

## **General Information**

The Girls' Brigade is an international and interdenominational Christian youth organisation. It was founded in 1893 in Dublin, Ireland. The modern organisation was formed as the result of the amalgamation of three like-minded and similarly structured organisations in 1964. These organisations were the Girls' Brigade of Ireland (1893), the Girls' Guildry of Scotland (1900), and the Girls' Life Brigade of England (1902). The International Headquarters are currently based in Glasgow. The organisation operates in over 60 countries worldwide and is divided into five Fellowships:

1. African
2. Asian
3. Caribbean and Americas
4. European and
5. Pacific

International Conferences are held every four years, this has been happening since 1998 when the conference was in Australia. It was in Thailand in 2002, Northern Ireland in 2006, and Malaysia in 2010. The Queen Mother and Princess Alice were Girls' Brigade's patrons until their deaths in 2002 and 2004 respectively. There are, at the moment, no living patrons. The anthem of the Girls Brigade is the hymn Give me oil in my lamp.

The motto of the Girls' Brigade is "**Seek, Serve and Follow Christ**" and its Aim is "To help girls become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, and through self control, reverence and a sense of responsibility to find true enrichment of life". Because of the youth development aspect of its work, the Girls' Brigade is a member of The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) and has been since 1936, when it was one of NCVYS's founding organisations.

### **GIRLS BRIGADE NORTH WEST LONDON DISTRICT**

The North West London district consists of 8 companies: 1<sup>st</sup> Edgware, 5<sup>th</sup> Hendon, 1<sup>st</sup> Kenton, 2<sup>nd</sup> Northolt, 1<sup>st</sup> Queensbury, 1<sup>st</sup> Stanmore, 1<sup>st</sup> Sudbury Hill and 1<sup>st</sup> Sudbury Town.

#### **From the Commissioner:**

Girls' Brigade has been working in North West London for over 80 years and during that time there has been several changes in name and area covered. The latest change was in 1997 when our name was changed from Brent and Harrow Division to North West London District and companies from Hendon joined the group.

During those years many girls have joined companies and many young leaders trained. The district has been responsible in training young people over the age of 14 to become young leaders and our effective annual training programme has allowed young people to discover their talents

and learn new skills which has enabled many to go on to become adult leaders working in the borough now.

Our district has had girls selected to attend a Fonomarae where girls from different countries meet up as part of a cultural exchange and see how Girls' Brigade operates in different parts of the world. A new Girls Brigade initiative in starting companies in Kosovo has provided some girls from the borough an opportunity to travel and help out in local companies during the summer months.

Although the companies in our group are spread across several boroughs we support each other and provide a safe environment for young people to have fun and learn life skills which they can put to use as they grow and mature.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Stanmore – Captain Claire Ingate**

1<sup>st</sup> Stanmore is 75 years old, during this time we have had 6 captains. I joined the company as a girl aged 5, went through each section, did young leaders training and became an officer aged 18 in 1991, I became Captain in 1999. Currently, we have 4 regular volunteers (myself, Ruth – a lieutenant, Shanaj- a helper and Nana – our chaplain) and the church's children's worker who recently became one of the country's first male Girls Brigade officers. Some parents also help out when our regular helpers are unable to attend. All volunteers are committed to working with the young people and rarely take an evening off. We meet every Friday during term time, in the past we have held week long camps but more recently have taken groups away for weekends. In the last 15 years 240 girls have been members of our company some for a short time, others for longer. We currently have about 60 girls in our company ranging from aged 4 1/2yrs – 14yrs. The girls come from diverse backgrounds, everyone is welcome. A number of our eldest girls have been members since they were 4 and are committed to our company and the events we hold. We have taken part in some national events at the Royal Albert Hall, Remembrance day parade at the cenotaph, Trooping of the Colour and most recently the Mayor Making Ceremony in May 2013 and the Civic Service in June 2013. We also have links with a local Sheltered housing association in Stanmore and some of our girls go there to and give gifts they had made to the residents. The Girls also visit a Nursing Home in Headstone Lane at Christmas to sing carols. As a company we are committed to seeing the lives of girls become transformed through fun, friendship, and acceptance of who they are. We provide a space where they can come and be themselves, ask questions and get support if needed.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Queensbury- Captain Jane Stubbs**

