

To Keep the Guide Law
By Heather Talbot

If you are interested in schoolgirl stories and in particular those about Girl Guides, this book may appeal to you. It is my contribution to mark the Centenary of Guiding, a Movement I have belonged to as a Brownie, Guide, Ranger, Guider, and now as County Archivist for Worcestershire. I wonder if those girls who gatecrashed the Boy Scout Rally held at the Crystal Palace in September 1909, asking only to be allowed to join in as Girl Scouts, could have imagined that one hundred years on Guiding would be flourishing in a very different society.

I have taken the Guide Promise and individual Laws, illustrating them by extracts from Guide fiction stories, comparing their view of Guiding with illustrations of real Guiding then. I have been able to draw on my own collection of Guide fiction and substantial archives for photos and records in minute books and logbooks spanning at least 70 years relating to a number of Guide companies. I have also used my own personal knowledge of earlier days.

The authors whose books I have featured include well-known authors of schoolgirl fiction amongst whom is Dorothea Moore, who wrote the very first Guide fiction story 'Terry the Girl Guide' in 1912. Others are Mrs A C Osborn Hann, who was herself a Guider, and Ethel Talbot (no relation!).

I have also included a list of Authors and their books, which may help other collectors.

The following is quoted in the book in the chapter dealing with 'The Sunshine Shop' by Mrs A C Osborn Hann and is part of the text of a Campfire ceremony interpreting all the Guide Laws. It is acted out in the darkness around the fire with individual Guides representing each Law and I have chosen this as it has the magic of campfires past, which still burn brightly in our memories.

' From the darkness beyond them came the voices singing softly, " All Through the Night." At the head of the procession walked Sheila, bearing a lighted taper. Still singing, they entered the circle opposite the fire and halted.

" Who are ye," enquired the Captain, Who comes out of the darkness bearing a shining light?"

And Sheila replied:

"We are the Guide Law. We bring the spirit that dwells in the midst of the Guide Camp; we bear the Light that shines before every Guide to show her the way."

" Lead on, Guide Law," said the Captain, " and give us of thy light." As each Guide, representing one of the Laws, came up to Sheila with her unlighted taper, and, kneeling, kindled it from hers, the circle of listening girls watched intently.

It was an impressive scene. Darkness all around, star-shine above, silence enfolding the Camp, and within the circle, Sheila, with her lighted taper and pale, earnest face, intensely alive to the solemnity of the moment.'