
Opening Extract from...

How the Girl Guides Won the War

Written by Janie Hampton

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We are the Girl Scouts

Thirty years before Pax Ting, in 1909, there were no Guides, only a few intrepid girls who had begun to discover the excitement of the Scouting movement, which had been started that year by the distinguished Boer War hero and former spy, Robert Baden-Powell.

Conscripting soldiers for the Anglo-Boer War had revealed the poor state of health of the youth of Britain, a weakness which was interpreted by doctors, eugenicists and psychologists as both physical and moral. They decided that the country was in a state of decline, and desperately needed to be regenerated and revitalised. Foreign elements, homosexuality, mental instability and female hysterics – all had to be weeded out. Popular opinion was crying out for another war to 'cleanse' Britain of its social ills and weakness.

Robert Baden-Powell had been brought up with the self-discipline of 'Christian Socialism'. 'You must try very hard to be good,' he had written at eight years old. He was a good shot, a brilliant tracker and a talented artist. Posing as a harmless tourist he could sketch a town plan, or the outline of a fort with gun emplacements, and then disguise it as a butterfly. He was a man of energy and efficiency who

wanted to ensure that boys lived more fruitful lives. He believed that in order to prevent them hanging around on street corners and getting up to mischief, their aimlessness had to be replaced with a sense of 'fun and excitement'. In 1907, when he was already fifty years old, Baden-Powell tried out his ideas at a camp on Brownsea Island, Dorset. A mixture of private- and state-educated boys slept in bell tents, cooked over a campfire and practised woodcraft, stalking and tracking, all of which were designed to teach them new skills. When a year later Baden-Powell's book *Scouting for Boys* was published in six parts at fourpence each, it was a best-seller. The book was intended merely to offer new ideas gleaned from his life as a soldier and from the Brownsea Island camp to existing youth leaders. Baden-Powell was surprised by the reaction: immediately, thousands of boys asked how they could become Scouts or started their own groups. He had unwittingly spawned a whole new youth movement.

Unknown to Baden-Powell, by 1909 girls were forming their own Scout troops in several parts of the country, from Newcastle-upon-Tyne to Clacton-on-Sea. They too had read *Scouting for Boys*, and in response they formed patrols and marched around with staves and lanyards, their haversacks filled with bandages in case they came upon an injured person. They cobbled together their own uniforms: Miss Elise Lee, the first Girl Scout in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, wore a Boy Scout hat and her own blouse. Winnie Mason of Southsea, Hampshire, wore a Boy Scout shirt and scarf, a long straight skirt and lace-up boots, and carried a staff. The first Mayfair Group, formed by three sisters, Eleanor, Laura and Jean Trotter, wore serge skirts just below the knee, navy jerseys and shiny leather belts. In Scotland, Girl Scouts wore kilts and woollen jerseys. The thirty Gillingham Girl Scouts in Kent went on cycle outings in their uniforms in 1909. These early Girl Scouts even managed to obtain badges from Scout headquarters by indicating that they had achieved the desired standard in tests, and only giving their initials rather than their full Christian names. It was some time before the Boy Scouts noticed, and then demanded the return of the badges.

Just a year after Boy Scouts had started, Baden-Powell left the army to devote himself to the movement. The uniform worn by

his waxwork in Madame Tussaud's was changed from that of a General to a Scout, in his trademark shorts and broad-brimmed hat. Baden-Powell knew that more and more boys were joining the Scouts, but he wanted to find out just how popular the movement had become. He organised a rally at the Crystal Palace for 4 September 1909, to see how many would attend. Not only did *11,000* Scouts turn up, but much to Baden-Powell's surprise, standing in the front row was a group of girls wearing Scout hats and holding staves.

'What the dickens are you doing here?' he asked.

'Oh, we are the Girl Scouts,' they said. Sybil Carradine, from Peckham in South London, and her friends had seen the boys going off to have fun with the Scouts and decided to copy them. When they heard about the Crystal Palace rally they put on their uniforms and marched straight through the turnstiles.

'The devil you are!' Baden-Powell declared.

'Please, please,' they replied, 'we want something for the girls.' To their utter amazement he said, 'You'd better take part in the march-past at the end.' At that moment Sybil and her friends knew they had won; and it was the girls whom the photograph of the event in the *Daily Mirror* depicted standing at the front of the crowd.