1st Queensbury has been going for 73 years we have had 5 captains with Maureen Eaton now an officer at Burton in Hampshire and Beverly Eyres is captain at 1st Hythe in Southampton. We have lots of auxilliary leaders with Jill Simmons our longest serving with over 30 years service. She was in the Girls Life Brigade as a girl . We had the wonderful pleasure of gaining an officer last year who is now studying to be a teacher at university. We have 18 regular girls each week and a young leader on level 2. Our minister Rev Steven hill is our chaplain and a great support. We join in all the district events and look forward to this year at Girls Brigade.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Kenton – Captain Rebecca Woodvine**

1<sup>st</sup> Kenton has been going for 76 years, last year we had a celebration with a reunion of past and present girls. The girls and leaders performed a musical of Jairus' Daughter. Since beginning as Girls Life Brigade GB has changed throughout the years. Kenton has always been a large

company, sometimes reaching numbers of over 100. For many years we have done the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, with many youngsters achieving their Gold Award and the thrilling time of either going to St James or Buckingham Palace. Many of our girls also achieve the Queens Award. We have always been blessed with many volunteers and although at times we have been short we have always had a large number of older girls who have helped out in the younger sections. In the past, with the BB, at our monthly church parades we used to march around the local area which used to help with our recruiting. Camps have always been a high priority at Kenton. Many youngsters have made commitments to Christ and as result are serving in other churches, centres or often abroad. Displays and Awards evenings are a regular feature of company life. We were privileged to be part of a large display in the Albert Hall. Our girls enjoy a variety of activities including outings, fun days and games as well as badgework. We have supported many different charities such as Guide dogs, Christmas shoe box appeals and regularly supporting a missionary working in India. Hundreds of girls have passed through our doors which we have had the pleasure of both serving and working with, touching many lives with the gospel in a needy world.

### **5th Hendon Company**

The 5th Hendon Company was formed in 1926 making it 87 years old this year in 2013. We currently have 23 girls attending and 3 leaders. The Company is very diverse and at present we have girls from 7 different nationalities.

I have been an officer for 39 years - 37 years as Captain - and have seen a number of girls come to faith in Jesus Christ. When I was 15 it was at a summer camp that I became a Christian so I have much to thank previous leaders for their example and dedication.

We have had 6 girls gaining the Queen's Award and currently have one girl more than half way through completing it.

Some members of our company were chosen as official programme sellers at the Royal Wedding's of Prince Charles & Diana and Prince Andrew & Sarah. Also we took part in the parade for the Queen Mother's 90th birthday celebrations in 1990.

For 20 years we arranged a meal for approximately 100 senior citizen's. We had sponsored events to raise the money and visited local care homes and elderly residents in our locality. We arranged transport for them to get to and from the church where they enjoyed a hot meal followed by entertainment from the girls or special guests. At the end of the evening they were each given a gift from the girls.

It is always encouraging to see some of the girls many years later who often say how much they enjoyed being in Girls' Brigade and how the things they learnt there have helped them in their employment and have been a good foundation for their lives as a whole.

The 5th Hendon is a happy and friendly company and parent's often say their daughter loves coming to Girls' Brigade and can't wait for our company evening to come around each week.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Northolt- Captain Ruth Rego**

2<sup>nd</sup> Northolt is 56 years old and currently have 7 volunteers. How long have they served:

Ruth Rego (Captain) (20+ years in Company & Church)

Pat Davidson (30+ years in Company & Church) – was a child minder before retiring. Is a church member, Sunday School leader and current Deacon

Margaret Reynolds (30+ years in Company & Church ) – just retired as a teaching assistant at Greenford High School. Is a church member and Sunday School leader

Tracy Taylor (16 years in Company) – Tracy is a Special Needs Teaching Assistant

David Taylor (10 years as our informal Chaplain). Both David & Tracy live in Letchworth, Hitchin and travel to Northolt each week to support and work with us and also come to every parade service too.

Rebekah Rego – (18 years of age – completed Young Leaders and now qualified as a Lieutenant). Rebekah is studying at Middlesex Uni (Hendon)

Debbie Cunningham (22years of age – completed Young Leaders and now qualified as a Lieutenant). Debbie works at an after school club in Ealing.

Number of volunteers over the past 20-30 years: At least 10 others (during my tenure 18yrs). So probably more.

