

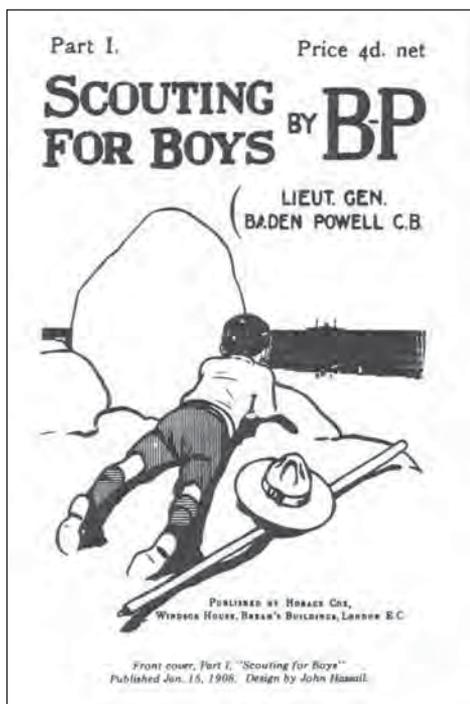
Scouting in Pietermaritzburg 1908 to 2007

In May 1900, the name Baden-Powell became a household word in England. The little-known but resourceful British soldier became a national hero overnight for using his military skill, imagination and bluff to hold Mafeking (now Mafikeng), an obscure town in the northern part of the Cape Colony, with no natural defences, against an enemy force nearly five times as large as his. Just before the siege began, he posted the corrected proofs of his little military handbook *Aids to Scouting* to his publishers, who, when the news of the relief of Mafeking reached Britain, found they had a potential best-seller on their hands.

During the seven-month siege, and with the intention of strengthening his perimeter defences by using all available soldiers, he decided to use boy volunteers as clerks, orderlies and messengers. He was impressed by their willingness to accept responsibility, and by the way they carried out their rather mundane duties, as if they realised that the defence of the town rested partly on their shoulders.

On his return to Britain after the Anglo-Boer War, he learned that *Aids to Scouting* was being used not only by the military but also in schools as a method of training boys in observation and deduction. He also met Sir William Smith, the founder of the Boys' Brigade, the units of which were affiliated to churches and religious organisations

The cover of the first of six fortnightly parts of Scouting for Boys.





1st Pietermaritzburg Scout Group. The first scout camp was held during Easter 1910 at Zwartkop, near Blackridge. The troop was started in October 1909 by Mr Job Brookes whose son, Edgar, a member of this troop, was later to become a Senator, Professor of History at the University of Natal, and author. He is possibly the child on the right. (From Victorian and Edwardian Natal by Jennifer and Alistair Verbeek, Shuter & Shooter, Pietermaritzburg, 1982.)

and used a smart uniform, brass bands, drill and Bible study to retain members. Baden-Powell felt that some of his scouting practices might prove an additional attraction for boys, and a more colourful means of training than the Brigade already provided. At Sir William's suggestion he set down on paper his ideas of how scouting could be adapted to the use of boys, intending to provide an additional, not an alternative, way of training for existing boy organisations.

The outcome of this was the writing and publication of *Scouting for Boys*, which appeared in 1908 in six fortnightly parts, each costing fourpence, to keep the book within the financial reach of boys. This book was aimed not at soldiers but at boys. It dealt with outdoor subjects like camping, pioneering, woodcraft, observation, tracking and stalking, as well as physical health, saving-life, self-discipline, citizenship and patriotism. Baden-Powell was the first man to suggest that boys could and would enjoy activities which, up till then, had been the exclusive preserve of the soldier, although the boy would use them for peaceful enjoyment. Eschewing the easier path of the negative, largely followed by the religious authorities of the day, he drew up the **Scout Law**, a ten (originally nine) point positive code of conduct for the boy to live by:

1. *A Scout's honour is to be trusted.*
2. *A Scout is loyal to the King, and to his officers, and to his country, and to his employers.*
3. *A Scout's duty is to be useful and to help others.*