In May 1908 Baden-Powell had already rhetorically asked the question, 'Can girls be Scouts?' in *The Scout* magazine. He considered that 'girls can get as much healthy fun out of scouting as boys can … and prove themselves good Scouts in a very short time'. However, while he was certainly impressed by the turn-out of the girls at Crystal Palace, his attitude towards women was typical of his time. He was not a misogynist; rather, he was a military man who just didn't quite know what to make of the female sex. In his book *Rovering to Success* (1922) he would write: 'The four rocks which prevent a man from achieving happiness: Horses, wine, women and irreligion.' Yet despite putting women in the same category as horses and wine, he did look up to them, and tried to resist the 'temptation to forget the reverence due to women. The bright side is safe-guarding oneself against temptation through the cultivation of chivalry. Sexual temptations come from perfectly natural causes, viz *sap*.'

By the end of 1908, Baden-Powell was enthusiastic about girls joining his new movement: 'I've had several quite pathetic letters from little girls asking me if they can share the delights of the scouting life with the boys. But of course they may! I'm always glad to hear of girls' patrols being formed.' A year later he wrote, 'I have had greetings from many patrols of Girl Scouts, for which I am very grateful. They make me feel very guilty at not having yet found time to devise a scheme of Scouting better adapted to them; but I hope to get an early opportunity of starting upon it. In the meantime, they seem to get a good deal of fun and instruction out of *Scouting for Boys* and some of them are capable Scouts.'

Baden-Powell was very concerned that girls should not become 'coarsened' or '*over*-toughened' by engaging in Scouting. 'You do not want to make tomboys of refined girls, yet you want to attract and thus to raise the slum girl from the gutter,' he wrote in *The Scout Headquarters Gazette*. A month before the Crystal Palace rally, he decided that if there were to be Girl Scouts, they should be called something different. He chose 'Guides', from the Queen's Own Corps of Guides, a regiment in the North-West Frontier whose soldiers had impressed him with their bravery and efficiency when he was in the Indian army. In 1910 the Girl Guides were formed as a separate organisation, which could develop independently from boys, for girls over the age of ten years. After their foundation, Baden Powell stated adamantly that he had not started the Girl Guides – 'they started themselves'.

He asked his fifty-two-year-old sister Agnes to organise the girls. The unmarried Agnes enjoyed steel engraving, ballooning, making aeroplanes and playing bicycle polo. Despite these modern hobbies, she held traditional Victorian views, and believed that a Guide would be horrified to be mistaken for an imitation Scout, or to be regarded as merely mimicking boys' activities. She warned that 'violent jerks and jars' could 'fatally damage a woman's interior economy', and that girls who went in for 'rough games and exposure' would ruin their delicate hands. She also believed that too much exercise led to girls growing moustaches. 'Silly vulgar slang' such as 'topping, ripping and What ho!' was definitely to be avoided.

Respectable girls and young ladies in 1910 never went out without their mother or a chaperone. Guide meetings gave them the opportunity to gather with their peers, and as there was no danger of meeting the opposite sex, they didn't have to take their mothers. They also learned independence, self-confidence and life skills.

On 27 July 1910, *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, a weekly local paper, reported: 'Since the Guide movement first originated, many have swollen its ranks. We believe that there are about 60 in the Oxford region.' Many existing groups of girls, such as the Girls Friendly Society, the Catholic Women's League, and the Better Britain Brigade (BBB), changed themselves into Guide companies. 'A girl came down the drive on her bicycle with all kinds of things dangling from it,' wrote a new recruit in Oxford. 'She told us she was a Girl Guide looking for Accidents and Good Turns. She had with her everything she thought might be useful, first-aid box, rope and frying pan. I was fascinated.'

Agnes Baden-Powell, an efficient organiser, gathered round her all her doughtiest lady friends to sit on committees. She adored travelling up and down Britain inspecting groups of Guides, appointing Commissioners and being treated like minor royalty. In between all this, she set about writing, with her brother's help, a handbook which she called *How Girls can Help to Build up the Empire*. In the foreword she wrote: 'The Girl Guides is an organisation for character training much on the lines of Boy Scouts. Its *Aim* is to get girls to learn how to be women – self-helpful, happy, prosperous, and capable of keeping good homes and bringing up good children. The *Method* of training is to give the girls pursuits which appeal to them, such as games and recreative exercises which lead them on to learn for themselves many useful crafts.'

Agnes's book was mainly copied from *Scouting for Boys*, but it included extra chapters on nursing, childcare and housekeeping. Girls, like boys, were advised strongly against trade unions and masturbation: 'When in doubt, don't,' they were warned. 'These bad habits can quickly lead to blindness, paralysis and loss of memory.'

Baden-Powell was modern in his ideas about gender-specific jobs: Boy Scouts learned traditional women's skills such as sewing and

cooking, and Guides were encouraged to learn mechanics and carpentry.

