

Clwyd

Wrexham

Scouting came to Wrexham because Robert Baden Powell spoke at the Drill Hall in Peyser Street in January 1908. His subject was 'The Scouting Game', and many in the packed hall were enthused by his vision. Over the next two years a number of troops were formed, mostly sponsored and encouraged by local worthies. The 1st Wrexham was made possible by F.W. Soames, who owned the local brewery, and provided a meeting room on his business premises. Similarly the 1st Rhosnessney was patronised by Sir Foster Cunliffe of Acton Park, and was originally known as 'Sir Foster Cunliffe's Own'. The 1st Chirk owed its existence to Lady Trevor, and the 1st Overton to the agent of the Bryn-y-Lys Estate, A.J.P. Child, who lived in Overton. By 1910 there were enough troops, and enough enthusiasm from Wrexham and Llangollen both to form Local Associations, which would later be known as Districts. In May of that year Baden Powell (now Sir Robert and Chief Scout), returned to North Wales and inspected rallies of Scouts both at Hawarden and at Caernarfon.

The number of troops continued to expand until the war of 1914-18, took many leaders and not a few Scouts into the armed forces, a distressing number of whom never returned. 'The Scouts Book of Heroes' (a typical flourish of the time) records the achievements of some of those who joined up: Edward Davies, George Randles and J.H. Randles, all of the 1st Gresford, received the Meritorious Service Medal, Ralph Bonfoy of the same troop the Croix de Guerre, and Edward Roberts of the 1st Rossett the Military Medal. At a more local level, but equally deserving the *Scout* magazine of 21st September 1918 recorded the award of the Scout Gilt Cross to Second R.A. Roberts for his brave conduct at a fire in the neighbourhood.

Rather unusually, the records of the Second World War, where overall casualties were less severe, make in terms of Wrexham Scouting, rather sadder reading than the First. In 1941 Eric Williams, formerly a PL in the 1st Chirk, was awarded the DFM while serving as an air gunner, but was killed shortly after the award, an event which was recorded in *The Scouter*. The following year the Roll of Honour in the same magazine recorded the deaths of C.V. Williams and W. Roberts, both formerly of the 1st Chirk, and J.R. Stace of the 1st Wrexham. Very different but equally sad was another report of 1941 that Ivor Moore of the Hope and Caergwale Church Group had been posthumously awarded the Cornwell Scout Medal. The circumstances of his death are not recorded.

On a much more cheerful note, in 1948 the 1st Cefn Mawr Group decided to build their own headquarters. They purchased an acre of land, and set about the task. In a year and a half the Group Committee had raised £480, and received a gift of 20,000 used bricks. These had to be cleaned up, which the Scouts did with the help of some other volunteers, and then laid. For this purpose several professional bricklayers gave their services free, and the building was duly

opened in the autumn of 1950 – at which point the achievement was reported in *The Scouter*.

Between 1956 and 2000 Wrexham District ran 23 Gang Shows, which raised substantial funds to support Scouting in the District.

On the 18th September 1967 W.G. Briffa took part in a river rescue in the Dee estuary, for which he was awarded the Royal Humane Society's medal

In 1978 the exchange visits with Germany, which still continue, were instituted. In that year a party of ten Scouts visited Wrexham's twin town of Markischer Kreis, and received their German friends in return.

Ron Edwards, who contributed these notes, adds

'Scouting in this part of the Country continues to thrive, and the Scout movement keeps pace with modern trends, but the founder's basic ideas still keep youngsters wanting to join in. We still offer the outdoors adventure, various activities and team work in a mix which no other youth movement can equal'.