To their amazement it was B.-P.; perhaps he was just seeing if he had lost his skill in disguise, or perhaps he was laughing at the snobbery of a luxury liner.

One characteristic which was soon apparent to anyone who met him was his versatility - he could do so many different kinds of things, and do them well. This

did not mean "Jack of all trades, and master of none". He was, for instance, a master of his own profession - soldiering - and particularly of all that is covered by the word "scouting". He preferred to do things for himself and to look after himself, whether at home or on the veldt or in the wilds of Kashmir. As an artist he showed remarkable skill, particularly in sketching people or animals in action. This was, of course, based on the accuracy of his powers of observation combined with his skill with pencil or brush. Another form of this ability was modeling, the elements of which he learned, as has been recorded, while he was having his portrait painted. It was typical of him that instead of using "official" tools, he improvised what he needed out of a couple of penholders.

He was humanly glad when people were interested in what he was doing, for he never assumed a false shyness; but he himself was equally interested in what others did, and this was part of his charm; as you explained something to him, you felt it was the one subject he was interested in, though he might possibly be able to do it better than yourself. He never stopped learning; he liked, for instance, to visit a factory and see how things were made, and so add to his store of knowledge; and in his later years he took up cine-photography with enthusiasm and produced some delightful films. It was this keen interest in all that was going on around him that made him such an interesting companion.

His recreations as a soldier were polo and pigsticking, in both of which he was an expert; the attraction was the horsemanship needed, and, of course, in pigsticking, the risks. It might have been expected that such a fine horseman would later on enjoy foxhunting. But that kind of sport, with all its social routine, did not attract him, and although he did a certain amount of big-game hunting in Africa and India, he preferred getting to know the lives and habits of wild animals to killing them. He once wrote, "I could never bring myself to shoot an elephant. I would as soon blow up the Tower of London as shoot him." He had a great fondness for all animals; in India he had his horses and dogs, and he even tamed a young wild boar and a panther cub. He would hike out at night to watch wild animals come down to a pool to drink, and he never tired of sketching them in their natural haunts. His main sport became fishing. One of his friends writes:

"I think his chief joy in fishing was that it took him away from the ordinary business of life more effectively than anything else, particularly when the formalities too often connected with sport were bypassed. He was always entranced with the beauty of river life, especially in the Highlands in the autumn, with its gorgeous colouring.

"Even the Boy Scouts had to give place to science and philosophy when the day's work was finished on the river. I don't think he was ever so supremely happy as he was when wading deep and waiting for that electrical thrill of taking fish."

Very often the chance of a day's fishing would be offered as a sure bait to lure him to a Rally when his engagement list was already very heavy.

It will be noticed how his interests were mainly out-of-doors. And it was this kind of life which he preferred. At home he slept in a veranda bedroom; he would be up early and off for a walk with his dogs, and, as far as his work permitted, a day at home - all too rare - meant gardening or practicing casting with his fishing-rod, while one of the dogs excitedly tried to catch the 'fly'. Visitors were soon brought into whatever activities were the order of the day: there might be a hedge to be trimmed, roses to be pruned, or a path to be rolled. His was indeed a friendly home to visit, and everyone soon felt at ease. The house itself was a museum of treasures and momentos, and with B.-P. as guide, time quickly passed. It was a house, too, of laughter and good fun. One Scout Commissioner relates, for instance, how one morning when he was trying to make up his mind about getting up, the door was suddenly opened and two of the children rushed in and hid under



the bed; but not for long, for B.-P. was in full pursuit and tracked them to their hiding-place. Children found him a delightful companion. Here is one memory, for instance, of his early days in India. The writer was a small girl at the time, and in her old age she recalled her first meeting with B.-P. when he joined his regiment in Lucknow in 1877.

"My elder sister and I always 'inspected' the new young officers who came out from England, and in the evening of his arrival we walked up the drive to the bungalow where he was to live with two or three others, and found them all reclining in their long chairs in the veranda. We immediately demanded the new subaltern's name.

"'Charlie,' he said, laughing at the two funny little girls with their bushy brown hair and inquisitive eyes. And 'Charlie' he has been to us ever since.

"He was a great pal to us in those days, as he has probably been to many children since, for he was undoubtedly fond of children. When my father told him not to be bothered with us, his only answer was, 'Oh, they are the pudding after the meat!', and most evenings when his work was done he would come over to our bungalow with his ocarina, and with one child hanging on each side of him, he would take us out into the quieter roads, playing tunes to us and teaching us to be observant. He sometimes had to be reprimanded for waking my small sister up with his cat-calls and jackal noises.

"On wet evenings we would sit in his room and he would draw, paint or sing to us."

Here is another incident showing how quickly B.-P. got on good terms with children:

"The Chief and Lady B.-P. spent a night or two as my parents' guests during some Scout Rally. It was after lunch that I, aged five, and my brother, aged three, were brought in to pay our respects to the visitors. The Chief was in uniform and standing with his back to the fireplace. My stolid young brother, who at that age hated getting himself dirty, strode straight up to the Chief and, placing a pudgy finger on one of his freckled knees, said in an accusing tone, 'What those dirty spots?' The Chief rocked with laughter, and then proceeded to hold us enthralled for some time with animal stories and the like. This first meeting with him made a very vivid and lasting impression on me, very young though I was."

Many a Boy Scout and Girl Guide can recall meetings with B.-P. which they treasure in their memories. Here is one example out of thousands.

"The Chief was to land at Southampton, and the local Troops, etc., were lined up outside the dock gates to welcome him. As a callow youth of seventeen, I had to stand in front of our school contingent, and to my joy when he came along the Chief stopped, shook hands with me and began speaking. I found myself looking into those kindly eyes of his and telling him that before long I was to leave school, etc. etc. 'Well,' he said, 'whatever you do, don't leave the boys,' and he repeated seriously several times, 'Stick to the boys'."