'Girls must be partners and comrades rather than dolls,' said Robert Baden-Powell. Educated Guides were encouraged to become translators, pharmacists, stockbrokers, laundry managers or accountants. Their role models were Joan of Arc, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and Marie Curie. Working-class Guides were encouraged to be efficient and honest domestic and factory workers. All Guides, it was hoped, of whatever class, would make better mothers and wives. 'A Guide prides herself on being able to look after a house well,' wrote Agnes. 'She must be able to cook, to sew, and to do laundry work: she must know simple first-aid, sick nursing and how to look after children. Her knowledge must be sound, so that she can be counted on in an emergency to care for other people as well as herself.'

The book was full of health-giving advice.

> The blood to your body is what steam is to the engine. It makes it go well or badly. But also your blood is food to the body, like water to a plant; if your body doesn't get enough, it remains small and weak and often withers and dies. You must take in food that is good for making blood, and avoid sweeties. When you have taken in your food and have chewed it well and have swallowed it, it goes down to your stomach and the good parts go off into the blood, and the useless part of it passes out of you at the other end. If you let this useless part stay in you too long – that is, for more than a day – it begins to poison the blood and so to undo the good of taking in good food. So you should be very careful to get rid of the poisonous part of your food at least once a day regularly.
>
> Unless a girl can chew her food well the goodness does not come out of it in her stomach to go to make blood. So try to keep your teeth sound and strong.

If a girl could not afford a toothbrush, she could make one, just like the children Baden-Powell had met in Africa. 'Take a short stick and hammer the end of it until it is all frayed out like a paint-brush. Use

it every morning and evening. Attack those germs and get them out from their hiding places between the teeth, and swill them out with mouthfuls of water, so they don't get a chance of destroying your grinders.'

The book included the Guide Law:

1. A Guide's honour is to be trusted.
2. A Guide is loyal, to her King, and her Guiders, her parents, her country and her employers or employees.
3. A Guide's duty is to be useful and to help others.
4. A Guide is a friend to all, and a sister to every other Guide no matter to what social class she belongs.
5. A Guide is courteous.
6. A Guide is a friend to animals.
7. A Guide obeys orders of her parents, patrol leader, or captain without question.
8. A Guide smiles and sings under all difficulties.
9. A Guide is thrifty.
10. A Guide is pure in thought, in word and in deed.

Robert Baden-Powell sometimes added an eleventh law: '(This law is unwritten but is understood: *A Guide is not a Fool*.)'

One reviewer commented, 'This book is vastly more than it professes to be. It not only teaches girls to be women of the best but is one of the best aids to nature study that we have seen.' Baden-Powell, however, thought his sister's popular pocket book rather confusing, and later described it as 'The Little Blue Muddly'.

In 1909 it was almost twenty years before all British women were allowed to vote, and the editor of the *Spectator* wrote of the Guides that 'it is time to stop this mischievous new development', while one of his readers commented, 'This is a foolish and pernicious movement.' But Guiding was just what girls wanted, and within months 6,000 of them had enrolled. A year later, the uniform of navy blue serge skirt, cotton multi-pocketed shirt and wide-brimmed hat had been established. 'We wore ETBs,' remembered Mary Allingham. 'Elastic top and bottom. They were navy blue, thick worsted woollen

material knickers.' Baden-Powell was clear that the uniform should be smart, yet not too military – he also hoped that it 'makes for equality … it covers the difference of country and race, and makes all feel that they are members of one organization'. For girls who normally wore old or ragged clothes, to wear a uniform was empowering. 'We all wore these huge floppy hats,' said Eileen Mitchell, 'and cotton scarves, tied at the back with a reef knot, right over left, left over right.' A metal trefoil badge, always highly polished, was worn on the scarf, the three leaves representing the threefold Guide promise.

Agnes Baden-Powell told Guides, 'You can wear your badge any day and any hour when you are doing what you think is right. It is only when you are doing *wrong* that you must take it off; as you would not then be keeping your Guide promise. Thus you should either take off the badge or stop doing what you think is wrong.' Mary Allingham never forgot Agnes's rule: 'I was on my way to a date with my boyfriend when my knicker elastic went. Scrabbling in my handbag I found my Guide badge, which worked well as a safety pin. During the film he leant over to kiss me. Then his hand began to wander up my skirt. Now I knew that this was a Wrong Thing. But if I took off my badge, the situation would become untenable. What was I to do? Luckily the film became so exciting that he became distracted and my honour was saved.'

The Guides' motto was the same as the Boy Scouts' – 'Be Prepared'. In 1910 Captain Mrs Josephine Birch of the 1st Watford Company was so proud of two of her young Guides that she took a photograph of them with the old woman they had saved from being knocked down by a milk cart. It is subtitled 'An example of Guides Being Prepared for any emergency'.