### **Special stories:**

We have a young lady (**Rianne Smith** – now 18 years old). She was a swimmer with the Northolt Leisure Centre (not sure of the official title), however Rianne was on track to swim for the 2012 Olympic games as a Junior, however when she was 14 she had a stroke and lost the use of her left side and suffered short term memory loss. Rianne made a wonderful recovery, but although she still swims she was never able to recover her former form. Rianne never once complained about her condition or the effects, at the time she was just into her GCSE's. She has worked extremely hard to turn these difficulties into a positive and is currently planning to attend Birmingham (Ashton Uni.) to study medicine, to try and give back to others in similar circumstances to hers. Rianne at the time of her stroke was living in South Harrow, recently moved to Pinner.

**Rebekah Rego** (our new Lieutenant) is also 18 yrs old. Rebekah suffered extreme bullying in her primary school (Earlsmead – South Harrow). However she fought to attend Whitmore High School, Harrow which she won through the Appeal Process. She still struggles with new and different situations (large crowds etc). However due to her experience she became determined to study and become an Education Psychologist. She is on track and will begin studying Psychology with Education at Middlesex Uni (Hendon) later this month. Rebekah also works at the Children's Society as a volunteer as another way to help support young people.

Diversity of girls: In our company for the past 10 years we have had 'Boys in Trust' and this has been both challenging and exciting, lots of fun. Our community is a rough neighbourhood, mostly council properties and not a lot of wealth. So we do struggle with fees etc, but the church is a great help and support. Northolt Park runs Holiday Clubs and does fun days which they fund themselves, so no-one is excluded due to finance.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Sudbury Hill Company – Captain Pat Smith**

The Company is 77 years old. When we celebrated our 75<sup>th</sup> 2 years ago we had many 'old' girls come and join with us. As we have said in the past we don't always see the harvest, but when 'old' girls tell their stories it is very encouraging to hear. Some have become Christians, some have started their own GB Company.

We have had Queen's Award girls, Gold Duke of Edinburgh Awards, taken part in Albert Hall Displays in the company's life. I have 2 Auxiliaries who have been with me for many years. One was a parent who came to help and has remained. The other was a girl and also remained for many years. I have been in the company since a Cadet in The Girls' Life Brigade, became an officer in 1965 and then Captain in 1986.

We have had many volunteers/helpers over the years, whether to help with badge work, take devotions, or speak about their jobs etc. Diversity of girls in mixed, white, black African, one with Romanian parents. The company is small in number and we have just joined with our Boys Brigade company on Fridays to help with staffing and teaching etc. I have 5 young leaders who are extremely good and willing and are a credit to the company.

**1<sup>st</sup> Sudbury Town Company- Captain Jean Harper**

We have celebrated our 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year; old girls returned to share memories from the past and our present company produce a DVD to inform the Church of the impact Girls' Brigade has had on their lives.

Our en:counta group (11-14 years) have been looking at local developments and environmental issues. We will be supporting the Sudbury Arts Festival by hosting 'Trash' a film about the environmental effects of waste and poor recycling on Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

**1<sup>st</sup> Sudbury Town meets every Friday from 6-8pm in Sudbury Baptist Church, District Road Wembley (term time only –except for our company camp in May Half Term).**

In May 2014 we are planning to stay in a coastal town to enjoy the beach and surrounding areas. Camp is a great opportunity for young people to enjoy the outdoors and explore new places. Currently we have a small company with thirty girls on our registers; however we are recruiting new members to all of the age groups (5 to 19 years). Age of Company – 55 years; Number of volunteers you currently have - 5

How long your leaders have been serving young people in the community?

Carol Silvera	BLACK CARIBBEAN	old girl and previous helper returned Sept. 2013 relationship with company over 35 years
Jean Harper	BLACK CARIBBEAN	girl and officer relationship with company 43 years; serving 33years this September
Nichola McCarter	WHITE BRIT	10 years
Rebecca Dan	WHITE EUROPEAN	2 years
Rachel Dan	WHITE EUROPEAN	2 years

Numbers of volunteers over the past 20-30 years – approximately: 50

Diversity of girls you have in your company

BLACK CARIBBEAN	7
BLACK AFRICAN	2
WHITE BRIT	9

INDIAN	5
MIX/DUAL HERITAGE	3
OTHER	4

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