

**'Doing Nature' and Being a Guide: the problem of the town  
Guide in the British Girl Guides Association, 1930-1960**

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3 **'Doing Nature' and Being a Guide: the problem of the town Guide in the British Girl Guides**  
4 **association, 1930-1960**  
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6 **Purpose.** To explore the advice given by the British Girl Guides Association, a popular  
7 girls' youth organisation, to urban members in the period from 1930-1960.  
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10 **Design.** This article is based on an analysis of the Girlguiding publications *The Guide*  
11 and *The Guider* in thirty years spanning 1930-1960.  
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13 **Findings.** The article shows that, although rural spaces maintained symbolic position  
14 in the education and training of the British Girl Guides Association throughout the  
15 mid-twentieth century, the use of urban spaces were central in ensuring that girls  
16 embodied Guiding principles on a day-to-day basis. While rural spaces, and especially  
17 the camp, have been conceptualised by scholars as 'extraordinary' spaces, this article  
18 argues that by encouraging girls to undertake nature study in their urban locality the  
19 organisation stressed the ordinariness of Guiding activity. In doing so, they  
20 encouraged girls to be an active presence in urban public space throughout the  
21 period, despite the fact that, as scholars have identified, the post-war period saw the  
22 increased regulation of children's presence in public spaces. Such findings suggest that  
23 the organisation allowed girls a modicum of freedom in town Guiding activities,  
24 although ultimately these were limited by expectations regarding the behaviour and  
25 conduct of members.  
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28 **Originality/value.** The article builds upon existing understandings of the Girl Guide  
29 organisation and mid-twentieth century youth movements. A number of scholars  
30 have recently argued for a more complex understanding of the relationship between  
31 urban and rural, outdoor and indoor spaces, within youth organisations in the  
32 twentieth century. Yet the place of urban spaces in Girlguiding remains under-  
33 explored.  
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36 **Keywords:** Girl Guides; urban spaces; nature study; informal education  
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43 'Are you ScOUTing?'<sup>i</sup> asked Elizabeth Brimelow, a prominent figure in the British Girl Guides  
44 Association, in a 1957 edition of the organisation's periodical *The Guider*. She continued on  
45 to question the reader: 'Do you feel that for you Scouting can have no OUT in it but only the  
46 IN?'<sup>ii</sup> Such questions were prominent within the movement throughout the mid-twentieth  
47 century, as the issue of town Guiding was continually addressed in organisational  
48 publications. The movement, which had initially been formed in 1910 with the aim of  
49 preparing girls for their duty as wives and mothers of the British Empire, had long placed  
50 outdoor recreation and an education in nature at the heart of its agenda; with the  
51 organisation celebrating the countryside and the positive impact it could have on the  
52 physical and mental health of members (Edwards, 2018). Yet, as Brimelow identified, many  
53 Guide companies found it difficult to achieve the idealised Guiding programme of outdoor  
54 activities, nature observation, and trips into the countryside. Subsequently, Girlguiding  
55 periodicals consistently identified the problems faced by town Guides and gave advice to  
56 both Patrol Leaders and members on how best to apply Guiding activities in an urban  
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3 setting. The advice, which included suggestions for town woodcraft and nature study,  
4 reveals the way that, while contributors to the publications continually upheld the  
5 importance of the natural world and celebrated the countryside as a site of transformative  
6 education, they simultaneously acknowledged the realities of everyday life for girls, and  
7 positioned the town as an educative space in response.  
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11 The symbolism and significance of rural spaces within Girlguiding, and youth organisations  
12 more broadly, has been the subject of some interest in recent years (see: Springhall, 1977;  