To make sure that they were prepared for all eventualities, Guides learned a variety of skills; after an independent test they were awarded cloth 'proficiency badges' to sew on their sleeves. Among the first badges were Farmer, Electrician, Cyclist, Surveyor, Telegraphist and Braille. Two years later Geologist, Fire Brigade, Boatswain, Signaller and Rifle Shot were added.

'The badge manual was the only reference book I owned,' said Mary Allingham. 'Thanks to that I learnt how to dress a wound, light

a fire and do Morse code. Wrapping up a parcel was a science that if achieved culminated in another Guide badge. Getting those corners straight, like doing "hospital corners" on a bed, and tying the correct knots. Oh the horrors that might happen to a parcel not correctly wrapped. How the Postmaster would laugh and sneer!'

Baden-Powell loved aphorisms, which often appeared in Guide diaries and magazines: 'If you cannot find a bright side, then polish up the dark one'.

He had a great sense of fun:

Be kind to little animals
Whatever sort they be,
And give a stranded jellyfish
A shove into the sea.

By 1912, just two years after the Guides began, the fifty-five-year-old bachelor was beginning to realise that if he didn't get married soon he would end up living with his two overbearing sisters, Agnes and Jessie, for the rest of his life. He was on a cruise to New York when he met the twenty-three-year-old Olave St Claire Soames. 'The only interesting person on board is the Boy Scout man,' she wrote home to her mother, playing down the fact that when she was a child, Lieutenant-General Baden-Powell had been her hero. Romance quickly blossomed, and the thirty-two-year age difference meant little to either of them. While Baden-Powell continued on his world tour, they exchanged love letters, signed with drawings of robins. The daughter of a wealthy, poetic brewery owner, Olave had been brought up very comfortably in a series of beautiful houses. She was educated at home by a governess until she was twelve, and then learned about the world by travelling with her parents. She and her sister learned arithmetic by keeping their own hens and selling the eggs to the household. A tall, attractive, sporty girl, she enjoyed canoeing, skating, cycling, swimming and football, and teaching local boys with disabilities. She had already received several proposals of marriage, but she was looking for true love and a purpose in life. In Baden-Powell she had found both. She had no

idea how to cook or sew, but she was determined to learn how, or at least how to manage servants. Baden-Powell described Olave to his mother as 'very cheery and bright, a real playmate'. He also recognised in her a woman who could be trained up to help with the Guide movement.

Despite the disapproval of Olave's parents, the couple married ten months later, amidst huge media interest. The Scouts gave them a twenty-horsepower Standard Laundalette car, painted in the dark-green Scout colour. The couple appeared to have little in common, apart from being madly in love, and their shared birthday – 22 February, the day they later designated Guides' Thinking Day and Founder's Day for Scouts. For their honeymoon, Baden-Powell took his new wife camping in the Atlas Mountains of Algeria, where she learned to cook on a campfire and to scrub out the single pan with earth and dried grass.

The Scouting movement was concerned that Baden-Powell would have less time to spend on it, but there was no need to worry – he remained as involved as ever. The following year, Olave gave birth to their first son, Peter, named after their favourite fictional character, Peter Pan. She was happy to produce babies, but not very keen on looking after them – she did not like small children. Leaving her own in the care of a nanny and nursery maids, Olave had time on her hands, and was thus a serious threat to her sister-in-law. When in 1914 Olave offered her services to Guiding, Agnes was determined not to be displaced from her position as Chief Guide. Undeterred, Olave trained as a Guider and became a Company Captain. With her natural common sense she had a way with the girls, and proved to be popular, which further strained her relationship with Agnes.

As soon as war was declared in August 1914, young women, many of them Girl Guides, began training as nurses with the Voluntary Aid Detachment, First-Aid Nursing Yeomanry and with the Guides themselves. Several thousand other Guides volunteered as part of a ready-made workforce to replace the young men sent to the trenches, and they soon demonstrated that young women could be as brave and useful as men. They looked after children, worked on farms, practised

fire-drill by carrying each other out of first-floor windows and down ladders, and demonstrated how to give artificial respiration.

By this time Guide badges had increased to include Air Mechanic, Astronomer, Bee Farmer and Dairymaid, along with Lacemaker, Interpreter, Masseuse and Poultry Farmer. The outbreak of war meant that even more badges were created: the Telegraphist's Badge required a Guide to be able to construct her own wireless receiver and to send messages in Morse code at a speed of thirty letters a minute.

As well as contributing to the war effort by working in farms and factories, Guides raised enough money with 'Sales of Work' to buy a large motor ambulance built by Clement-Talbot of Wormwood Scrubs. Guides in Western Australia collected used baler twine from farmers and made fly-veils for the Light Horse Brigade in Egypt. Tasmanian Guides carried out rifle practice by shooting rabbits, then cooked them over campfires and made rabbit-skin jackets for soldiers.

