

## **Surrey East Guiding March 2022 to March 2023.**

Hello and thank you for inviting me back to tell you about Girlguiding Surrey East over the past year. I see your theme is little acorns to giant oaks on this, the 80<sup>th</sup> year of the Trefoil Guild. I had a look at your anniversary challenge badge which looks fun! Countries with all the letters – EIGHTY –Ethiopia, Iceland, Ghana, Haiti, Tanzania and Yemen – that's one!

Whilst it has been a year with things returning to normal, it has equally been a year of significant events – the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, 3 Prime ministers, the Platinum Jubilee celebrations and then the loss of HM The Queen, our Patron, in September and of course the ongoing economic and environmental concerns which affect us all.

I am so proud of every one of our 900 volunteers who bring Guiding to the girls and young women of Surrey East. In the wake of the pandemic, and with all that is going on in the world it is not easy, and I know today there are many people with multiple roles or running more than one unit for which, we are very grateful. The recruitment of more volunteers remains a constant challenge to charities across the UK and for us, it is no different.

It is really important that we thank people for the service given. This year we have awarded over 50 awards. Congratulations to Val Hickmott who received her Laurel Award. Margaret King and Mary Zoeller received the Region Chief Award. Charity Nichols, Kate Fowles and Angela Hammond received Good Service awards. 16 members received their 10-year long service awards, 9 20-year awards, 6 30-year awards and 40-year awards for me, Gill Utting, and Tracy Lovell, a 50-year award to Menai Jones and 60-years to Veronica Ballard. Congratulations to them all for their amazing contribution and I know we have some more big celebrations coming soon.

We presented Hero awards, a new award recognising individuals who have done something particularly special. Two were to a mother and daughter rainbow leaders who stepped up providing CPR to a man in church, one to a Brownie who had offered support to help some anxious pre-school children know more about her primary school and one to a leader who has achieved significant charity fundraising targets, inspiring girls in her unit. We are now seeing girls in our units receive Bronze, Silver and Gold awards and I was delighted to present Alexia Beale with her Queen's Guide Award.

Guiding has introduced a new Leadership Development Programme with mandatory training and support of a mentor throughout, so we have recruited and trained 30 mentors. We are currently transitioning from the old scheme to the new and by September 2023, the old scheme will be phased out completely. The role of Assistant leader is being withdrawn, so people are either qualified leaders or not. Ideally units are led by one or more leaders who split the responsibilities between each other. Compliance is now mandatory too - this means people need to renew their safe space and disclosure checks required for their role before it expires or they cannot continue to work with the girls until they have. They receive automatic reminders and if they update early, it will still be valid for three years from the expiry date.

All of this put demands on our commissioners, advisers and training team, but we are extremely proud of the many committed individuals we have in Surrey East and all they do. This year Louise Lander stepped down as Division Commissioner for Godstone and Sue Corrance has taken over. Sadly, we will be losing Dax Patel from Leatherhead Division in July as she is moving away and Kate Fowles and Mary Zoeller will end their Div Comm terms after 5 years though they aren't going too far, as I have appointed Kate ACC with focus on volunteers and Mary as ACC with focus on events for the girls. Division Commissioners are critical roles that we need to fill as they are trustees of the county. We are pleased to have a voice at HQ with Jodi Morton on the Commissioners Forum, Kate Roberts on the Queen's Guide Coordinator group and I am on the Region Steering group.

Faurefold, our county holiday house and campsite held adventure days for rainbows, brownies and guides across the county and is a popular venue with limited weekends available to book in 2023 and even a 2024 booking. The Faurefold committee have worked tirelessly to maintain and develop the site and this year have introduced a new low ropes course which is very exciting.

Very shortly, we will see the completion of Little Acres Lodge in at Epsom division's campsite in Horton Country Park. Again, another significant undertaking that has taken time and hard work to get to this stage.

For the Platinum Jubilee, Epsom Guides formed a guard of honour to welcome the Queen at the Derby. Units across the county celebrated with events and tea parties.

Many of our Guide and Ranger units attended Scoutabout at Ardingly in the summer and units across the county arranged camps and holidays again with many girls attending for the first time. International trips are back on the agenda too with girls from Surrey East busy fundraising for the Jamboree in South Korea, a trip to Iceland, and to Explore Europe.

It was a sombre time following the loss of the Queen and many leaders were pictured visiting the lying in state. Guiding managed a social media shutdown but units respectfully continued to run.

In September, we held a County Day in Horley, where volunteers came together to take part in a range of learning opportunities: sharing resources to help us be more inclusive, also sessions on how to complete risks assessments and to manage unit finances. The attendees were able to try out a range of activity ideas to take back to their units. The next one is on 24<sup>th</sup> September at Faurefold and will have an outdoor theme.

We held a County Planning day for commissioners and county role holders across the county to come together to consider what we do well and what we should focus on for improvement. It was great to bring this group together, face to face after all this time and to help us prioritise and focus our efforts on what is important.

In November, 17 volunteers represented Surrey East helping at the Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall. It was hard work but an honour to be part of such an event.

Finally, you will have seen the latest news that Guiding has been rebranded – 10 years since the last one. Introduced on 8th March – you will see many people are already busy adjusting their online sites to the new simplified design. The drive for the change has been to address concerns that we are inconsistent in how we talk about Guiding – so much so that people outside of Guiding find it hard to understand. The new design has been well received, and Guiding is keen that we take our time to transition and do not waste resources we already have. The trefoil is still at the heart, and you will be pleased to hear that the rebranding has not been funded by the annual subs.

We have always known the importance of our role as part of the community, supporting our members, promoting well-being and helping girls and young women to realise their potential whilst making friends and having fun - and never more so than now. Through Guiding we sow the seed, **help all girls know that they can do anything** and then support them as they grow. I have no doubt that many of today's leaders are the result of the time and effort that many of you have invested over the years. As ever, we are very grateful for all your support and hope that the mighty oak trees continue to grow in Surrey East.

Congratulations on your 80<sup>th</sup> year celebrations and thank you again.

Thanks,

Beverly Heywood-Jones  
Surrey East County Commissioner  
March 2023