13 Bannister, 2014 & Alexander, 2017, pp. 109-139). As David Matless notes, youth movements  
14 formed part of a 'culture of the open air' in the twentieth century by encouraging a close  
15 relationship with the countryside (Matless, 1998, p.74). While elsewhere I have argued that  
16 the Guide organisation identified rural spaces as sites where girls could both develop and  
17 exhibit good citizenship (Edwards, 2018). Such research suggests that, despite the changing  
18 relationship between town and country at this time, including post-war reconstruction,  
19 suburbanisation and changing agricultural practices, the mid-century saw continuity in  
20 public identification with the landscape and the idealisation of the rural and this discourse  
21 permeated youth movements. Yet, the membership of the organisation throughout the mid-  
22 century remained largely urban and a significant proportion of the educational activity of  
23 Guide companies could take place in a clubroom, rather than on a campsite. As Sarah Mills  
24 identifies in her study of the nineteen-fifties British Boy Scout Association's 'Bob-a-Job  
25 Week', the urban spaces (both public and private) navigated by members during this annual  
26 event, challenges our understanding of the youth organisation as being a largely rural  
27 movement (Mills, 2014a, p.115). This disjuncture can also be identified in the Boy Scout's  
28 sister organisation, with the idealised rural ethos of Guiding educational philosophy being  
29 somewhat at odds with the experience of numerous members. Indeed, Guiding logbooks  
30 reveal that company activities took place in a variety of spaces and locations: school, church  
31 halls, domestic spaces (such as the Captain's home), outdoor meetings, campsites and fields,  
32 suggesting that there were a range of geographies of Guiding activity. Yet, despite the  
33 growing interest in the historical geographies of youth organisations in the twentieth  
34 century (Mills, 2013), the place of town Guiding within the organisation, and the advice  
35 given to town girls about how to behave in and utilise urban space, has yet to be fully  
36 explored.  
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46 This study explores the advice and training given to 'town Guides' through the organisational  
47 publications: *The Guide*, aimed at members, and *The Guider*, published for those with  
48 leadership responsibilities. A qualitative textual analysis of the magazines that were  
49 published throughout the thirty-year period from 1930-1960s provides clear evidence of the  
50 ways that Girlguiding philosophy was packaged and disseminated to members, through  
51 articles and stories written by Guiding leaders. At the same time they demonstrate the  
52 outside influences on the organisation, with contributions from prominent educationalists  
53 and contemporaries writing on a variety of subjects and issues. The publications thus served  
54 an educational purpose, providing readers with lessons on the importance and relevance of  
55 Guiding in 'modern' society, as well as disseminating practical tips and ideas for Guiding  
56 activities. Alongside this however, they were also a tool of community building amongst  
57 members, as they brought together readers with localised experiences through the  
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3 publication of their stories, poetry, experiences and questions. Subsequently, both  
4 magazines include, to some extent, the voices of their readers, alongside activities and tasks  
5 that could be shared and completed in the context of a group meeting, making them an  
6 important tool in both the construction and dissemination of organisational attitudes and  
7 approaches across Britain, as well as internationally, as Kristine Alexander has shown  
8 (Alexander, 2017, p.8). Although readership figures are difficult to obtain, the continued  
9 publication of the periodicals throughout the mid-century and the consistent contributions  
10 of members to the magazines, suggests that they were an important avenue of engagement  
11 for members. Thus similar to the nineteenth century school periodicals examined by  
12 Catherine Sloan, these publications were both prescriptive and participatory, with members  
13 encouraged to actively take part in the dissemination of material and ideas (Sloan, 2017,  
14 780); although, as Alexander notes, girls' voices within such sources were often mediated  
15 (Alexander, 2012, p.141).