At railway stations all over Britain Guides set up feeding points for returning soldiers and acted as messengers for Marconi Wireless Telegraphs. Guides in London helped to organise a sports day for wounded soldiers. In a silent film made of the event, five Australian soldiers demonstrate their prosthetic dexterity by lying on the grass and racing to see who can be the first to stand up. Soldiers stand in a line, their trousers rolled up to show their artificial limbs. A one-legged soldier executes a hop, skip and jump as a hop, hop and hop into a sandpit. Then Guides offer up their long hair for a hairdressing contest. The men have to brush and plait the hair, then pin it up neatly and quickly, causing much amusement and giggling.

Olave threw herself into Guiding during the war, and in 1916 she became Sussex County Commissioner. With her husband's encouragement she then left her two babies at home for several months while she ran a rest hut for soldiers in Calais. Relations with her sister-in-law remained difficult. Agnes, much to her annoyance, was slowly sidelined, and had to be content with the non-executive position of President of the Guides.

Guiding wasn't just for schoolgirls – the movement also helped girls once they had left school. Until 1918, education was compulsory for children only up to the age of twelve, and most teenage

working-class girls found employment in domestic service or in factories. 'Guiding is so vitally needed by the girls of the factories and of the alleys of the great cities, who after they leave school, get no restraining influence and who, nevertheless, should be the character trainers of the future men of our nation,' wrote Agnes Baden-Powell.

Even well-educated women had no freedom of action, no training for life, and little education compared with boys; needlework, painting and music were almost the only activities considered suitable for young ladies. Years later Olave wrote, 'Guiding opened up new and appealing vistas to young females, visions of a life where women could face the world on equal terms with men, where they would be trained and equipped to cope with whatever emergencies might arise.' The idea chimed perfectly with the growing demand for women's suffrage. After centuries as second-class citizens, women were beginning to dream of freedom and equality with men.

The First World War provided girls with an opportunity to show that they could be as good as, if not better than, boys. At the start of the war, Boy Scouts were employed as messengers at the London headquarters of Military Intelligence, MI5. But they were soon found to be 'very troublesome. The considerable periods of inactivity which fell to their share usually resulted in their getting into mischief,' stated MI5 report KV/49. On 15 September 1915, MI5 replaced the Scouts with Girl Guides, aged between fourteen and sixteen, who were entrusted to carry secret counter-espionage memoranda and reports. 'They proved more amenable and their methods of getting into mischief were on the whole less distressing to those who had to deal with them than were those of the boys,' MI5 reported.

Within just a few months of the outbreak of war, silent films were made with such titles as *The German Spy Peril*, *Guarding Britain's Secrets* and *The Kaiser's Spies*. These featured rather stupid German villains, overcome by clever Girl Guides who trick them into giving themselves up, or falling off cliffs. Spy-mania was rife, with people looking under their beds or in woodsheds, and turning against anyone with a whiff of German ancestry.

Before a Guide could start work at MI5, she had to sign a contract confirming that she had permission from both of her parents and the

Guide Captain who had recommended her. She pledged with her honour not to read the papers she carried, and was paid ten shillings a week for fifty hours of work, with only a short lunch break. The Guides' working day began at 9 a.m. and finished at 7 p.m., and as well as carrying messages they were responsible for keeping inkpots filled. Some were also trained to clean and repair typewriters. By January 1917 these select girls had been formed into a special MI5 Guide Company with its own Captain, with each Patrol assigned to a separate floor of the Military Intelligence headquarters. Every Monday afternoon they paraded across the roof of Waterloo House for inspection.

Their enthusiasm could sometimes be too much, as Miss M.S. Aslin of MI5 Registry reported after working with Guides for several days. Commenting on one of the MI5 Guides, she described how 'She speeds from floor to floor, bearing messages of good will, and no obstacle is too great for her to fall over in her devotion to this happy task. Released for the moment, she retires to her attractive little sitting room, where she reads and writes or converses quietly (?) on high topics with her friends.'

All the women employed by MI5, of whatever age, education or competence, had to fight to be recognised as colleagues rather than regarded as mere skivvies. In 'H Branch', women were employed as secretaries (a new idea), to run the photographic section and to staff the switchboard. They also cleaned, cooked and drove cars. The Guides became so much a part of the fabric of the organisation that the journal edited by its female employees, *The Nameless Magazine*, featured a cartoon of four Guides sitting in their uniforms in a corridor captioned, 'The Electric Bells having broken, the GGs (*not* the Grenadier Guards) sit outside Maj. D's door in case he wants them.' From 1915 to 1918, Girl Guides even took over from Scouts in the Postal Censorship office. In less than ten years since their formation, Guides had demonstrated to the establishment that girls were reliable members of society who could play useful roles beyond the purely domestic.

