



'B-P'—Chief Scout of the World

SIR GEORGE BERESFORD STOOKE outlines the life of the founder of the Boy Scout movement, the late Lord Baden-Powell of Gilwell, the centenary of whose birth is being marked by a service in Westminster Abbey on February 22. A recording of this service will be broadcast in the General Overseas Service this week on Sunday at 17.30 and Monday at 01.00

ON February 22 a congregation of men and women, representing every part of the British Commonwealth and Empire, is gathering in Westminster Abbey to honour and remember with affection Robert Baden-Powell, first Lord Baden-Powell of Gilwell, Chief Scout of the World.

In spirit they will be joined by a countless multitude of men and women, boys and girls, of every colour, class, and creed, in every part of the world, to whom the name of Robert Baden-Powell speaks the magic of the game of Scouting which he founded.

As author, talented artist, and gifted amateur actor Baden-Powell might well have made a distinguished career in any or all of these fields, but it was as soldier and above all as Scout that his genius found its true expression. 'B-P' became the hero of the world's boyhood.

Robert Baden-Powell was born in London on February 22, 1857. The fourth son of a distinguished clergyman-scientist, he was named Robert Stephenson Smyth, taking his first two names from his godfather, Robert Stephenson, inventor of 'The Rocket.'

He was not a brilliant scholar, but during his years at a preparatory school and later at Charterhouse his greatest interest lay in the open air. All his spare time was spent studying nature, teaching himself to track and stalk and observe the wild creatures of the woods, to trap rabbits, make fires, and cook his catch.

Schooldays over, 'B-P' went into the Army, where his career was brilliant from the start. With the 13th Hussars in India and later in Zululand, Ashanti, and Matabeleland he proved his qualities of leadership, his ability to scout in difficult country, to conduct dangerous campaigns against an enemy in bush and jungle. And above all he gained the love and respect of every man who served under him.

At the age of forty he was given command of the 5th Dragoon Guards and became, with his brilliant defence of the besieged town of Mafeking, the hero of his country and especially of every boy in the land.

In 1903 'B-P' successfully organised and trained the South African Constabulary, and then returned to England to become the Inspector General of Cavalry.

He returned to find that his military textbook, *Aids to Scouting*, written during the South African campaign, had become popular among men and women as an aid to the training of children, and he was persuaded to give some thought to a scheme of training on similar lines suitable for boys.

'B-P's' organisation of the boys of Mafeking into a messenger corps to help behind the lines led him to believe that boys would respond to being given responsibility, and in 1907 he set himself to try out his ideas for their training.

A trial camp on Brownsea Island off the coast of Dorset—at which twenty boys carried out his ideas for camping, stalking, and living in the open—planted the acorn of Scouting which has grown into the strong tree of today with branches in over a hundred different countries.

'B-P's' ideas, set down in *Scouting for Boys*, were published in January, 1908. The publica-

tion saw the start of the new movement—movement which 'B-P' himself said 'grew.' Boys all over Britain formed themselves into Scout patrols, and the new game of Scouting rapidly spread to other countries.

But it was a game with a purpose underlying its fascinating activities—its aim, by means of games and an outdoor life, to develop good citizenship among boys by training them, habits of observation, obedience, and self-reliance; inculcating loyalty and service for other and promoting physical, mental, and spiritual development.

In 1910 'B-P' left the Army to devote his entire time to his new movement and to his sister movement, the Girl Guides, which he sprung from it. In this task he was helped immeasurably by his wife, whom he married in 1912, and who later became Chief Guide of the World. Together 'B-P' and his wife travelled extensively, visiting Scouts and Guides in every part of the world.

Baden-Powell claimed to have lived two lives—one as a soldier fighting for his country; the other, which began when he was fifty years of age as a Scout working for peace through the brotherhood of the Scout movement.

As an experiment a World Jamboree was held in 1920, when Scouts of twenty-seven nations met and lived together for a week at Olympia, London. It was a unique event, and its amazing success proved that boys of different nations and beliefs would live together in harmony. This Jamboree 'B-P' was spontaneously claimed by the boys themselves as 'Chief Scout of the World.'

These Jamborees became a feature of Scouting, and have been held since in Denmark, Britain, Holland, Hungary, France, Australia, and Canada. This year of 1957 sees the jubilee of Scouting and the centenary of the birth of its founder, and it will be marked by the greatest of all Jamborees to be held in August at Sutton Park, in the heart of England.

Honours were showered upon 'B-P' by every country in the world, but perhaps what he valued most was the knowledge that he had been inspired to give happiness to so many millions of the world's boys.

On January 8, 1941, 'B-P' died at his home in Kenya, where he had spent the last few years of his long life, peacefully and quietly indulging in his pastimes of sketching and watching the wild life of the country. He died knowing that his movement was firmly founded on the promise of brotherhood and understanding among boys and Scouts. The whole world mourned his passing.