21 To begin, the first section of this article will examine the symbolic role of the natural world,  
22 and particularly rural spaces, in the citizenship training of twentieth century youth  
23 movements, and particularly the Girl Guides. In doing so, it will consider the implications of  
24 this study for existing scholarship on the movement and highlight the need to add further  
25 complexity to our understanding of how citizenship was understood by the organisation.  
26 Following on from this, the article will then examine the problem of the town Guide in the  
27 organisation, reflecting on the ways in which urban spaces were consistently understood as  
28 having a negative impact on girls and how the rural was positioned in opposition to this. The  
29 article will then seek to add complexity to our understanding of the place of the urban in  
30 mid-century Girlguiding by considering how the movement acknowledged the inevitability of  
31 navigating urban spaces for the majority of members and sought to provide instructions on  
32 the educative use of urban spaces. Finally, this article will end by considering the extent to  
33 which such instructions stretched or subvert gendered expectations of girls' behaviour with  
34 the organisation.

41 Through an analysis of Guiding magazines, this article fundamentally argues that while the  
42 countryside was constructed by the organisation during the mid-twentieth century as being  
43 the most authentic site for the *becoming* of future citizens, the town or city was consistently  
44 understood, not solely as a space of corruption but, as a space of *being*; with urban  
45 members being encouraged to embrace urban spaces as a site for the development and  
46 application of Guiding skills in the present. Importantly, girls were encouraged to undertake  
47 activities such as observation, tracking and stalking in the ordinary spaces that they occupied  
48 on a daily basis, fitting Guiding activities into their daily routines and *being* a Guide in all  
49 situations. In encouraging this, members were taught to seek adventure in the everyday  
50 and, most importantly, were emboldened to independently explore public spaces and  
51 demonstrate the skills that Guiding had taught them. Such skills were embodied and  
52 evidenced in the ability of girls to observe, navigate and maintain social etiquette in the  
53 public spaces around them, revealing the ways that good citizenship for girls was  
54 conceptualised beyond the domestic sphere, albeit with explicit limitations.

59 **Girl Guiding, Citizenship Training and the Rural**  
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4 In 1995, William Cronon asserted that nature was a 'profoundly human construction',  
5 arguing that the way the natural world is understood at any particular point in time is  
6 inevitably bound up in societal values and assumptions (Cronon, 1996, p.25). Numerous  
7 scholars, interested in the formation of national identity, have explored the idea of nature as  
8 a constructed entity, which is given meaning and value. Rodrick Frazier Nash posited that  
9 the notion of the uncontrolled 'wilderness' was created as a means to give American society  
10 'identity and meaning' and is thus the 'basic ingredient of American culture' (Nash, 2001, xi).  
11 Similarly, David Lowenthal, has explored the significance of the English landscape in British  
12 national identity; arguing that the 'countryside has been its peoples' supreme communal  
13 creation since prehistoric times' (Lowenthal, 1991, 2013). Within the English context, the  
14 celebration of the English countryside as a symbol of national identity has often been  
15 understood to have roots in anti-urbanism, as originally argued by Martin Wiener, and as  
16 such is bound up in value judgments regarding the negative impact of urban living on society  
17 (Wiener, 1981, p.47). Subsequently, as David Matless has argued, the twentieth century saw  
18 the rise in the popularity of the outdoor recreation movement through which the English  
19 landscape become bound up in moral geographies of citizenship and conceptualised as a site  
20 for the development of the intellectual, physical and spiritual self (Matless, 1997, p.142).  
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27 Such moral judgments about urban/rural difference were central to the pedagogical use of  
28 nature in both formal and informal education in this period. As Hester Barron has shown,  
29 the School Journey Movement, which facilitated educational fieldtrips led by teachers, was  
30 partly a response to concerns about urban poverty in the interwar period and the perceived  
31 impact this was having on children (Barron, 2013, pp.171-172). While Lynn Cook has argued  
32 that the promotion of outdoor education following the 1944 Education Act, shaped by the  
33 educational philosophy of Kurt Hahn, was a response to social and political concerns of the  
34 post-war period and particularly worries about juvenile delinquency (Cook, 1999, p.158).  
35 Such concerns, as Mark Freeman has identified, were also present in Hahn's Outward Bound  
36 movement that was formed in the 1940s with the aim of providing character training  
37 through outdoor adventuring, which was promoted as a form of 'self-discovery' (Freeman,  
38 2011). While youth organisations more broadly (and not just in the British context), utilised  
39 outdoor recreations such as camping, as a means to develop the good citizenship of young  
40 people, transforming them into, what Kenny Cupers terms, 'governable subjects' (Cupers,  
41 2008, p.195).  
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47 This approach was at the heart of the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides Associations, which, based  
48 on the educational philosophy of Sir Robert Baden Powell, aimed to foster good citizenship  
49 and address concerns about urban youth culture through a programme of outdoor  
50 recreation, nature study, woodcraft and proficiency tests. Such activities, it was believed,  
51 would foster desired character traits and behaviour, including preparedness, thrift,  
52 obedience and a commitment to service. As one member wrote to the Editor of *The Guider*  
53 magazine in 1930: 'the object of the Guide movement is to develop the child's character  
54 along mental and physical lines, so that through its self-development it can serve others.'<sup>iii</sup>  
55 The concept of service thus underpinned the education and training provided by the  
56 organisation, with an emphasis on preparing girls for their future duties as adult citizens.  
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60 Indeed, the notion of *becoming* – that is the idea that childhood is a period of social