Another incident also illustrates his extraordinary memory for people and places - his long training in observation developed this power.

"In the summer of 1925 two village boys who belonged to my just-started small Troop at Drayton St. Leonard, near Oxford, were walking down the street at Dorchester during their school lunch-hour; they had Scout buttonhole badges. A touring car pulled up near them on the kerb, and the man driving called to them and said, 'I don't suppose you know who I am.' When they replied that they did

not, he said, 'Well, go and have a look on the front of my radiator.' There they saw a mascot with 'Presented to Sir Robert and Lady Baden-Powell on the occasion of their marriage'. They came back to the side of the car, and B.-P. shook hands with them, asked them how long they had been Scouts, whether they had been to camp yet, what Troop they belonged to, and many other questions. Of course they were thrilled, and for some time this chance meeting was the talk of the village. Over six months later I happened to have the good fortune to meet B.-P. for the first time, in Oxford, on the evening of the day on which he laid the foundation stone of Youlbury. When he heard I came from Drayton St. Leonard, he at once said, 'How's your Troop getting on? I was so glad to meet those two Scouts of yours last summer,' and sent them messages of good luck."

B.-P. could remember people by their back-view, by the way they walked, and by their voices - again the result of his experiences as a scout. The following example bears this out.

"I recall the Friday evening of the 1937 Gilwell Reunion. It was fairly late when I had eaten my supper and washed out my billy-can, and I was walking up the drive towards the house in the dark when I overtook two figures just inside the gates, and said 'Good evening' as I passed them. In answer, a torch was flashed on my back, and to my astonishment I heard a well-known voice say 'It's Brown, isn't it?' I turned, and by the light of their own torch could see that it was the two Chiefs.

"Now I had been introduced to him at the Reunion the year before, but had had the chance to say little more than 'how d'you do' to him, so that it is little short of amazing that he should have been able at once to put the right name to my back-view and my voice."

Is it surprising that such a man had innumerable friends? But the winning of new friends did not mean forgetting old ones. An officer who served under him in India before the Mafeking days writes:

"His friends of course must have been as the sands of the sea. In his last letter to me written from Kenya early in 1940 he apologizes for its brevity but says he has over 80 letters besides hundreds of cards that require answers, yet he gives me all the news of his family and of several mutual friends out there. I do not know if I was especially favoured, or if so why, but I always marvelled that, among his world-wide activities, he could find the time for private letters; but one of the characteristics of B.-P. was that among his multitude of young friends he never forgot his old ones."

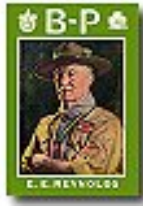
The marvel is that he could find time for all his activities and interests and for such a wide correspondence. He managed it by making use of every spare moment. Amongst his papers are many notes scribbled on odd sheets; he may have been waiting for a train and some idea came to him; down it went to be passed on and discussed, and often the result would be some fresh development in Scouting.

But he was never satisfied with the amount of work he did, and as the years passed and the natural limitations of age set in, he felt that he could not do all he should to encourage the men and women in the movements; he even went so far as to suggest that he should resign from being Chief Scout of this country and appoint someone else, while he would remain Chief Scout for the movement outside Great Britain. The suggestion was received with such horror by the few who were consulted that he went no farther with the proposal. But the fact that he could seriously think of such an idea shows two things: his sense of duty was highly developed and he had no use for passengers; secondly, in spite of Jamborees and Rallies with their rapturous receptions, he did not realize how deep was the personal affection all Scouts had for him; he thought himself as a Leader of a Movement in an almost impersonal way, and he argued quite simply that if

the Leader could no longer do his job, then someone else should take his place.

He had, in fact, that simplicity and sincerity of character which are the marks of all truly great men.

---



E. E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life** is a major source of biographical information about B-P. It is one of several works by E. E. Reynolds documenting the life of the Chief Scout and the early days of the Scout Movement.



**The Baden-Powell Library.** A Selection of excerpts from the works of Sir Robert Baden-Powell and works relating to his life and career



**Sir Robert Baden-Powell, Founder of the World Scout Movement, Chief Scout of the World.** A Home Page for the Founder. Links Relating to Baden-Powell on the Pine Tree Web and elsewhere. **Text Only Index.**

---



**[Return to the Pine Tree Web Home Page](#)**



**THE PINE TREE WEB**

Your feedback, comments and suggestions are appreciated.

Please write to: **[Lewis P. Orans](#)**

**[lporans@texas.net](mailto:lporans@texas.net)**

Copyright © Lewis P. Orans, 1997

Last Modified: 11:04 AM on February 16, 1997





An Excerpt from:  
E.E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life**,  
London, Oxford University Press, 1943.

---

#### CHAPTER XIII. COMING-OF-AGE

IT had been decided to hold an International Jamboree every four years, each time in a different country. By this rule the Copenhagen Jamboree should have been followed by one in 1928 in some country other than England or Denmark. But it was felt that as 1929 would be the Coming-of-Age year, the Jamboree should be held then in the country where Scouting began. Arrowe Park near Birkenhead was chosen as the site, but before the Jamboree opened two events must have given B.-P. special delight.

At the end of July, 1928, a Reunion of the survivors of the Brownsea Island Camp of 1907 was held at B.-P.'s home, Pax Hill, Bentley. Of the original twenty-five, seven had died—some of them in the war—and six were abroad. Twelve met together to recall that early experiment. Only B.-P. and Mr. P. W. Everett were still active in the movement.