4. *A Scout is a friend to all, and a brother to every other Scout, no matter to what social class the other belongs.*
5. *A Scout is courteous.*
6. *A Scout is a friend to animals.*
7. *A Scout obeys orders of his patrol leader or scout master without question.*
8. *A Scout smiles and whistles under all circumstances.*
9. *A Scout is thrifty.*
10. *A Scout is clean in thought, word and deed.*

No-one (either boy or adult) could or can become a Scout without taking the **Scout Promise**:

*On my honour, I promise that I will **do my best** –
To do my duty to God, and the King*.
To help other people at all times.
To obey the Scout Law.*

It is not easy to live up to this promise, but the phrase **do my best** keeps it within the boy's ability, and Baden-Powell was quick to point out to his young readers that everyone could do his best, and no-one could do more.

But before venturing into publication, Baden-Powell felt he should try out his ideas in practice, to see how boys would respond. He wanted a private wooded area away from the public view and the constant attentions of newspaper reporters, and found it on Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour, Dorset. He obtained permission from the owner, whom he had met socially, to use the island for an eight-day camp for 20 boys during August 1907. He deliberately selected boys from a wide spectrum: some were sons of his friends, some were pupils at public schools, and the rest were members of the Boys' Brigade in Poole and Bournemouth, attending local schools. While Baden-Powell, assisted by two adult friends, was in charge of activities, logistics and supplies, the boys were placed in small groups under boy leaders, each of whom was responsible for, and led, his particular team. (This is now known as the patrol system.) While the boys were settling in on the first day, Baden-Powell gave the leaders special instructions, so that they would be a step ahead of the other boys in their groups. Thereafter, he would introduce a new skill, demonstrate its use, and then lead the boys in games and contests to practise the skill. In this way all the subjects dealt with in *Scouting for Boys* were covered, while in the evenings he would lead songs round the campfire, and tell them stories of his adventures. On the last day of camp parents were invited to observe the skills their sons had learned during the camp, and Baden-Powell was convinced that his ideas would work in practice.

The public reception of *Scouting for Boys* was startling. Boys who bought and read the fortnightly parts began to form scout patrols, with or without adult help, and it became clear to Baden-Powell that a new boys' movement was forming before his very eyes. It seemed that boys of all classes wanted to be members of a movement inspired by the hero of Mafeking. Lord Haldane, the Secretary of State for War, Baden-Powell's political boss, and King Edward VII both saw the value of a movement for boys using the methods advocated by Baden-Powell, namely trust, responsibility, preparedness, and a positive code of conduct, and urged him to make it his prime objective. He resigned

(*The exact wording will obviously vary in different countries and religious traditions.)

from the army and proceeded to place his fledgling movement on a businesslike footing. He rented offices in Henrietta Street, London, and engaged a skeleton secretarial and administrative staff. He took all decisions himself and solved problems as they presented themselves. Support, personal, moral and financial, came flowing in from well-wishers in all classes of society. The first Scout census, taken in 1910, revealed 109 000 scouts in the United Kingdom. The movement quickly spread, first to the British Dominions (Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand), and then to other countries, of which Chile, in South America, was the first, beating the United States by a full year.

The story of how a scout's good turn enabled scouting to reach the United States must have warmed Baden-Powell's heart. An American businessman named William Boyce was visiting London, and became enveloped in one of the pea-soup fogs for which the city was notorious. He asked a small boy for help, and the boy took him through the fog to the address he was seeking. When he offered a tip, the boy refused, saying that a scout didn't accept a reward for doing a good turn. The astonished Boyce had never heard of Boy Scouts, and determined to find out more of this unusual organisation. He obtained copies of pamphlets and of *Scouting for Boys*, taking them back to America with him. He found other men who had heard of the movement, and together they founded the Boy Scouts of America in 1910. Sixteen years later, the Boy Scouts of America presented a bronze statuette of an American bison to the British Boy Scouts, with a plaque reading:

'To the unknown scout whose faithfulness in the performance of his daily good turn to William D. Boyce in 1909 brought the Boy Scout Movement to the United States of America.'