It didn't take long for other employers to realise that Guides were honest, trustworthy and loyal, and soon many factories only

employed them. In some munitions factories, where safety was paramount, all the workers were Guides aged from fourteen up. During their lunch hour they would assemble in the factory yard and remove their working overalls and caps to reveal their Guide uniforms and their hair in long, single plaits. Their Captain wore a long skirt, navy blouse and white kid gloves to go with her felt hat and lanyard. They practised first-aid on each other, and learned new skills towards more badges. When the factory whistle went they would put their overalls and caps back on, and return to making armaments. Some employers paid for the Guides' uniforms and outings. Even after the school-leaving age was raised to fourteen in 1918, there were still many working Guides: in 1921 the 9th Oxford Guide Company was registered in the Savernake glove factory off Botley Road.

When the First World War ended, Guides were considered so reliable by the War Office that a contingent was taken with the British delegation to France. British Guides ran errands at the Palace of Versailles for the Paris Peace Conference in June 1919, and sixteen Ranger Guides were invited to witness the signing of the treaty.

Five months later, Baden-Powell made a speech at a Guide peace rally in a packed Albert Hall. He told the 8,000 Guides present that it was small, unselfish deeds that led to peace and greater understanding between people. 'Each of you can go further and take a valuable part in this great work,' he said. 'There is no doubt that you *can* do this. The only question is – *will* you do it?' There was a resounding cheer in response: 'Yes we can!'

With so many men lost during the war, the Guide movement was a blessing for many young women who had been left with little chance of finding a husband. They had to learn to support themselves, and needed all the skills they could muster for employment. Child Nurse, Toy-Maker and Gymnast Proficiency Badges were all useful for future nannies; and before the introduction of the national driving test, Mechanic and Map-Reading Badges could lead to chauffeur or taxi-driving jobs. 'The Artist's Badge helped me to get a job designing toffee papers,' said former Guide Verily Anderson. Not all badges meant hard work: for the Dancer's Badge, 'the Irish jig should be

danced with plenty of spirit and abandon', wrote Mrs Janson Potts in *Guide Badges and How to Win Them*.

Among the proposed names for older Guides, aged sixteen to twenty-one, were 'Citizen-Guides', 'Torchbearers', 'Eagerhearts', 'Pilots', 'Pioneers' and 'Guide-women'. Baden-Powell had a sound sense of marketing: he pointed out that a vague name, without any historical connotations, would be best, as it could acquire its own meaning. He suggested 'Rangers', and 'Sea Rangers' for those who lived near the sea or rivers. These young women were at 'the age of fullest sexual development', wrote Olave Baden-Powell to new Guiders, 'when a real love for the out-of-doors can give her many healthy interests and a wholesome tone. Beware of any tendency of allowing the idealism of the age to be fixed on ourselves [leaders] with our human failings, which must inevitably disappoint.'

Running Brownie packs and Guide companies proved an invaluable outlet for the energies of many unmarried women at a time when they were beginning to express a desire for equality. The Guide movement filled a gaping hole in contributing to social order, education and entertainment. Badges now included Landworker and International Knowledge, the latter requiring an understanding of the League of Nations and the International Labour Office. The 'Badge of Fortitude' was created in honour of Nurse Edith Cavell, who had been executed by a German firing squad in October 1915 for helping British soldiers to escape. This special badge was awarded to Guides with physical disabilities who showed extra fortitude.

By the end of the war, relations between Olave and Agnes were still strained, and there was nothing Agnes could do to prevent her young sister-in-law from appointing her own secretarial staff, taking charge of the training department and writing her own book, *Training Girls as Guides*. When Olave was appointed first Chief Commissioner, and then in 1918 Chief Guide, Agnes had to throw in the towel and content herself with the title 'the Grandmother of Guiding'.

The following year, the Baden-Powell family settled down in Hampshire, in Pax Hill, a house big enough for entertaining, run by

domestic servants, many of whom were young enough to be enrolled as Guides and Scouts. It was quite normal for the Baden-Powells to have up to 150 people to a garden party, with Guides providing country dancing. The three Baden-Powell children were allowed to come down from the nursery with their nanny and join in the fun.