Then at Charterhouse a pleasant incident occurred. The "Masque of Charterhouse" was performed, and at the roll-call of famous Carthusians, Peter Baden-Powell called "Adsum" for his father. A scene in the Masque was devoted to the foundation of the Boy Scouts, and the performers were boys of the School Troop. The lines spoken were these:

Orator. Now the old heroes of a former day  
Have struck their shadowy tents and stolen away;  
Their voice is still, and hushed their music's strains;  
The legend of a living man remains,  
Who, youthful yet at three score years and ten,  
To manly service trains the sons of men.  
In our own Copse he learnt the tracker's art  
Wherewith to unlock the door of boyhood's heart,  
Called the world's youth to adventurous brotherhood  
And generous effort for the common good.



Now young and old alike his work acclaim,  
And bless our school for Baden-Powell's name.  
See here an eager band of roving boys  
Seeking the open road with all its joys  
Woodland and valley, stream and mountain height,  
The scorching noontide sun, the starry night.

(A trek-cart enters, and a group of Scouts are welcomed by others around a Camp-Fire.)

When the Jamboree opened on the 31st July, 1929, there were gathered together 50,000 Scouts from forty-one nations of the world and of thirty-one parts of the British Empire. B.-P. gave the signal that the camp was open by once more using the koodoo horn of Matabeleland, Brownsea Island and Gilwell. Those who had the good fortune to take part in that amazing Camp will never forget the experience. Perhaps first of all they will think of it as the "Mudboree", for the rain had no mercy and the ground became a sea of mud. After the first few days, gum-boots became the most important item of wear as one slithered about. Yet mud and rain were soon forgotten in the general good-fellowship of the Jamboree. Memory calls up many scenes and incidents, and of these perhaps the more private ones are most treasured—having tea with a new-made friend in his camp, or chatting with Scouts from overseas, or trying to exchange conversation with a foreign Scout and discovering there is a language we all understand—Scoutese. Of the public scenes one naturally recalls the visit of the Prince of Wales, or the shows in the arena with the march of the Scouts of all nations, or the Camp-Fire Sing-Songs, or the Thanksgiving Service when the Archbishop of Canterbury preached a memorable sermon.

The Chief Scout's own work was recognized by the King, who conferred upon him a peerage; after consultation with the members of the International Committee, he decided to choose the title of Baden-Powell of Gilwell—an indication not only of the place the Training Centre had gained during its decade of life, but of B.-P.'s own estimate of the importance of training. The boys naturally expressed their admiration for their Chief in their own exuberant ways whenever he moved amongst them, but they also presented him and Lady Baden-Powell with a Rolls-Royce car and caravan—promptly christened the 'Jam-Roll' and 'Eccles'.

A lighter side of the presentation was supplied by the Scouts of Eire. When B.-P. had been asked what he would like as a present from the Scouts, he had said that the only thing he needed was a new pair of braces—and Eire rose to the occasion; on the day following the handing over of the Jam-Roll, B.-P. was solemnly presented with the Order of the Braces!

Of all the scenes, however, the one which will last longest in memory was the Farewell March Past to the Chief Scout. This time the Scouts did not keep in national groups, but mixed up freely arm-in-arm. They swung past the Chief cheering him as they went; then they formed up in twenty-one lines radiating from the point where B.-P. stood. As soon as silence fell he symbolically buried the hatchet of war, and then passed down the lines of Scouts Golden Arrows—recalling the name of Arrowe Park—and as he did so he said:

"From all corners of the earth you have journeyed to this great gathering of World Fellowship and Brotherhood. To-day I send you out from Arrowe to all the world, bearing my symbol of Peace and Fellowship, each one of you my ambassador, bearing my message of Love and Fellowship on the wings of Sacrifice and Service, to the ends of the earth. From now on, the Scout symbol of Peace is the Golden Arrow. Carry it fast and far so that all men may know the Brotherhood

of Man."

Besides being raised to the Peerage, B.-P. was honoured in other ways in 1929. The City of London conferred upon him the Freedom of the City, and at the ceremony he was naturally presented by the Master and Wardens of the Mercers, his own Company. At the luncheon, B.-P. called himself a "cockney bred and born", and said that he had learned swimming in the Serpentine and had there caught his first fiddler. He referred to his days at Charterhouse while it was still in London and the annual fights with the butcher boys.

Mr. David Jagger was engaged to paint his portrait for the Mercers, and a second one for the Boy Scouts Association; in both he is represented in Scout uniform. The following year Mr. Simon Elwes was invited to paint another portrait for the Girl Guides Association. B.-P., when asked how he would like to pose for this, replied that he would prefer to be represented at work, and in explanation he wrote:

"My suggestion that I should be 'doing something' when sitting to you has a twofold meaning underlying it. One (entirely selfish) is that it is difficult for me to sit still and do nothing when I have so much on hand to do. Secondly, I (in common with many others) feel that (though it is very usual with portraits) to hand down to one's successors the representation of a man staring vacantly into space with hands lying idle, does not give a true picture of an active worker."

At the Arrowe Park Jamboree the Rover Scouts came into their own. They were the pioneer workers on the site, and throughout the camp, and afterwards, they did much of the donkey-work which makes such a vast undertaking a success. B.-P. said of them, "Many of them never saw anything of the pageants or the fun, but were working away behind the scenes all the time. And they did it all in the cheeriest mood, and in their hundreds, coming from all parts and from all grades of society. But all were alike in their readiness to chuck self and to serve." This must have been to him one of the most encouraging aspects of the Jamboree. "All this behind-the-scenes service," he added, "told me just what I had wanted to know, and what I had hoped for all these years. It gave visible proof that our training can, where properly handled, produce community serving citizens."

One outcome of this Rover achievement was an International Moot held at Kandersteg in August, 1931. Here an International Scout Chalet had been opened in 1923, and it had soon established itself as a centre of World Scouting.