To accommodate smaller boys, who were too young to fit into the scout programme, Baden-Powell devised the Wolf Cub programme in 1916, using Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book* as a background and, in 1918, the Rover Scouts were formed, designed for young men aged 18 years and over, but using the same methods and following the same aims. To accommodate girls, the Girl Guide Movement was founded in 1910, with Baden-Powell's sister Agnes as its leader. On Baden-Powell's marriage in 1912, Lady Baden-Powell became Chief Guide, a position she held until her death in 1977.



King Edward VII attended a rally of 30 000 Scouts in Windsor Great Park on 4th July 1911, and the event captured the imagination of the British public. This picture appeared in Punch shortly afterwards.

The first Scout Troop in South Africa was formed in Cape Town in March 1908; the 1st Pietermaritzburg Troop, which still meets in its own headquarters in Adrian Road in Prestbury, a suburb of Pietermaritzburg, followed later that year. This was followed, within the next few years, by the 4th Pietermaritzburg Troop, attached to St Peter's Anglican Church, the 5th Pietermaritzburg Troop, attached to the Boshoff Street Methodist Church, and the 6th Pietermaritzburg Troop, attached to St Saviour's Anglican Cathedral. The original 2nd and 3rd Troops did not last more than a few years, and no details are available. About this time, the Mayor of Pietermaritzburg, Daniel Sanders, was the District Commissioner of the local scout district.

In 1916, the Natal University College established a department of History, and the first lecturer (later Professor) was Alan F. Hattersley, a former Senior Scholar of Downing College and a graduate of Cambridge University with first class honours. He had become interested in the Scout movement while at Cambridge, and had been scoutmaster of two scout troops in the town. On leaving Cambridge, he became District Commissioner of Enfield, where he received the highest Scouting decoration, the Silver Wolf, from Baden-Powell himself. On his arrival in Pietermaritzburg he took over leadership of the 6th Troop, and about a year later became District Commissioner, starting a Patrol Leaders' Parliament, where on one Saturday a month patrol leaders of all troops met in the Presbyterian Church Hall to discuss subjects of interest to them. He also kindled in the mind of a local businessman, Mr H. V. Marsh, such an interest in the movement, that he travelled to England to be a participant in one of the first Scoutmaster Training Courses run at Gilwell Park, the now famous scout camping ground adjoining Epping Forest, donated to the movement in 1919 by Mr W de Bois Maclaren, a Scout Commissioner in Scotland.

Returning to South Africa full of enthusiasm, Marsh was appointed Natal's first Deputy Camp Chief (a scouter in charge of training scoutmasters), and immediately set aside four acres (1.6 hectares) of his extensive property on the Town Hill for use as a scout camping ground and training camp, named Lexden Scout Camp, after his home village near Colchester in Essex. This land proved an immediate boost to local scout troops, who could now go camping without the need to find a friendly farmer willing to have scouts camping on his land. As the city's sewerage and water-reticulation systems did not, in 1920, extend to the top of the Town Hill, the first need was for pit-latrines and a water-supply. The first were easily dug, covered with a corrugated-iron structure, and were in use until the municipal sewerage reticulation reached Lexden 50 years later. A borehole was drilled, a pump obtained, powered by a diesel engine and protected from the weather by a corrugated-iron shed, which also served as an equipment- and tent-store. Lexden used the water from this borehole until piped municipal water reached the Town Hill in 1930.

