

Agnes Baden-Powell

You would have been most fortunate to have known this talented, loving and giving lady.

Agnes Baden-Powell, at her brother's request, was involved with organising the Girl Guides right from the beginning following the successful rally at the Crystal Palace.

It is important to understand that she and Lord Baden-Powell were two of a family of ten.

Their father was the Reverend B. Baden-Powell who was professor of Geometry at Oxford University in England. Their mother was a woman gifted in music and arts as well as mathematics and science. She was widowed when she was 36 and raised the ten children on her own.

The family was of the upper class and that usually meant that money was not a problem. Agnes was older than her brother, B-P, and at the time she agreed to take over the guides, this new experience for girls, she was already in her early 50s.

Agnes was known to be a good musician who played organ, piano and violin. As an artist she was described as excelling in all handcrafts and specifically metalwork, the making of lace and needlework.

Being most interested in natural history, Miss Agnes always insisted on an 'open air' movement in guiding. Nor is that all! She was recognised expert in astronomy, could bicycle, swim, drive and skate.

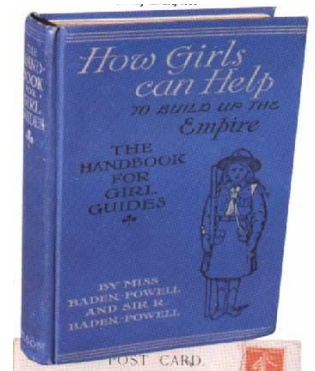
Her nursing ability was described as first rate, and she was an excellent cook. In her home, she kept a beehive and produced prize honey. The bees had access to the outside by a pipe through the wall. There was also a colony of butterflies living in the home and several small birds who were not caged.

When Miss Agnes agreed to sponsor the fledgling Guide Movement she became the President, even though this was not official until 24 September, 1915 on the granting of a Charter of Incorporation.

By April 1910, she, with two of her friends, saw the need to have an office for guides and so she undertook to rent a room in the building where the Boy Scouts had their offices.

There were by this time already 6000 girls registered, and as B-P was most anxious to keep the two groups separate, he advanced them 100 pounds to become established.

In the early part of this century, girls and women had to be ladies and many parents were afraid that guides would be tomboys, but those who knew Miss Agnes declared that a more gentle lady could not be found. She would overcome this tomboy image.



In the next several years Miss Agnes worked to adapt the handbook "Scouting for Boys" to the "Handbook of the Girl Guides" or "How Girls can Help to Build up the Empire".

She encouraged and co-ordinated guiding throughout the world, established the 1st Lone Company in 1912, wrote articles for the Girl Guide Gazette, and with her committee made all the decisions large and small that helped create the organisation we now have.

In 1917 Miss Agnes resigned the Presidency in favour of Her Royal Highness, Princess Mary, who was an enthusiastic supporter of the guides.

Miss Agnes remained in the office of Vice-President until her death in June 1945 at age 86.