One of the particular delights of the Moot was that all the B.-P. family were there—the Chief Scout, the Chief Guide, Peter, Heather and Betty. They took part in all the life and fun of the camp and became known to hundreds of Rovers of many lands; after the gigantic size of the Arrowe Park Camp, Kandersteg had more the air of a delightful family gathering. Of course there was rain at times, but that was expected, as by now it was an accepted joke—started by B.-P. himself—that the Chief always turned on the rain, "Just to see how you fellows stick it." As usual, he jotted down his own impressions for the encouragement of those who could not be present.

"Up here among the Swiss mountains [he wrote], in the green valley of Kandersteg, one is very remote from the fuss and hurry of the world. Yet, from where I sit in the flower-decked balcony of this Chalet, I can see the flags of twenty-two nations waving above the tents, and the camp-fires of some three thousand young men gathered there.

"Rover Scouts they are: a brigade, as it were, of storm-troopers of the larger army of over two million Boy Scouts. Their arms are

alpenstocks, their discipline that of goodwill from within; their service consists not so much of fitting themselves for war as in developing the spirit of universal peace.

"To myself, possibly, the most inspiring part of their varied programme was when one saw the endless succession of these splendid specimens of the young manhood of all nations setting out in comradeship together with heavy packs on their backs and ice-axes in hand to tackle the neighbouring mountains. The Moot might have been held with greater convenience in any large city, but this valuable side of it, namely, the breeding of mutual friendship in healthy sport, would have been lost.

"Aye, and something more and above all price, namely, the higher tone of thought which could not fail to have inspired the least imaginative among them in those wonderful surroundings of mountain scenery. Here, among the eternal snows, face to face with Nature in its grandest and most sublime form, they must have felt themselves in closer touch with the Almighty Creator, and in a new atmosphere, far above the man-made jazz and vulgar squalor of the town.

"Yes, a wide and promising field lies yet before the Scout Movement."

A normal man aged seventy-four might pardonably have felt that after Arrowe Park and Kandersteg he could sit back and take life more easily; his work was well established and there were all the signs of the movements he had founded going forward to conquer new fields. But B.-P. was not that kind of man; every milestone of achievement reached was not an invitation to rest but a spur to go forward to the next, and, as he looked ahead, he saw the need for further service in the cause of Scouting.



E. E. Reynolds, [B-P: The Story of His Life](#) is a major source of biographical information about B-P. It is one of several works by E. E. Reynolds documenting the life of the Chief Scout and the early days of the Scout Movement.



[The Baden-Powell Library](#). A Selection of excerpts from the works of Sir Robert Baden-Powell and works relating to his life and career



[Sir Robert Baden-Powell, Founder of the World Scout Movement, Chief Scout of the World](#). A Home Page for the Founder. Links Relating to Baden-Powell on the Pine Tree Web and elsewhere. [Text Only Index](#).



[Return to the Pine Tree Web Home Page](#)



# THE PINE TREE WEB

Your feedback, comments and suggestions are appreciated.  
Please write to: [Lewis P. Orans](mailto:lporans@texas.net)  
[lporans@texas.net](mailto:lporans@texas.net)

Copyright © Lewis P. Orans, 1997  
Last Modified: 4:24 PM on August 31, 1997







An Excerpt from:  
E.E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life**,  
London, Oxford University Press, 1943.

---

#### CHAPTER XIV. OVERSEAS

ALL aspects of Scouting were dear to the heart of B.-P., but perhaps none attracted him more than the spreading of the movement overseas, especially in the British Dominions and Colonies. The Fourth Scout Law reminds us that Scouting knows no differences of "country, class or creed". This was the great message to the world of the Jamborees, and at each B.-P. seized the opportunity to bring that message home to every Scout. Thus at the Jamboree in Hungary in 1933 his final words, before the boys of sixteen parts of the British Empire and of thirty-two countries left for their widely-scattered homes, were on this subject of friendliness with all. The symbol of that Jamboree was the White Stag of Hungary, and B.-P. used this as his text.

"My brothers,—Those of you who were at the last Jamboree in England will remember how the Golden Arrow was handed out to each country as a symbol of Goodwill flying forth to all the ends of the earth through the Brotherhood of Scouting. Now at Godollo we have another symbol. Each one of you wears the badge of the White Stag of Hungary. I want you to treasure that badge when you go from here and to remember that, like the Golden Arrow, it also has its message and its meaning for you.

"The Hungarian hunters of old pursued the miraculous Stag, not because they expected to kill it, but because It led them on in the joy of the chase to new trails and fresh adventures, and so to capture happiness. You may look on that White Stag as the pure spirit of Scouting, springing forward and upward, ever leading you onward and upward to leap over difficulties, to face new adventures in your active pursuit of the higher aims of Scouting—aims which bring you happiness. Those aims are to do your duty to God, to your Country, and to your fellow-men by carrying out the Scout Law. In that way you will, each one of you, help to bring about God's kingdom upon

earth—the reign of peace and goodwill.

"Therefore, before leaving you, I ask you Scouts this question—Will you do your best to make friends with others and peace in the world?"

The British Dominions and Colonies are themselves a world within a world of various races and religions, and B.-P. saw the importance of the British setting the example of how, in spite of differences of colour and creed, men can live happily together in peace.

Few men have known the countries of the British Empire as thoroughly as he did. His soldier's life had included many years in India and in different parts of Africa, and his love of travel was later to take him to every part of the Empire. It was perhaps significant that the first British Scouts who greeted him outside Great Britain were the French-Canadians of Quebec Canada itself is a wonderful mixture of peoples, and many Scout Troops include boys of several racial origins. Scouting in that great Dominion is doing its part in bringing together these very varied elements.

When young men consulted him, as thousands did about their future, he often urged them to look for a new beginning in one of the Dominions or Colonies. He was particularly glad when it was possible to establish a Migration Department at Scout Headquarters, but he took care to warn the Scouts who went out to the Dominions that they would have to work hard. Here is one message he sent to a party going out to Australia.