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3 development (James, Jenk & Prout, 2005, p.148) and therefore all children are 'adults in the  
4 making' (Uprichard, 2008, p.304) has certainly shaped the way that historians have  
5 understood the training of the organisation, and youth movements in general, particularly  
6 within the imperial context (Smith, 2006; Warren, 1990). In the Guides this preparation for  
7 adulthood was achieved through regular patrol meetings, public performances (such as  
8 shows and parades), community work and trips to the countryside, for camping, rambling  
9 and other outdoor activities. Moreover, the success of an individual member in *becoming* a  
10 good citizen was measured through a number of tests and badges, which marked a girls'  
11 self-development in a range of skills and proficiencies. This focus on children as future  
12 citizens was mirrored in broader political and public discourse throughout the mid-twentieth  
13 century, which, as Laura King has argued, was intensified by the dislocation of war (King,  
14 2016, p.394) and, as Laura Tisdall has noted, became enshrined in child psychology in the  
15 years following (Tisdall, 2017, p.40).

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Alongside this however, Guides were also expected to perform good citizenship in the  
present by making contributions to society through 'Good Turns' and exhibiting certain  
emotions and character traits, such as perseverance, cheerfulness and selflessness.  
Subsequently, the notion of the child as *being* – a concept in which the child is defined as a  
'social actor' (Uprichard, 2008, p.304) in the present that emerged to replace *becoming* as  
the dominant model of understanding childhood in the nineteen-nineties (James, Jenk &  
Prout, 2005, p.148) – also shaped organisational understandings of its members. As Sarah  
Mills has identified in her study of the Woodcraft Folk youth organisation, young people  
were conceptualised as concurrently 'citizens-in-the-making' and 'young citizens' (Mills,  
2014b, p.66). In other words, despite historians' tendency to emphasise the future driven  
training of twentieth century youth organisations, it is clear that meanings of citizenship  
within the organisation was defined by both present and future, *being* and *becoming*;  
meanings of which were largely framed by the middle-class ethos that guided the  
movement. This is significant as, while the two have for a long time been understood as  
being separate frameworks, more recently sociologists such as Emma Uprichard, have  
argued that our application of these concepts of childhood must be simultaneous, if we are to  
fully grapple with the complex ways that childhood has been constructed and understood  
(Uprichard, 2008, p.304).

The organisation positioned the rural landscape as being the most suitable place for this  
simultaneous citizenship training, as it could help counter the negative impact of urban living,  
including the physical and mental effects of urban poverty in the 1930s, provide an escape  
from wartime destruction and anxiety, and assuage the impact of the breakdown of family  
life in the post-war period (Edwards, 2018, p.82-95). Alongside this, the movement worked  
within a popular discourse that romanticized country childhood (Ward, 1990, pp.18-19) and  
positioned the countryside as a space of adventure and freedom for children. Opportunities  
for adventure were, however, gendered, with ideas of service in the Girl Guides largely being  
linked to girls' future roles as wives and mothers. (See Warren, 1990; Smith, 2006;  
Alexander, 2017, pp.77-78 & Edwards, 2018, pp.172-178). Despite this, Kristine Alexander  
and Katherine Magyarody have shed light on the ways that the organisation encouraged  
girls to uphold a more complex ideal of femininity and to some extent allowed girls to  
subvert gender norms by providing transgressive spaces to do so (Alexander, 2017, p.124 &

Magyarody, 2016). Rural spaces were thus central to the educational agenda of the organisation but also allowed girls a modicum of autonomy to express themselves, although, as Jim Gledhill has found in his study of the movement in the 1960s, an emphasis on domestic training remained dominant within the organisation well into the second half of the twentieth century (Gledhill, 2013, p.78). Subsequently, due to its ability to appease both adults and children the organisation attracted significant popularity throughout the mid-twentieth century with girls' from a range of social backgrounds (although largely middle-class). The organisation maintaining high membership throughout the period<sup>iv</sup>, which peaked at 626,028 Association members in 1933 but never went below 400,000 (Edwards, 2018, pp. 265-266), with a large proportion of members being urban. During this time, the movement continued many of its original practices, badges and ideas. Indeed, while the emphasis on the British Empire declined in response to decolonisation and the spread of Guiding across the globe, the idealisation of rural spaces remained.

