

No. 18: Thousands guided by three lifelong Trinity ladies.

I am writing this blog on the day of the Grand National and this reminded me of my only trip to Aintree Racecourse; not to see horse racing but to attend a Christian music festival called Crossfire with the Christian Union at what was then Huddersfield Polytechnic. I was then struck by the fact that this was thirty years ago and I suddenly felt very old! The HPCU camp at Crossfire was definitely distinctive. Faced with a shortage of tents and equipment, we were proud to be able to borrow tents, including a huge 12-person 'bell-tent', (probably left over from World War II) from the Holy Trinity Guide Company.

A guide company at Holy Trinity, the '60th Huddersfield', was first formed around 1932. The guides formed just four years after the scout troop associated with Holy Trinity. Both the guides and scouts met at the Parish Hall in Marsh. Uniformed organisations were a key part of many young people's development, particularly in the mid twentieth century and churches like Holy Trinity had considerable influence over generations through the guide and scout movements.

The scouts and guides attended monthly 'Parade Services' in uniform carrying their flags, originally marching from the Parish Hall to the church for the services. Weekly meetings opened and closed with prayer and acts of worship formed important elements in the regular camps and activities.

Holy Trinity's first guide captain was Miss Gwen Clarke, the vicar's cousin and its assistant leader was Win Ritchie (nee Webster), *photographed right*. Gwen later went to south India as a missionary with CMS and worked in a school for the blind before returning to Holy Trinity and its guides. Win later became captain. In her memoirs Win proudly records that the 60th Huddersfield had received the record number of Queen's Guides Awards – 74 in all.



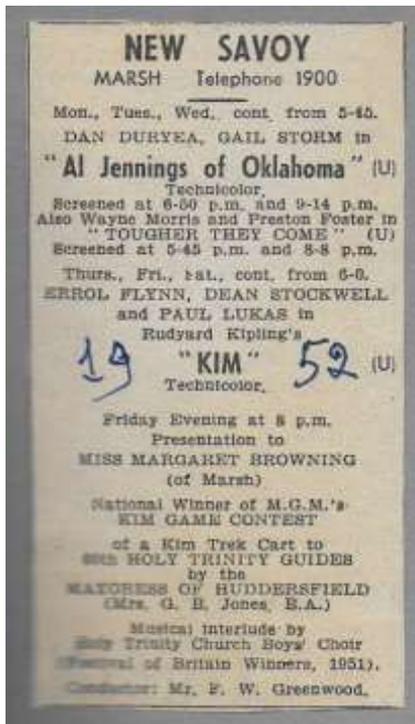
The company formed a brownie pack in May 1934 and a ranger group was formed in November 1959.

During World War II the guide company collected paper to recycle, clothes for evacuees and refugees and knitted countless garments to help provide for those in need. After the war the paper collection continued as a way of raising funds to purchase further camping equipment.

Camps were an important part of guiding life. In Win's own words:

"Every year there was a week camp further afield with many weekends locally. Many guides said this was the best part of guiding as there were few holidays in those days. In the war camping even continued, literally in Huddersfield in friends' gardens. Whilst camping once during the war the air raid alarm sounded and it was a big rush down to the cellars, five times in the two nights. After the war a troop of American girl scouts camped with us and we went to Switzerland.

"In 1952 Margaret Browning, the company's first Queen's Guide was the winner of the Metro Goldwyn Mayer (MGM) Kim's Game contest. She was presented with a superb trek cart by the Mayoress of Huddersfield and the choirboys sang at the presentation which took place at the New Savoy Picture House in Marsh" (Now the Playworld, behind the Croppers Arms).



At the summer camp 1960 held at Cantley Manor near Doncaster, the guides used their own marquee for the first time, - a product of much fund raising, costing £124. A party of the guides also stayed at Oberammergau the same summer.



The photograph (left) shows girls from the 60th at the county rally held at Hesley Wood, near Sheffield in 1967. The group were awarded first prize in a song writing and singing competition. The award was presented by Lady Baden Powell, the world 'Chief Guide'.

Gwen Clarke died in March 1968. In October the guides got a new leader, - Miss Freda Waite, with Mrs Margaret Allison as assistant leader. The following year, Mrs Margaret Holmes, Brown Owl of the brownie pack for a number of years, died aged just 34.

A note appeared in the Parish Magazine of November 1978 stating that due to the long waiting list for the brownies, "to ensure that girls can join when they are 7 years old, their names need to be added before their fifth birthday."

Many older members of the church will remember Margaret Allison, who continued as a guide leader until 1990 when she retired aged 65. It was Margaret who was adamant that the CU make use of the guides camping equipment, which had laid idle for many years before then.

Another key figure in the life of Holy Trinity was Meg Brierley who was Tawny Owl in the brownie pack going on to hold many positions in guiding becoming County President. Like Win, Meg was a life-long member of Holy Trinity, being baptised here in 1912, married in 1939 and living to the age of 96, her funeral service being held here in 2008.

Photograph above, taken mid 1970s shows Win Ritchie (4th from left), alongside vicar Rev John Poole and other guide leaders at the annual Remembrance Day parade in Greenhead Park.



The chair, as used by the preacher at our 9.00 service was given to the church by Win Ritchie and she sat on it in later years. She found its arms useful to help her stand up and as a qualified physiotherapist she selected the chair as she considered it the best design.

Girlguiding still continues in the Huddersfield area. When the 60th company finally closed it joined with the group at Birchencliffe. Now the area is served by the Huddersfield Ramsden group, part of the West Yorkshire South district made up of around 6000 members. Find out more about it here: <http://www.girlguidingwestyorkshiresouth.org.uk/home.html>

The service given by Win, Margaret, Meg and many other leaders over many years to the guide company at Holy Trinity set up thousands of girls for life. There will be countless ladies in this area who will have happy memories of their childhood spent camping in the marquee or bell-tents in the back gardens of Huddersfield or abroad. In preparation for the 200th Anniversary of Holy Trinity in 2019 any memoires would be gratefully received, either about the guides, scouts or any other aspect of church-life.

**Andy Barber
May '18**