

People

In 1942 leaders from the United Kingdom, Australia, Europe, Canada, Kenya and New Zealand volunteered during World War II to give service to those affected by the conflict. They helped refugees who had fled their homelands and were living in poor conditions in crowded refugee camps. After the war ended in 1945 they continued their relief work, providing welfare and caring for the homeless and the sick until 1952. GIS members had to 'Be Prepared' wherever for whatever, anything or everything at any time! Their training and preparations were vigorous and 'fast tracked'. They learned survival, medical, communication and outdoor living skills. GIS members were prepared for abseiling, making camps, bushcraft living and even ju-jitsu. They had to be resourceful quick-thinking and good team members. Equipment was in short supply, so they had to be inventive with what they had and could find. Cleaner camps, mobile kitchens, mobile hospitals, distribution of stores, food and clothing rations, care, nurturing and constructive entertainment of children were all among the achievements of the GIS.

Rosa Ward Britain

Chairman of the G.I.S.
Rosa Ward put many other commitment aside and spent 12 years leading the Girl Guide relief efforts



Muriel Evelyn Bush Australia

Merle Bush devoted over 50 years of her life to the Victoria Guide Movement. During that time she developed training programs for leaders in Victoria and interstate. In the New Year's Honours List for 1956, she was appointed an Officer of the British Empire (Civil) for her services to the Girl Guide Movement.

In 1945 she was an organiser and assessor of the first Guide International Service (Australian) Test prior to the women being selected to work with the displaced people in Europe and Malaysia.



Desma Cohen Australia

Desma went to England in 1946. Her work was with Displaced Persons in Germany. She wrote home about the lack of clothing and 2 ton of clothing was sent from Western Australia.

Florence Couper Australia

Served in Europe with team RS/136



Alison Duke England

Her team sailed in June 1944, only to be stuck in Egypt for 7 months because of the outbreak of the Greek civil war. During this enforced break they helped in the Greek refugee camps, eventually arriving in Athens just 24 hours after the tide of civil war had released that city. The official role of the team was the distribution of relief; supplies were divided with impeccable fairness amongst deprived mountain villagers, often in extremely remote locations, which were hard of access. Those who knew Alison in later years found it hard to imagine the young Englishwoman, dressed in khaki, who in January 1945 against great odds negotiated a bread supply for a women's prison in Athens or who later that winter, snowed up in Amphissa before the British troops got through, with two female colleagues, was called upon to accept the arms surrendered by ELAS guerrillas coming down from the hills.

Phyllis Croft England

She had been heavily involved with the Girl Guide movement. The worldwide Guide International Service had been preparing to go into Europe as soon as was possible to help wherever was needed once liberation happened, to start up hospitals and relief centres under the aegis of the Red Cross. 'I had trained in my spare time for three years, and we were getting teams together to go and help the inhabitants of the liberated countries,' she recalls. 'We were enormously keen!' And, sure enough, while Phyllis was waiting for her job back in Cambridge to start, the call came. 'The Red Cross wanted us to go to the Netherlands to help the Dutch, who were just being freed from the Germans,' she says. 'I was to be part of an ambulance team, and was so desperate to go that I threw over the job, saying I was going abroad.'

In the end, she didn't go for six months, which were spent typing at the Girl Guides' headquarters ('At least it made a change from knitting!' she says), but had to be ready to go at 48 hours' notice. The call came in the February and, after a quick visit to Buckingham Palace to be wished well by the Queen Mum (as she became), Phyllis and the rest of the 24-strong team were off to Holland. 'We were setting up hospitals – and I still have friends there!'

The team was meant to stay for six months, and she celebrated VE day in a school dormitory. Some of the four or five hospitals they set up were new, and others were existing ones that were re-established, having lost key staff and equipment. 'The aim was not to run the hospital in the long term – but to get it going again before handing it over to the locals. So we gradually became unnecessary.'

Once the situation in the Netherlands stabilised, the team was meant to move to Germany, but Phyllis admits that she really didn't fancy going to help the Germans, and instead returned to the UK. 'I'd had the time of my life, and the Girl Guide movement thought we were heroes!' she says. But once the adulation and talk-giving subsided, she realised that she had no job!

Nancy Kemp Australia

Believed she went to Malaya & Europe. She wrote the book "Let's Go Camping" for Guides. Nancy went to Papua New Guinea after G.I.S. She travelled and trained leaders there. "G.I.S. work has been a good preparation for my job as Territory Trainer, since I have now, as then, to be a Jack of All Trades."



Beatrice Ford-Smith Australia

Served in Europe



Eleanor Manning Australia

In 1946, Eleanor Manning and three other Guides went to Malaya to serve with the Guide International Service to help with post war rehabilitation. This led to a life long interest in the Australian-Malaysian-Singapore Association and the development of friendship and co-operation between the countries.



Sheila Nevell England

She had a life-long active interest in the Girl Guide movement and in voluntary social work. She was a qualified member of the Guide International Service.

Pat Richards Australia

Pat sailed to Malaya on the 'Charon' in 1946. She worked at Kota Bharu in the Kalantan Province. The task was to fight disease and neglect in surrounding villages.

Dr Meredith Ross Australia

Dr Ross wrote to Miss Ward in London to offer her help in the Guide International Service and was the first Australian to be accepted and leave for England and training.



Marjory Taylor Australia

Marjory Taylor became a Member of the Order of Australia on 9 June 1980 for her service to nursing. During World War II she served with the Royal Australian Airforce Nursing Service (1944-1946) and worked voluntarily as senior nursing officer with the Girl Guide International Service in the British Zone, Germany, for three years. From 1950 until 1981 Marjory worked with the Geelong Hospital, first as supervisor of the Maternity Wing and then Director of nursing. For 17 years - two as president - Marjory was a board member of the Intellectually Handicapped (Karingal) and was a founder and Board Member of the Geelong Hospice Care Association.

Marjory Walkowskit (married name)

Jean (Tommy) Tucker Australia

Served in Europe



Three members from Australia. Barbara Godson, Nancy Kemp and Gwen Hesketh