In comparison, urban sphere, which underwent significant change in the mid-twentieth century (impacted by slum clearance, aerial bombardment and post-war reconstruction), was often positioned as a site of deviance. As Joe Moran argues that the urban street came to occupy a 'unique place in the British imagination' in the mid-twentieth century, as it became a 'symbolic means of articulating hopes for and anxieties about social and political change' particularly in the post-war period (Moran, 2012, p.166). Subsequently, the participation and behaviour of working-class children and young people in urban public space gained significant attention from contemporaries. Focusing on Glasgow, Andrew Davies has evidenced that the city streets were a site of contestation between police officers and local youths in the nineteen-thirties (Davies, 1998, p.253). Similarly, Angela Bartie has argued that the image of 'violence in the streets' was central to the social construction of the problem of gangs in 1960s Glasgow (Bartie, 2010, p.400). Such work suggests that urban spaces were continually understood as sites of deviance throughout the mid-century. Meanwhile, historians of childhood have explored the extent to which the twentieth century saw the decline of the neighbourhood street as a site of leisure for working-class children, with many identifying the Second World War as a turning point. Amy Helen Bell has argued that the war 'presented new opportunities for children to negotiate public space', through their presence in air raid shelters and on bombsites (Bell, 2017, p.84). However, Lucie Glasheen suggests that this was largely temporary, with the building of adventure parks in post-war cities serving to regulate children's use of space (Glasheen, 2019, p.70). Matthew Thomson supports this arguing that shifting discourses of the child following the Second World War served to isolate children from the outside world and limit their autonomous use of public spaces (Thomson, 2013, p.1). Although, Stephen Brooke's work on the photography of Roger Mayne evidences that children's use of the neighbourhood for play continued into the nineteen-sixties, which suggests that attempts at regulation were not always successful (Brooke, 2014, p.481). However, while there has been significant work on the urban outdoors as a site of play for children in the twentieth century, this article seeks to consider the way that the movement positioned urban outdoor spaces as sites of education. Discussions of urban educative spaces have often focused on indoor spaces; for example, Tom Hulme has studied the school as a physical site of citizenship education before the Second World War (Hulme, 2015, p.432). Meanwhile, Stephanie Spencer has argued for the

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3 city as an *imagined* educative space in post-war Britain (Spencer, 2006, p.133). However,  
4 there has been less concern for how public spaces, such as the street, neighbourhood or  
5 urban parks, were utilised practically in the citizenship training of young people. This is true,  
6 despite the fact that, as Sarah Mills has evidenced, a study of the way youth movements  
7 encouraged participation in urban public space, can challenge the traditional narrative of  
8 post-war deviance and allow further understanding of the way the child was positioned as a  
9 citizen at this time (Mills, 2014a, p.125). Building on our understanding of how the urban  
10 was positioned as an educative space for children, this article will now reflect upon the place  
11 of the urban within the rural-based Girlguiding programme. Indeed, while Richard Kyle, in his  
12 study of the Boys Brigade, argues that the 'camp can be theorized as an *extraordinary* space  
13 of self-development' (Kyle, 2014, p.22), a study of town Guiding reveals that 'ordinary'<sup>v</sup> or  
14 everyday spaces, meaning those which were part of the landscape of daily life, also played  
15 an important role in allowing girls' to evidence the skills that they had acquired in their time  
16 as a Guide. Engaging with the educational opportunities of urban spaces was thus vital in  
17 allowing the movement to address the 'everyday realities of being a child' (Uprichard, 2008,  
18 p.304) in the mid-twentieth century and reflected the organisation's approach to citizenship  
19 training which traversed both temporal lines – the present and the future – and spatial – the  
20 urban and the rural.

