

Norman R.F. Tucker
1894 – 1971
One of the very first scouts in Wales.

“When in the spring of 1908 scouting was started in Colwyn Bay conditions were different from those of today. It is necessary to understand this to appreciate the tremendous impact the movement had on the orderly life of those days. Home life was accepted as the natural order of things; there were few attractions; there were few distractions. The roads, dusty in summer, were used by horse-drawn traffic; motor cars were few. Most houses were lit by gas; there were few telephones and no buses. No one had seen an aeroplane. Colwyn was a distant hamlet approached by a hedge-lined road which had not been widened since the days the turnpike road was constructed more than a century before”.

These words were written by Norman Tucker to describe the social circumstances in April 1908 when Scouting started at the Y.M.C.A. in Colwyn Bay, North Wales. Norman joined the growing band and was enrolled on his 14th birthday in May.



*Norman Ralph Francis Tucker
Patrol Leader "Wolf" patrol
1908.*

“NORMAN TUCKER AGED 14 AND PATROL LEADER OF THE WOLF PATROL MAY 1908”

“I do not know the date when it came into being but I do recollect that it was before the first number of “THE SCOUT” appeared, for I can remember buying this. (April 18th 1908) The cover was printed in two shades of blue which misled me into thinking that scout shirts were pale blue. Accordingly I dyed my cricket shirt this colour. My chum, more intelligent, guessed it should be khaki but he too, came to grief when his khaki turned out to have a distinct orange tint. Somewhat self-conscious of our gorgeous raiment we made our way to the “Y” to find one boy in red and black football shirt and another in a black and gold barred jersey. We all felt we had to wear something distinctive. Circumstances taught us to improvise; broom-handles for staves, school satchels for haversacks, syrup tins for billycans, and shoulder knots manufactured from the coloured braid that teamsters used to decorate the manes or tails of their horses”.

From these very early beginnings, when Scout Headquarters and The Scout Shop were not yet fully operational, Norman’s lifetime membership of the Scout Movement began.

Norman R F Tucker - The Adult

By 1910, Norman had become the Assistant Scoutmaster at the Colwyn Bay Y.M.C.A Troop of Baden-Powell Scouts. In 1924 he became the District Commissioner for Colwyn Bay Local Scout Association, a position he held until 1931. During the same period he was, for some time, the District Commissioner for the Abergele and District Local Scout Association. In 1927 he became Assistant County Commissioner for Scouts in West Denbighshire and in 1932 he was appointed Deputy Camp Chief (Adult Leader Training) for North Wales. His efforts were recognised in 1932 when Lord Baden-Powell awarded him the Silver Wolf on St Georges Day at the age of 38.



Border Scouts. 1930 - 1939. Norman organised this semi-official body of "Commissioners, Scouters, Cub masters and Rover Scouts" from West Denbighshire and North Caernarfonshire whose districts connected with the Conwy Valley. Under his leadership the members banded together for fellowship and the advancement of scouting particularly through leader training. With Norman, the Border Scouts were the core group that helped acquire and develop the Rowen camp site for use by scouts and be instrumental in the site becoming a recognised Adult Leader Training Centre (Wood Badge Courses) At the time of the first course there in 1932, the Rowen site was the only recognised training centre in North and Mid Wales
In view of its intended use as a training ground for adult leaders, the site was visited by many senior people within the scout movement at the time. Baden-Powell the Chief Scout wrote to the team expressing his appreciation of their work, a copy of the letter is to be found on display in the camp building. The camp site remains in use today and is managed by Conwy District Scout Association and continues to be a testament to the dedication and foresight of its founders.

In his professional life, Norman was a respected journalist, local editor, author, playwright, lecturer, and historian. As a journalist, he spent several years working in Canada as a reporter for the Toronto Evening Telegram. On his return to the U.K. he worked in London for the Sunday Times and the Sunday Express. In the early 1920s he returned to North Wales and lived mainly in the Colwyn Bay area and it was here he wrote a regular scouting column in the local paper entitled "Woodsmoke" under his pen name of "Grey Wolf". He also wrote many boys stories for the Boys Own paper, twelve historical novels and short plays for broadcasting on the BBC. As an historian, Norman wrote several books including:- North Wales and Chester in the Civil War, Colwyn Bay-Its Origin and Growth, Conway and its Story, Llanrwst-The History of a Market Town.

His writing was prolific and in addition to the aforementioned, he contributed countless articles for historical societies, most with a civil war subject.

A fellow of the Royal Historical Society he was recognised as one of the leading authorities on this period in North Wales.



Norman Tucker was a scout all his life and lived to the code of conduct as outlined by Baden-Powell.

Holding the office of Honorary Commissioner for Wales, he died at the age of 77 in 1971.

At the centre of the Conwy County District Scout Association area, the very beginning of World Scouting had one of its roots in Colwyn Bay.

From the following quotation we draw the conclusion that scouting started in Colwyn Bay in February or March 1908. Following the lead of Norman Tucker and his friends, over 100 million scouts have followed in their footsteps!

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Norman R.F.Tucker. (A committed scout for over 60 years)