'Guiding is a Game; Guiding is Fun; Guiding is an Adventure,' declared Olave. In 1919 she formed the International Council, to help Guides and Scouts share their ideas around the world. Dispensing with Agnes's older friends, she rallied some well-known and influential women to join the committee. A number of them had married older men, didn't like children much and preferred uniform to civilian clothes. One of these was Violet Markham, who always used her maiden name even after she was married to a Lieutenant-Colonel. The daughter of a wealthy mine-owner, she first championed the causes of miners, and then female domestic servants. Olave's Assistant Chief Commissioner was Katherine Furse, who had been brought up in Switzerland, and was an excellent skier and keen mountaineer. During the First World War she had worked for the Red Cross, and had then started the Women's Royal Navy and the Voluntary Aid Detachment nursing service. An open-minded woman, she wanted Guides to be more socially responsible, and soon became head of the Sea Rangers, which had been started in 1920 by former Wrens. They sang shanties and learned how to handle small boats, to signal and lifesave, and to cook and keep their gear tidy in cramped quarters. Before enrolment, a Sea Ranger had to make a lanyard with at least eight different knots.

In 1926 Dame Katherine founded the World Association, and was its director for ten years. A brilliant administrator and organiser, she once joked, 'If I saw a child being run over by a tram, my first reaction would be to organise somebody else to rescue it.' 'Dame Katherine represented sheer slogging hard work,' said Olave. 'There was a strange unexpected streak of intolerance in her make-up and her critical, questioning mind made her appear slightly argumentative and unbending in temperament. She was so absolutely upright, that you could not but bow to her decisions.'

In July 1925 the Girl Guides held a rally in Oxford. The *Oxford Times* reported the Chief Guide's opening speech: 'Our aim is to train

young girls to develop themselves to be useful, loyal, honourable, capable and helpful. We want them to think not only for themselves, but of others.' By then half a million girls had joined the Guides and Brownies in over thirty nations – nearly double the number of Boy Scouts and Cubs. In 1929 there were enough Guides all over the world to raise £60,000 to build substantial headquarters overlooking the Royal Stables in Buckingham Palace Road. Opening in 1931, these smart new offices housed the publisher of *The Guide* and *The Brownie*, as well as a tailoring department where uniforms were made – Guide overcoats cost two guineas.

At a time when the mortality rate was still very high, anything that helped to reduce death and disease was appreciated. Guides couldn't do much about sewers and clean water supplies, but they could learn about hygiene and be on hand for first-aid in emergencies. In 1927 the 46th Westminster Company demonstrated their skills as well-prepared first-aiders, making a 16mm film in which a woman crashes her horse cart. Luckily some passing Guides take control of the frightened horse, while others bandage up the woman's leg and carry her to the village doctor. Then, as the Guides walk along a cliff, they see a boy fall over the edge. One Guide climbs down to him, while another swims across a river to alert a boatman. With the tide coming in, the unconscious boy is rescued in the nick of time.

Within just ten years of the movement's foundation, Guide companies had been started in penitentiaries, orphanages and care homes. Guiding was a way in which 'the poor and needy' could be encouraged to help themselves, and the better-off could learn to help others. When a Colonel Strover organised 'The Woodlarks Camp for Cripples', over a thousand children suffering from club feet, polio and TB of the spine arrived for a holiday in their wheelchairs or on crutches, and were cared for by eager Guides. Before the Welfare State or the National Health Service, disabled children had to rely on charities and volunteers. Extension Guides began in 1909 in St Mary's Hospital, Surrey, then the largest children's hospital in Europe. 'The aim of Extension Guiding is to bring the blind, the crippled, the deaf and

the mentally defective girl into closer touch with normal life,' wrote the editor of *The Extension Guide*. Old-fashioned words, but modern ideas. 'If we try do everything for the handicapped girl, we only increase her dependence on other people. If we do too little we miss the chance of helping her to find a way round the limitations of her disability.' Proficiency badges were adapted to all abilities. Blind Guides were encouraged to take part in sports day and make dampers on campfires. Fire-lighting tests could be taken in bed with asbestos sheets laid over the counterpane.

In 1921 'Post' or 'Lone' Guides were set up for girls who were housebound, lived in isolated places or were at boarding schools where Guides were forbidden. They held 'meetings' by post: the Guide would post her reef knot and her 'Second Class Useful Article' to her Captain, and it would be returned with comments for the next 'meeting'. At the age of sixteen a Lone Guide could become a Lone Ranger.

In June 1941 Mrs Brash put on an exhibition at Guide headquarters of handicrafts made by 'crippled and invalid Guides from all over the country'. She was a tough judge, and firmly told a Scottish Post Guide, 'I would have passed that needlework from an ordinary Guide, Elspeth, but in the Extension branch we have especially high standards. You'll have to do better than that.'

Guiding pioneered the now-accepted attitude to children with disabilities: whatever her disability, no girl was ever turned away from Brownies or Guides. Kathleen Barlow belonged to an Extension company when she was a patient in a TB sanatorium. 'Most of us were lying in bed, yet full of happiness. The walking Guides took the little ones for walks in the fields, the little children pretending they were with their own mummies. The Guides grew marigolds in pots from their beds and wheelchairs. The flagpole could be carried into the ward and Colours hoisted.'

The Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre in Oxford had a hospital Guide company for long-stay patients. Children's orthopaedic problems often entailed months of treatment lying flat in bed. The girls wore their Guide ties, badges and hats over their nightclothes for meetings held in wards. On sunny days they were pushed outdoors in basket-weave beds on wheels, and able-bodied Guides came to the hospital

to work with them. When some Norfolk Guides discovered that many of the fifteen Guides of the Kelling Sanatorium Extension Company could not read, they paid for a teacher.

In Scotland, the Guides set up the Trefoil School for disabled children who would otherwise have received no education at all. Whether in callipers or wheelchairs, the children received a full education at the boarding school, whose motto was 'Undaunted'. The Trefoil School closed in 1975, by which time all disabled children were accepted in mainstream schools.

Across the globe, the Guide movement was spreading fast – by 1920 there were Guides in North America, Egypt, Palestine, Armenia and France. In 1929 Guides were established in Italy. But in 1933 Mussolini closed down all youth movements and set up his own organisation, *Balilla*, which he claimed was an improvement on Guiding and Scouting. Baden-Powell met Mussolini and pointed out that *Balilla* was compulsory rather than voluntary, super-nationalistic rather than international, and was intended to mould a uniform character rather than encouraging individualism. He also said that although the Scouting and Guiding movement encouraged service to one's nation, it never condoned the use of this for militaristic aggression. Guiding and Scouting had begun in Germany in 1914, and like Mussolini, Hitler banned them in 1933. Baden-Powell never met him to point out the deficiencies of *Hitler-Jugend* or the *Bund Deutscher Mädel*.

There was a perception that Guides and Scouts were connected to Christianity, and this was compounded by the parades that often took place in churches of the established Church of England. But Baden-Powell always insisted that they were non-denominational. 'The movement is based on faith but not a particular faith,' he said.

Joan Collinson was born in 1922 in Gateshead, where her Catholic father worked in the gasworks and led family prayers every night before bedtime. There was a Guide company nearby, but she never joined because its meetings were held in the Church of England church hall. 'It wasn't so much rivalry,' she said, 'as both sides felt we were the chosen ones, and that was that. As a Roman Catholic I never

dreamed of going into a different church. I don't think my parents forbade me to join, it just never came up.' In fact Guides met in church halls simply because they were the cheapest or only available places to rent.

While the movement was designed to be based on neither creed nor race, Baden-Powell protested that in some countries, such as Barbados and South Africa, Guides and Scouts were organised in separate white and black companies and troops. Despite his early career as a soldier fighting in Africa and India, and his exposure to the army's institutional racism, over the years his ideas had progressed. He insisted on 'One Nation, One Movement', and wanted complete racial integration. In India by 1920 there were several separate Scouting organizations – Muslim, Hindu, Seva-Samiti and 'Mrs Annie Besant's' – none of them affiliated to each other or to London. In 1921 the Baden-Powells were invited to India to discuss the problem with Scout and Guide leaders. They travelled all over the country in a special carriage attached to the back of any train going in the right direction. At every station, enthusiastic Guides and Scouts greeted them, whatever the time of day or night: 'We hung out of the train to talk to them and clasp their hands – and I hope that they did not notice we were both wearing uniform jackets and hats over our pyjamas.' Olave met Hindu, Parsee, Anglo-Indian and European Guides, who all agreed to work together. 'Once the Indian women took it up,' she wrote, 'the barriers between the races began to come down. Guiding could help break down the traditional conventions that kept Indian women in the background.' By the end of the tour, the rival factions had all agreed to unite.

In South Africa, by contrast, Baden-Powell only managed to persuade the organisers to agree that Guides and Scouts would form one movement and wear the same uniform. They were still split into separate companies and troops for Africans, Europeans and Indians. It was not until 1936 that the Wayfarers – black South African Guides – were accepted into the Guide Association of South Africa. 'At last,' wrote Olave in 1973, 'white had joined hands with black on equal terms. It was a giant stride for South Africa, even if it has taken several steps backwards since!'

By 1931, worldwide membership of the Guides was over a million, and in 1932 the first World Centre – 'Our Chalet' in Switzerland – was opened. Olave was delighted when she was appointed the World Chief Guide in 1930, and in 1932 she was awarded the Grand Cross of the British Empire. By the late 1930s Guiding had become international rather than Imperial, though Britain still had the largest number, with 525,276 Guides enrolled. Poland was next with 62,857, and in France there were 24,087. On the Atlantic island of St Helena there were 140 Guides to the sixty Scouts.