

The Guides (from Chilton Polden itself and the surrounding villages) continue to meet once a week in school term times in the Hall and Guiding remains popular with the age range (10-14+ years). At present we have 13 Guides in 3 patrols.

The Guiding programme is wide ranging and varied to suit girls of many interests. Over the past year we have had girls attending County events such as Emergency Days in Huish Woods where they learned survival skills, plus Somerset Christmas celebrations and a Carol Service in Bridgwater. In August this year a couple of our girls will be joining a South West Regional Camp in Hampshire.

Whenever possible we try to be outside and last summer was a great one for cookouts on the playing field and games evenings. We look forward to more cookouts very soon. We had an outing to Pets at Home in Bridgwater to learn about animal care last year and in January this year we went to the Pantomime in Bridgwater. The girls had the opportunity to do wall climbing at the YMCA last November.

For much of the time the Guides plan their own evenings in patrols from a selection of themed (and very varied) activity packs they choose themselves but for seasonal occasions and some one-off events we do special evenings. As a whole Guide Unit the girls gradually achieved their Craft Badge over several months. To do this they learned to make lovely fancy soaps when a professional soap maker led the evening, they did a taster glass engraving evening taught by Sue, made some small patchwork items in a couple of sessions taught by a Guide's mother and everyone created craft items at Christmas and Easter.

They had a Christmas party and also celebrated the Queen's birthday with scones and cake.

Earlier this year a number of the Guides helped with the village litter pick and as a unit we will be cleaning the church this month. Each year they are expected to do at least one community service activity.

In our very busy lives these days, Guiding is not the only activity which girls do and this age group has SATS and new secondary schools to cope with. Nowadays many schools offer camping and outward bound type activities which used to be more the domain of Guiding and Scouting. What Guiding does offer is a safe, girl only space for our Guides to get together and plan what they want to do. They come from several schools or different classes within the same school so it also gives them the opportunity to meet and make friends. Some evenings it is enough if they just want to socialise but most of the time they are learning new skills without really realising it.

As such Girl Guiding is still very relevant for modern girls and provides a useful service for those who need it. Guide Leaders are unpaid volunteers who give up a lot of time despite the rewards not being financial. In the case of the Chilton Polden Leaders Sue has now been a Guide Leader for 20 years and Sarah for 10 years. We would like to find a willing helper soon to join us.

**Sue and Sarah Burne**