

Several people have asked me for a copy of the talk I gave at this years Remembrance Sunday Service so I thought I would send it to the newsletter. I feel very strongly that when we have young people in church the talk should she be relevant to them and this one just happened, as you will see in the text. I do hope you enjoy it.

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Remembrance Sunday 2023

Talk

You might be wondering why I am in my Guide uniform when my girls are on parade in Heacham, Hunstanton and Docking – but it's because when my Poppy Guiding badge arrived this year it was all about what service the Girl Guides had given in WW1. (Pass badge round, read out from card)



There were 750,000 Girl Guides in the UK when the second world war broke out, which meant that there was a huge pool of skilled girls and young women willing to contribute to the war effort. Guides were earning badges as proficient electricians, mechanics, first-aiders, and signallers. For more than 100 years, community spirit has been at the heart of Girlguiding.

The cotton reel appeal of 1941 was no exception. In 1941, the Royal Air Force gave us a mysterious mission: to collect 11,000 cotton reels for the Royal Corps of Signals. (Pass round an old wooden cotton reel tot a modern plastic or cardboard one)

Within a week, Girlguiding members had collected over 42,000 for them, as well as further batches for the Royal Air Force.

Formed in 1920, the Royal Corps of Signals are responsible for installing, operating, maintaining and running telecommunications equipment and information systems. In World War Two, the Royal Corps Signals operated signals equipment, maintained telephone lines and other communications, often under enemy fire.

But why did they need us to collect cotton reels for them? Many years after the second world war ended, we discovered that the reels were used by the intelligence department at MI9 to send secret messages to soldiers on the front lines. They used the cotton reels to send everything from notes written on microfilm, to maps, and even German currency.

In Cambridgeshire one Guides Aunt was a nurse at a military hospital and, realising that her Aunt hadn't been to her Grans for Sunday tea for weeks, she went to find out why. It was because none of the nurses were getting a day off, they were so busy! Well this Young Guide told her troop about it, the next weekend they turned up at the hospital demanding to be taught what they needed to know to get their Home Nursing Badge and once competent, for the rest of the war, they worked Dawn till Dusk every Sunday so the nurses could take turns in having a day off.

In other parts of the country Girl Guides supervised evacuee children while the local organisers sorted out who was going to which family.

But what of the Scouts I hear you thinking! Well of course, some of them forged papers so they could go into military service, but for those too young, Scouts worked in very dangerous conditions as fire watchers, stretcher bearers, carrying messages, supporting evacuation of hospitals during air raids and carrying out first aid. These were all tasks which Scout training supported.

The Boy Scouts Are Carrying On

This was the war time slogan of the Scout Movement and incorporated an indomitable spirit that faced adversity from the home front to the brutal regime of the Japanese internment camps of South East Asia. The Scout Association during the War could be rightly proud of its record and commissioned a booklet entitled They Were Prepared and a film Men of Tomorrow in 1941. Both were aimed at an internal audience and therefore the public had little comprehension of the role Scouts played in the Allied war effort. In statistical terms there were 53,000 Scouts trained to undertake over hundred and seventy National War Service jobs by the end of 1940.

They had a War Scouts Service Handbook and wore a War Service Armband.



As might be expected Scouts played a key part in the Civil Defence role during the Blitz of Britain serving as Police messengers, firemen, stretcher bearers and rescuing people from the rubble of buildings.

For those who were too young or not living in areas that were heavily bombed had plenty of opportunities to contribute to the war effort. By the close of 1940, Scouts had collected thirty five thousand tons of waste paper including one Troop in Ponders End who gathered forty five tons in nine months. Forestry camps were organized with Scouts moving felled trees to points of collection which was physically demanding as the camps lasted for several weeks. Harvest time provided many opportunities for Scouts to assist farmers and enjoy the pleasures of the countryside. In 1942 six hundred Scouts picked more than a million pounds of plums in Worcestershire alone and this was replicated across the country.

And so, as time moves on, less and less of our congregation will remember actual people who have fallen, we will remember ancestors we never had the privilege to meet, but we can also concentrate our minds on all those who continue to give service to keep our country free, to honour all those who went before and what they fought for. So, I leave you with this parting thought – what would your Service be if called upon?