### 27 **'Doing Nature' and The Problem of the Town Guide**

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30 In 1934 at the Girl Guide County Commissioner's conference, speaker P.M. Bond gave 'A  
31 Plea for Out-of-Doors', which outlined one of the biggest issues that Guiding faced at that  
32 time: the lack of outdoor activity by members. Bond declared:  
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35 I have been trying to find out how much time this, our Outdoor  
36 Movement, actually spends out of doors, and although in every county  
37 there are a valiant few to whom out-of-doors still seems the only  
38 setting for Guiding, on the whole the result is most depressing. ... I  
39 suppose the feeling is that it is easier to be indoors, you can see  
40 everyone at once, and if you want to "do Nature" you only take into  
41 the room the bits you have already looked up.<sup>vi</sup>  
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46 Bond's speech is reflective of a persistent concern throughout the period that members  
47 were abandoning the outdoors in favour of indoor activities and meetings, and thus were  
48 'doing nature' only in the passive sense. Of particular concern was the town or city Guide:  
49 with financial difficulties, a lack of proximity to the country, time constraints and bad  
50 weather serving to limit the amount of time they could spend in the outdoors. This was a  
51 concern for contributors to the Guiding publications, who saw such issues as being a  
52 reflection on the lack of commitment, ignorance, apathy and passivity of modern girls and  
53 the women leading them. Bond went on to comment that:  
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57 the fundamental difficulty is in the Guider's own mind; it seems that  
58 nowadays a lot of Guiders look upon going out as a rather nice extra  
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3 that you put in when there is nothing very important to do, instead of  
4 looking upon it as one of *the essentials* of character training.<sup>vii</sup>  
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7 Such concerns about the town Guide and her leader are significant as they reveal the  
8 symbolic associations that the organisation attributed to the outdoors, and to the  
9 countryside in particular. Throughout the mid-twentieth century, 'Doing nature', meaning  
10 the observation and study of the natural world, was understood by many in the organisation  
11 to be the central tenant of Guiding at this time. This was partly due to the religiosity of being  
12 close to nature, with the countryside being positioned as a transformative space (Alexander,  
13 2017, 115-116). Catherine Bannister, for example, has argued that within the Baden-Powell  
14 organisations 'the campsite can be seen as a 'sacred' space, its metaphorical boundaries  
15 transcending the physical' (Bannister, 2014, p.39). But this was also partly a product of, and  
16 fed into, the broader romanticisation of the rural idyll at this time. For this reason, the  
17 annual camp, was often celebrated by individuals in the movement as being the most  
18 exciting part of the Guiding year and as an opportunity to be 'at one' with nature. In 1937,  
19 M. L. Martin, the Scottish Commissioner for Camping, stated that camping 'offers the best  
20 opportunities of the whole year for real Guiding.'<sup>viii</sup> While, the Editor of *The Guide* made a  
21 similar assertion in 1948: 'you cannot possibly understand completely the true meaning of  
22 Guiding until you have lived under canvas.'<sup>ix</sup> By suggesting that camping was more authentic  
23 than other forms of Guiding, both writers were making value judgments along spatial lines,  
24 with camping in the country deemed as being more desirable than Guiding in urban spaces.  
25 The authenticity of the camping experience was largely deemed so due to the way that  
26 camping allowed members to be close to nature and to escape town life. The construction of  
27 the countryside as being the ideal site of Guiding activity was thus always understood  
28 opposite the urban 'other'.  
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36 Throughout the period from 1930 to 1960 the town and city (conceptualised in general  
37 terms) was consistently positioned as problematic spaces within Guiding publications.  
38 During the 1930s, when urban spaces were discussed within the pages of Guiding  
39 magazines, it was often the urban slum that was recalled, with little consideration of class  
40 and regional diversity in experiences of living in towns and cities. Contributions to the  
41 magazines consistently criticised towns for being dirty and cramped but demonstrated a  
42 distaste for the lifestyle also, with contributors to the magazines critiquing the working and  
43 leisure lives of urban people. Contributors also expressed particular pity for urban children,  
44 who were seemingly being denied the rural environment that was best suited to childhood  
45 development. In 1937 Martin continued on to inform listeners about the distinctive  
46 problems that might face a town Guide in camp and, as he did so, he contrasted the artificial  
47 man-made environment of the city, with that of the rural.  
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53 Her life has been lived in small rooms and narrow streets. There are  
54 seldom any long views in a town, and actual distances are generally  
55 short, as shops, school, clubroom, etc., are nearly always within easy  
56 reach of home. ...The first night in a tent may be a thrill, but it is more  
57 likely to be a really alarming experience. A bit of canvas seems a poor  
58 protection from all the terrors of the night. ...The silence, and what she  
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3 will call the “loneliness” of the country will be further difficulties for the  