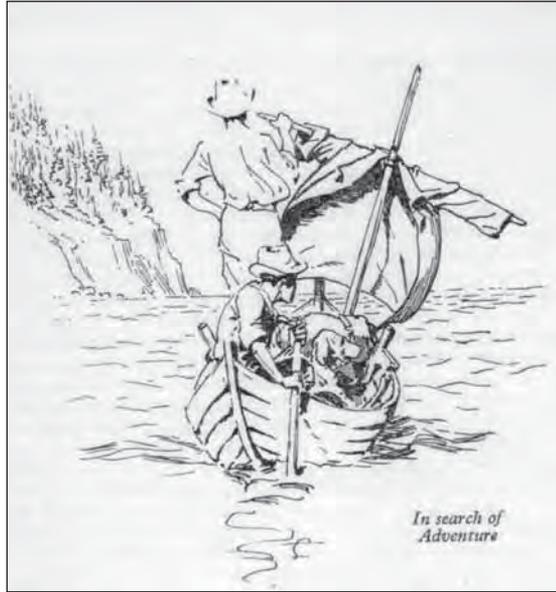
The Rover Scouts took up the challenge of developing the campsite. At midday on Saturdays (this was before the five-day working week) the Rover Scouts would ride the tram to its terminus at the Showgrounds, hike up Howick Road with all their camping gear in their rucksacks, and work on levelling the grounds and building camp-kitchens during the week-end. On Sunday afternoons they would hike down the same road to catch the six o'clock tram back to town. Their devotion was a fine example of the Rover Scout motto in action—*Service*. In addition to affording a place for boys to camp, Lexden provided a base for the training of scouters, for both the Cub and Scout

sections. About 1934, Marsh negotiated with the municipality for the lease of a further eight acres (3,3 hectares) adjacent to Lexden's northern boundary at a rental of one shilling per annum, which made for a more extensive camping ground. That same year the Pietermaritzburg Rotary Club paid for the erection of the brick hall which still stands by the gate into Hosking Road, and looks good for another 70 years' service to the movement. It enables activities to continue in the evening, provides emergency accommodation for cubs (who are not permitted to sleep in tents when it rains), and has proved an invaluable acquisition, as the Scout movement could not, at that time, have funded the structure.

In 1937 Marsh formally donated and transferred the original four acres to a body called *The Lexden Trust*, established to hold the property in perpetuity for use by the Scout Movement or other youth movements. In 1940 the Municipality scrapped the old lease agreement, and donated the additional eight acres to the Scout movement, subject to a condition that should the land not be used for scouting purposes it would revert to the municipality. This camping ground is, in the writer's opinion, the finest Scout camping ground in South Africa.

In 1921 the four troops mentioned above were joined by a new troop, given the name Southholm and the number 3, and meeting in the new suburb of Scottsville. Professor Hattersley was its first scoutmaster, having relinquished the leadership of the 6th Troop, owing to the refusal of the cathedral authorities to allow boys to join the troop who were not members of the St Saviour's congregation.

In 1928 the movement adopted the group system as a policy, thus officially encouraging Wolf Cub packs to link up with Scout troops, to ensure that each boy was provided with continuous training from 8 to 18 years. Unlike most other centres, the majority of cubmasters in Pietermaritzburg were male, though there were a few exceptions, fortunately for the survival of the Wolf Cubs of Pietermaritzburg. The departure of young scouters on active service during the Second World War caused the closure of several troops, and the war's end saw only two of them still functioning — the 3rd Troop led by Alan Hattersley, and the 5th Troop led by Cyril Friggens, assisted by Arthur Pipes. The Wolf Cub packs might well have suffered the same fate had it not been for Miss Florence Parker, the cubmaster of the 6th Pack, who took under her wing the 1st, 3rd, 4th, and 5th



*Baden-Powell was a talented artist, illustrating his own books with line drawings. In his last years, living in Kenya, he did some oil paintings of African wildlife, which can be seen in the British Scout headquarters at Gilwell Park, Essex. This sketch from *Scouting for Boys* shows his skill in pen-and-ink sketching, and also illustrates his vision of a very important element of Scouting — outdoor adventure.*

Packs, the cubmasters of which were all serving in the armed forces. This indomitable little lady, who by day served in the millinery section of John Orr's department store, made the survival of the Pietermaritzburg Wolf Cub packs her contribution to the war effort, and ran a pack meeting every night of the week from Monday to Friday.