"Some fellows seem to think that by going to Australia they will find a country in which they are bound to get on after they have failed in England. It is true that Australia has more room for men and opens out greater possibilities for them; but it means just as hard work there to gain success as anywhere else. The waster in England will be a waster in Australia. The fellow who is a hard worker and can stick it out through difficult times until the sun shines again is more certain to succeed in Australia than he would be in England.

"So when you get there don't be rebuffed by difficulties or disappointments. They are bound to come now and then; but be determined to stick it out and see the bad time through and you are sure to come out on top in the end.

"The great thing is that, being Scouts, you are not going to a land of strangers; you will find brother Scouts there ready to give you the hand of friendship and helpfulness when you want it.

"I urge you to remember the old saying, 'Once a Scout always a Scout', and to stick to and carry out the Scout Law as well as you can, even when you are grown up and working far away from Scouting influences. We shall all be glad to hear from you as to how you get on, and your news will be helpful to other fellows wanting to go out there.

"In the meantime from my heart I wish you God Speed."

Few things pleased him more than when any of these Scouts wrote to say that they were enjoying their new life.

Whenever an opportunity came, he liked to send messages to Scouts in distant parts of the Empire. Here is but one example. When General C. G. Bruce, a boyhood friend of B.-P., was going out to organize the Mount Everest Expedition in 1922 he carried with him a message from the Chief Scout to the Troop at the

Kalimpong Himalayan Home. They already possessed a portrait he had given them when he himself had visited the Troop; on this he had written,

"As topmost Troop in India—on the map, I see, Be topmost also in your Scout efficiency."

As General Bruce would go through Kalimpong, B.-P. sent the following message by him:

"Scouts! General Bruce and his party will pass near you on their way to try, once more, to climb Mount Everest. I know they will have your warm interest and admiration and good wishes on their Scout-like adventure. They are tackling the biggest mountain in the world with cheery pluck and determination. They have already tried various sides of it in vain, but they mean to try again until they succeed.

"I hope that you too will imitate their example. Whenever a difficulty comes in your way, even if it be the biggest difficulty in the world, tackle it cheerily and pluckily, and if you can't get over it one way, try another and stick to it till you are successful.

"Best of good wishes and good camping to you."

A very big book would have to be written to describe all B.-P.'s journeyings about the Empire. Fortunately he wrote accounts of his experiences in *The Scout*, and in such books as *Scouting Round the World*. Here it is only possible to give a few typical incidents, but these will show how his presence, and that of Lady Baden-Powell, increased enthusiasm and at the same time added to the host of the boys and girls who thought of them as friends.

In the autumn of 1925 the Chiefs with the three children set off for South Africa, and while B.-P. and Lady Baden-Powell travelled about inspecting Scouts and Guides, the children went to school; but they were all together at Christmas, and the following note by B.-P. gives a delightful glimpse of the family reunion.

"I write this on Christmas morning, when my thoughts run to you all at home.

"In the early, early dawn I woke with a feeling of 'Where am I?' The sea was washing among the rocks just below my window, a pink glow was in the sky, and joyous voices were shouting to each other in a strange tongue.

"The voices were those of a passing party of Dutch young men and maidens, rucksack on back, going out camping.

"From my bed I look out over an expanse of calm sea under a cloudless sky to the distant outline of Table Mountain, twenty miles across the bay. His upper heights are glowing red in the rising sunlight, while his base is still in the violet shadows of night.

"My first step is to make a hurried sketch to catch the quickly changing hues of dawn. My second to grab a peach from the basket, feeling it almost a sin to break into the lovely bloom and to exchange the delightful scent for the luscious flavour. But the deed is done all the same.

"Peter and I have had an argument, as to whether in dealing with these peaches you eat them or drink them, but we agreed that in any

case you need a basin of water and a towel handy!

"Presently the bumping of feet and the hushed chatter of small voices in the neighbouring room of our shack shows that the youngsters are awake, in fact very wide awake, to the fact that it is Christmas morn. And although there are only sprigs of sugarbush in place of holly on the walls, and though there are no chimneys for Father Christmas to enter by, still, stockings have been hung up in all good faith— and the presents are there.

"In a few minutes we are all assembled on one broad bed in a state of tense excitement and feverish unpacking of many parcels.

"Later in the day, cooking the Christmas dinner absorbs the time and inspires the ingenuities of each of us. Apart from Peter, who fancies himself as chef in the department of fried eggs, Heather and Betty also do their share, even though it involves standing on a chair in order to reach up to the kitchen range."

A few extracts from B.-P.'s report will give his general impressions.

"Perhaps I ought to have known, but I certainly did not realize fully, what a re-visit to my old haunts meant. It was not merely the enthusiastic crowds of Scouts and Guides that one met, but at every place one came to there were ex-members of my old force, the South African Constabulary, to revive old memories. Then there were the members of the Mafeking garrison now scattered and living in different parts of the country.

"There were old friends of the times when I lived at the Cape; and everywhere, especially among gangers on the railways, were old comrades, disreputable-looking old rascals, some of them, who had served with me in Matabeleland, or in Zululand, in the days of long ago.

"And those who could not come to see me (and some came many hundreds of miles to do so) all wrote to me and required answering, and you may imagine what that meant—with no office, no secretary, beyond a hard-worked wife with a pocket typewriter in the train!"

The doctor intervened when B.-P. once more suffered from one of his relapses from overwork.

"Under doctor's orders I was not allowed to go to South-West Africa, and the Chief Guide went there in my stead, another three thousand miles over very hot desert country. Meantime I, in more cowardly fashion, took a few days off in the beautiful Maclear country—trout-fishing.