The return of the men from active service saw the 1st, 4th, and 6th Troops resuscitated, and two new Groups, the 9th and the 7th were started, both in the Scottsville area, followed a few years later by the 11th, using Lexden hall as its base. Some years later the 4th Group built its own hall in the Pelham area, leaving no groups meeting in the centre of town. As the movement reaches its centenary year only four groups are still functioning: the 1st, the 3rd, the 4th, all with Scout troops and Cub packs, and the 11th, with a Cub pack only.

Commencing in the 1970s the Patrol Leader Training Unit, headed by Dudley Forde, has run week-long training camps for Patrol Leaders at Lexden Scout Camp. Hundreds of boys have attended these courses, where they have been challenged by an enthusiastic training staff to attempt new projects and to hone their leadership skills. After an exciting and exhausting week they have returned home looking at scouting in a different light.

Until 1977 there had existed, side by side, four parallel Scout associations for whites, coloureds, Indians and Africans. These had been tolerated (though not encouraged) by the Nationalist Government, who preferred the Voortrekker Youth Movement, founded in the nineteen-twenties or -thirties for political reasons. In that momentous year the leaders of the four parallel associations, led by Colin Inglis, at that time Chief Scout of South Africa, (and who was a former scout and Scoutmaster of the 3rd Maritzburg Troop), decided that such separation was contrary to the spirit of scouting, and formed a single Scout Association to which all scouts belonged. Despite expected fears of a crackdown, there was no response from the government.

In 1999, following the trend in several other countries, the South African Boy Scout Association decided to open the movement to girls, and the word 'Boy' therefore disappeared from its name.

To revert to Baden-Powell, the founder of the first worldwide movements for boys: knighted by King Edward VII in 1909, he travelled the world to encourage the boys who had joined his movement. At the first World Scout Jamboree in 1920 he was acclaimed Chief Scout of the World, a title given to no other man. In 1921 he was created a baronet by King George V, and in 1929 raised to the peerage as Lord Baden-Powell of Gilwell. In 1936 he and Lady Baden-Powell made the first radio broadcast from the World's View radio station overlooking Pietermaritzburg. At the age of 80 he was made a member of the Order of Merit by King George VI, and started spending the northern winter months in Kenya, where he and Lady Baden-Powell made their home in 1939, shortly before the outbreak of war. He died there in 1941, and his funeral was attended by members of the South African armed forces then serving in East Africa. Among their number was Rover Scout Jack Withey, the eldest of three scouting brothers who were members of the 1st Pietermaritzburg Rover Scout crew. Jack later became district commissioner for Pietermaritzburg, and subsequently commissioner for the whole of Natal.

Though there are still Scouts and Cub Scouts (the latter no longer known as Wolf Cubs) in Pietermaritzburg, the movement now does not have the same support or prominence in the city that it once had, especially in the middle years of the 20th century. This is not surprising, considering that the city itself is so much larger and its life more complex

than in the past. Then, too, there has been a huge increase in the number of organisations and activities competing for young people's attention. Nevertheless scouting here continues to provide a significant life foundation for those who give their time and loyalty to it. Former scouts from this city have made their mark in many spheres, and often gratefully acknowledge the influence that scouting had on them, not only in the useful skills it taught them (especially that of leadership), but also the positive values and attitudes. The most recent former Pietermaritzburg scout to make the headlines is André Bredenkamp, the first South African to make an Everest ascent from both the North and the South routes, and also to scale the so-called 'Seven Summits', the highest peaks on each of the continents.

GRAHAM HARRISON

Note. Readers wishing to know more about the present state of the Scout movement in South Africa may wish to read 'Scouting About', the SA Scout Association's newsletter at www.scouting.org.za/scoutingabout/

Acknowledgments: While most of the content of this article comes from my 60 years as a member of the Scout movement in Pietermaritzburg, its writing and completion would not have been possible without the encouragement and help of John Deane, a fellow scout, whose friendship I have enjoyed for over fifty years.