"The atmosphere and scenery of this district were exactly like those of Cumberland; a grand sheep country in a grand climate. A delightful farm was offered me at a rock-bottom price. I was sorely tempted to buy. Had I had the wherewithal I should probably now be a South African citizen. Indeed, if I were only a young man starting out in life—but that's another story."

Now for a glimpse from Australia. Here is part of a newspaper report of B.-P.'s visit in 1931. After the more formal Rallies, B.-P. visited the Scouts in camp.



"The sun was setting when he arrived. As he went from one to the other of the forty-eight different camp sites, here and there fires glinted through the gathering gloom, blue smoke curled into the still air. And the smell of frying sausages was wafted through the bush. Billies of boiling water bubbled merrily. Thick slices of bread were toasted at the ends of sticks held by brown little hands. Smiling boyish faces shone in the flickering light of fires.

"It was all delightfully informal. Many of the Scouts seemed unaware that the Big Chief was among them. 'Hey, Jack, I dodged you!' yelled one youngster from the top of a rock to a mate who chased him. They did not see the keen-eyed Big Chief watching them from a path above them. 'Hey, Jacky, you can't cat—' Suddenly he saw Lord Baden-Powell—stopped in the middle of a word, and came as nearly to attention as he could on his precarious perch.

"In the centre of a large cleared space stood a heap of firewood. He was asked to light it—around it, later in the evening, was to be a 'wood badge' investiture. Now no Scout must use more than two matches in lighting a fire. B.-P. took several, and in the end had to invoke the aid of a Herald representative's copy-paper. At that moment the Chief Guide appeared.

"'I took more than two matches,' said B.-P. shamefacedly.

"'Awful!' replied the Chief Guide, and B.-P. true Scout that he is, did not excuse himself by saying, as he could have said, that the laying of the fire was not kits doing, nor did he blame the dampness of the wood.

"In a very happy speech, Lord Baden-Powell said that when he had seen the Scouts marching on Friday and Saturday, he had had just a doubt whether they were not too much 'parlour Scouts'— but the visit to the camp had impressed him with their knowledge of woodcraft and the true Scouting attributes."

Innumerable little incidents can be recalled by thousands of Scouts from these visits of the Chief. As long as the witnesses live they will treasure such memories as the following episode which occurred at the Australian Jamboree at the end of 1934.

"The Chief had been visiting camps and, as he returned up the road, it occurred to me that if we could get him to pose for a photo beside our gateway it would make a wonderful souvenir for all Troops in our District. Well, nothing venture nothing win, so, adopting a traffic-cop air, I placed myself in the centre of the road and made my request. Smilingly the Chief complied, and soon some thirty or forty cameras were using up spools of films on him at full speed. In the rush I nearly got left, but managed to secure a photograph.

"Just beneath the Chief's horse in the snap is a man's foot encased in plaster. It belonged to our District Commissioner, Boss' Currey, who had the misfortune to break a bone early in the camp. Some of the boys had, in sport, autographed the plaster bandage. During the photo episode the Chief noticed these autographs, and chipped 'Boss' on being an autograph hunter—autograph hunting was the curse of this Jamboree, and the Chief had publicly dubbed autograph-hunting Scouts as 'Cissie Scouts'. 'Boss' retorted that he wished he had the

cheek to ask the Chief for his! With that, I and another Scouter hoisted 'Boss' on to our shoulders and there he was, head down, legs waving wildly, the bandaged foot under B.-P.'s nose, while someone dug up a pencil and we secured the only official autograph of the camp."

There was of course a serious side to these visits. B.-P. was a keen-eyed observer, and he quickly spotted the good things as well as the bad. Anything at all original, particularly if it showed a touch of humorous imagination, won his warm praise. The routine kind of Rally bored him; he wanted to see the Scouts in action showing that they could look after themselves as true Scouts. The Reports he wrote summing up his observations were always helpful though sometimes critical, and one of the great values of his extensive travels in Scoutland was that he could pass on ideas from place to place, and encourage those in difficulties by telling them how others—perhaps thousands of miles away—had solved similar problems.

---



E. E. Reynolds, [B-P: The Story of His Life](#) is a major source of biographical information about B-P. It is one of several works by E. E. Reynolds documenting the life of the Chief Scout and the early days of the Scout Movement.



[The Baden-Powell Library](#). A Selection of excerpts from the works of Sir Robert Baden-Powell and works relating to his life and career



[Sir Robert Baden-Powell, Founder of the World Scout Movement, Chief Scout of the World](#). A Home Page for the Founder. Links Relating to Baden-Powell on the Pine Tree Web and elsewhere. [Text Only Index](#).

---



[Return to the Pine Tree Web Home Page](#)



**THE PINE TREE WEB**

Your feedback, comments and suggestions are appreciated.  
Please write to: [Lewis P. Orans](#)  
[lporans@texas.net](mailto:lporans@texas.net)

Copyright © Lewis P. Orans, 1997  
Last Modified: 4:24 PM on August 31, 1997





An Excerpt from:  
E.E. Reynolds, **B-P: The Story of His Life**,  
London, Oxford University Press, 1943.

---

#### CHAPTER XV. LAST YEARS

IT is sometimes said that the best part of travelling is arriving back home, and however often B.-P. and Lady B.-P. set off on one of their tours, they were glad to enjoy their own home again. As B.-P. once wrote:

"It is good to be back, and on such a typical spring day as yesterday was—with the scent of wallflowers and primroses, and the rooks cawing, and the trees budding—so English after the glaring hot sun and hard outlines of South Africa. But all the same we loved the warmth and brightness of it all and were—all five of us—awfully sorry to leave it."

Soon the call would come again, from India perhaps, or one of the Dominions, and once more the Chiefs would be off on their journeys of goodwill. People marvelled at B.-P.'s amazing energy, which seemed in no way to decrease as the years passed. At the age of seventy-seven, the Chiefs and their daughters set off on a world tour which took them to Australia and New Zealand and back by way of America and Canada. The Scouts of the United States were always glad to welcome the man who had created the movement which has developed so wonderfully in that country. This was his fifth, and proved to be his last Scouting visit to Canada, and it ended a quarter of a century after the first French-Canadian Scout had greeted him in Quebec when he arrived there with a party of Boy Scouts in 1910.

The year 1935 was a busy one. There was an International Rover Moot in Sweden, and this was followed by a call to South Africa—one which he always found it difficult to resist. He was most anxious that Scouting should continue to play its part in bringing together his old friends the Boers and those of English descent;



there were, too, possibilities of developing better relationships between the native Africans and the white people. It was a great joy to him that he was able to do something towards these objects. Unfortunately he had an attack of malaria which prevented him from doing all he had planned.

One of the pleasures of travel in Africa was seeing places which had meant so much to him in his early life, nor did the passage of years lessen his enjoyment of the wonderful scenery. Here is a note he wrote when visiting the Victoria Falls.

"Livingstone and Cotton Oswell saw this same phenomenon eighty years ago, and heard the roar when they were yet ten miles from it. 'Moos-itunya', the natives called it, 'The smoke that sounds'. Both explorers were sick with fever, and had to be carried away south again without seeing the wonder of the Falls themselves. That joy was postponed till a couple of years later.

"But for us to-day it is open to all to see. Too much so in my mind. Thirty years ago I came here to stay in the few huts which formed the lodging for travellers, and to wander through the tangled bush where still the hippos, buck and baboons abounded, and suddenly to find oneself faced with a wall of falling water over a mile long and hurling itself with deafening roar into the dark, misty depths of a great chasm 370 feet down under one's feet.

"To-day man has done his best to mar the majesty and mystery of it all by erecting a most up-to-date hotel (whose luxury I am none the less enjoying!), laying down paths, and putting up sign-posts at every turn, and running trolleys to the various viewpoints, and so on. Still, in spite of all these artificial tinkerings, the natural grandeur of the Falls is too powerful to be really affected.

"To see them at closer range as I did last night under the light of the full moon, is an experience that is far, far above any emotion that can be evoked by man's effort even in a Cathedral service, however impressive."

He sent this message to the Scouts at the end of his visit.

"On leaving South Africa (and I hate going away!) I want you to keep two points in mind and to carry them out as well as you can.

"The first point is to make friends with Scouts in other places just as those of you did who were at the East London Jamboree. And I want you to keep up those friendships when you grow up, because at present there are too many quarrels and jealousies between the people in South Africa, and therefore the country does not get along so well as it should. But if you, when men, play together like a team, to make the country great and prosperous, you will do a big national service. It will be a game. So play in your place, play fair, and play flat out for your country and not only for yourself—your country will then win through to success.

"The second point I want of you is to go in for more Camping and Hiking. By so doing you will make yourselves healthy and strong, and also you will be doing things for yourselves, such as carrying your kit, making your shelters, cutting your firewood, cooking your grub, and all the other little chores about the camp. In this way you won't be like some South African boys who are helpless without a native boy to do such things for them; they 'Pass the Buck' and 'Leave it to George', as

your American cousins would say.

"Life in the bush brings you in touch with the wonders and beauties of Nature, the birds and the animals, the plants and the views, so that you become their comrade as being put there by God the Creator."

The few months he spent in England during 1936 saw the marriage of his daughter Betty, who later left with her husband for Rhodesia, B.-P.'s Matabeleland, where her brother Peter was already settled. Later in the year the Chiefs, with Heather, set off for India, where the Scouts were to hold their first All-India Jamboree at Delhi. This was like a dream come true, for Indian Scouts of all creeds and castes came together under the one banner of Scouting to greet their Chief. The Scouts of that vast country had already proved the value of their training in citizenship by the health campaigns they carried out in the villages and at the religious festivals; and the dreadful Quetta earthquake showed that they could forget the differences of creed and caste in the common work for the relief of suffering.

It was a particular satisfaction to B.-P. that he was able to spend his eightieth birthday with his own regiment, the 13th/18th Hussars, which was then stationed in India. Once more he wore his Hussar uniform at a Ceremonial Parade at which he presented new drum banners. "I felt forty years younger on the spot" he wrote. "It was for me my last mounted parade."

A heavy programme faced B.-P. on his return to England. He attended the St. George's Day Service for Scouts at Windsor. Then followed the Coronation, when the Scouts won praise for the way in which they organized the sale of the Programme, and the Rover Scouts for the work they did in controlling the crowds.

Honours were bestowed on this wonderful man of eighty. The King conferred upon him the rare Order of Merit, and the President of the French Republic the Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honour, while from America came the Wateler Peace Prize—fitting recognitions of his great achievements in bringing together the boys and girls of the world.

In August the World Jamboree was held in Holland at Vogelenzang, when 28,000 Scouts of thirty-one nations camped together. Once more the youth of the world gave a message of hope, but it could be but a faint beam in a darkening sky. At the conclusion B.-P. gave his last Jamboree message; all there must have realized that the sands of his life were running out, and his final, "Now good-bye. God bless you all," was charged with a deep emotion of affection which made itself felt throughout the vast assembly.

"The Emblem of our Jamboree is the Jacobstaff. This was the instrument by which the navigators in old days found their way across the seas. Let it also for us to-day be an instrument of guidance in our life. It is the Cross which for all who are Christians points the way; but it is also a cross with many arms; these are held out to embrace all creeds. Those eight arms, together with the head and foot of the emblem, remind us of our ten Scout Laws.

"Go forth with this emblem to spread the spirit of goodwill....

"Now the time has come for me to say good-bye. I want you to lead happy lives. You know that many of us will never meet again in this world. I am in my eighty-first year and am nearing the end of my life. Most of you are at the beginning and I want your lives to be happy and successful. You can make them so by doing your best to carry out the Scout Law all your days, whatever your station and wherever you are. I want you all to preserve this badge of the Jamboree which is on your

uniform. I suggest that you keep it and treasure it and try to remember for what it stands. It will be a reminder of the happy times you have had in camp; it will remind you to take the ten points of your Scout Law as your guide in life; and it will remind you of the many friends to whom you have held out the hand of friendship and so helped through goodwill to bring about God's reign of peace among men.

"Now good-bye. God bless you all."

Many who listened to him then must have realized that it was the last Jamboree at which they would hear his voice, and the depth of feeling with which he spoke suggested that he felt that this was indeed his last Jamboree.

In September the Chiefs camped at Gilwell for the Reunion—an event he never missed unless out of the country or ill. Once again the 'Jam-Roll' with 'Eccles' the caravan was drawn up on his usual camp site in front of the house, and hundreds of Scouters had the joy of meeting him as he strolled about with his dogs amongst the tents.

In October he was present on board R.R.S. Discovery, Captain Scott's old ship, to meet the Duke of Kent when the ship was handed over to the Boy Scouts Association. This was followed soon afterwards by a pleasing ceremony when, at a gathering of Scouters and Guiders, a Silver Wedding Present was made to the Chiefs. Soon after he sailed once more for South Africa; he had hoped to see how the various Scout organizations were settling down in the Federation, but his strength failed him, and instead he went to Kenya and rested for the winter at Nyeri; the country so suited him that they decided to build a cottage, which was named 'Paxtu', as an offshoot, as it were, of Pax Hill, Bentley. There was, however, one outstanding incident when Peter Baden-Powell, his wife, and son, Robert, came down to meet the boat at Beira.

"The Chief Guide had already stayed with them in their charming house at Inyanga, but this was my direct sight of what she had described to me as the finest baby in the world.

"When I asked the little imp if this description was true he, with a self-conscious grin, rammed his fist down my mouth, as if to say, 'Oh, go on!'"

During 1937 an appeal had been launched for a Boy Scout Fund to safeguard the Movement. This was well in hand when B.-P. returned in May, 1938, but he was a sick man. A traveller on the same boat has said what a deep impression was made on him by the gatherings of Scouts and Guides who assembled on the quay-sides to pay tribute to their Chief: they had been warned that he was too ill to see them, but they were content to see the boat which was taking him back to England.

In August he accompanied some Scouters and Guiders on a cruise to Iceland, but he was unable to land, and later he and Lady Baden-Powell left England for the last time to set up a winter home in Kenya. His days were pleasantly occupied—sketching, reading, going out on expeditions to see the wild animals, gardening, and of course letter-writing. B.-P. was an industrious correspondent; his friendship once given was not allowed to rust.

He began a series of pictures of wild animals in their natural haunts. He also produced three books for boys and girls mainly about animals, *Birds and Beasts in Africa* (1938), *Paddle Tour Own Canoe* (1939), and *More Sketches in Kenya* (1940). These contained many of his sketches of men and beasts in colour and in line, and there is a pleasant vein of happiness running through the pages as he

talks of his pet hyrax, or the antics of the birds as he watches from his veranda, or of beasts of the surrounding country.

There were expeditions by car to observe wild life. On one of these he met a farmer whose boyhood had been spent at Gilwell Park; on another occasion a friend took him farther afield and once more he saw the beloved veldt; "And I thought," he exclaimed, "that I was never going to see it again!"

But as the months passed so his strength slowly ebbed. The coming of the War may have seemed to some that much of his work had been destroyed, but he knew better. During his more than eighty years he had seen so much that his faith in the future never weakened. He thought of that last Jamboree in Holland, and he sent this message of hope to Scouts everywhere.

"Though the war may have killed very many of our dear comrades and companions, it has not killed all, and it has not killed the spirit. You Scouters and Scouts who still live will carry on that same spirit, and will now develop it with all the greater force when you realize that you are taking up the torch which was dropped by those who have been struck down.

"Few of those comrades of ours could have foreseen that within a short time they would be fighting and giving their lives for their country, but we do know that through 'Being Prepared' as Scouts they were the better able to face their fate with courage and good cheer. As your tribute to their memory it is open to you to make goodwill and friendship for brother Scouts abroad your aim more directly than ever before."

The end came on 8th January, 1941. He was escorted on his last journey by soldiers and Scouts, and they laid him in view of Mount Kenya in the country which he loved so much. On the gravestone is the plain inscription between the carved badges of the Scouts and the Guides:

ROBERT BADEN-POWELL  
CHIEF SCOUT OF THE WORLD



E. E. Reynolds, [B-P: The Story of His Life](#) is a major source of biographical information about B-P. It is one of several works by E. E. Reynolds documenting the life of the Chief Scout and the early days of the Scout Movement.



[The Baden-Powell Library](#). A Selection of excerpts from the works of Sir Robert Baden-Powell and works relating to his life and career



[Sir Robert Baden-Powell, Founder of the World Scout Movement, Chief Scout of the World](#). A Home Page for the Founder. Links Relating to Baden-Powell on the Pine Tree Web and elsewhere. [Text Only Index](#).





[Return to the Pine Tree Web Home Page](#)



## THE PINE TREE WEB

Your feedback, comments and suggestions are appreciated.  
Please write to: [Lewis P. Orans](mailto:lporans@texas.net)  
[lporans@texas.net](mailto:lporans@texas.net)

Copyright © Lewis P. Orans, 1997  
Last Modified: 4:24 PM on August 31, 1997