4 town Guide. She has possibly never been alone during her whole life ... it  
5 is not difficult to understand why the silence of the country should be  
6 disquieting to a child who has lived all her life in the noise of traffic.<sup>x</sup>  
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10 Here, Martin juxtaposed the natural space, light and sounds of the countryside with the  
11 manmade urban environment, constructing an idea of what constituted the ‘real’ or  
12 authentic outdoors and the suggestion is made that the urban child is missing out. Such  
13 juxtaposition between the rural and the urban was further reinforced by G. Sharp, who  
14 wrote of the need of girls to escape the confines of urban living in 1935: ‘You are living the  
15 open air life which means that for the time being you are released from the walls of  
16 convention which surround the town dweller, and for a whole week are free to belong to  
17 the brotherhood of all the living creatures who make their homes in the woods or tramp the  
18 open road.’<sup>xi</sup> In the nineteen-thirties, urban space was thus constructed as being crowded,  
19 limiting and manmade, while the countryside, due to its abundance of nature and living  
20 animals, was presented as an escape from this environment and, as the Health and  
21 Cleanliness Council termed it in 1931, ‘the humdrum round of everyday’<sup>xii</sup>. Underpinning  
22 such concerns were assumptions about the lifestyles of the urban working class, with  
23 worries about the living conditions of working class girls from slums, and the belief that the  
24 Guide camp possibly might be their only opportunity to experience the ‘wonders’ of the  
25 countryside.  
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31 The onset of the Second World War and the resulting destruction only served to embolden  
32 concerns about urban conditions. At this time, rising juvenile delinquency was perceived as  
33 being a response to wartime dislocation, including a lack of parental supervision and  
34 opportunities for financial freedom causing ‘restlessness’ amongst working-class girls. Of  
35 particular concern was sexual delinquency, with the movement reflecting broader worries  
36 over the sexual activity of young women in wartime (Tinkler, 1995 & Rose, 1998). In 1943,  
37 *The Guider* published ‘Delinquency in War-Time’, a speech delivered by Miss Mellanby,  
38 Governor of a borstal institution, at the Division Commissioner’s Conference. The speech,  
39 which was accompanied by an image of a girl in front of large industrial factory, lamented  
40 the way teenage girls living in towns were seemingly having romantic relationships with  
41 soldiers, utilising new spaces available to them, such as air raid shelters, to do so.<sup>xiii</sup> Such  
42 worry about the impact of the war on urban space, and its use by young people, continued  
43 after the war, despite large-scale rebuilding initiatives. In 1949 *The Guider*, discussed the  
44 ‘lack of playing space’<sup>xiv</sup> for urban children as being a contributory reason for the problem of  
45 juvenile delinquency, reflecting the way that, as Ben Highmore notes, the image of children  
46 playing on bombsites became symbolic of the much wider social issue of juvenile crime at  
47 this time (Highmore, 2013, 324).  
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54 At this time, the presence of young people in ruined public spaces, also served to further  
55 exacerbate concerns about working-class parenting (Cowman, 2017, p.237). In 1954, youth  
56 worker Basil Henriques reflected on the perceived rise of juvenile delinquency in his speech  
57 to the English County Commissioners’ conference, which he identified as being a response to  
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3 the unhappiness caused by the so-called decline of family, with the rise of working mothers.  
4 He stated that:  
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7 I can look back and see the little street urchins from the slums  
8 coming from homes where poverty, unemployment, sickness really  
9 meant ruin for the family ... The slums, I am glad to say are fast  
10 disappearing (though nothing like fast enough). Yet in spite of the  
11 benefit which slum clearance brings, we are witnessing, I suppose,  
12 the greatest challenge of all – the weakening of family life.<sup>xv</sup>  
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16 Urban leisure spaces also played an important role in the way problems of youth were  
17 conceptualised and understood. As Louise Jackson has identified, concerns about children  
18 and youth had often been related to the use of urban space, with the regulation of street  
19 activity being seen as highly important in addressing the moral corruption of young people.  
20 However, the development of distinctive commercialised spaces for youthful leisure in the  
21 interwar period meant that places such as coffee bars were increasingly policed in the post-  
22 war years (Jackson, 2008, pp. 293 & 304). Thus, it was the idea of the ‘crowded, mean  
23 streets’<sup>xvi</sup> of urban Britain, as one contributor to *The Guider* described it in 1956, which  
24 dominated discussions of town life throughout the period. Consequently, Guiding and the  
25 access to the countryside that it provided, was positioned as an important tool in tackling  
26 the problem of urban leisure as it allowed girls an opportunity for space, freedom and  
27 adventure. In August 1958, *The Guider* contributor and author, Agnes Mary Maynard  
28 commented in the special training pages of the magazine that ‘Let us once more remember  
29 that while the adult is searching for rest, order and safety, youth is searching for action,  
30 excitement and danger.’<sup>xvii</sup> The countryside was thus understood to provide young people  
31 with a more nurturing space to express their energy and search for adventure, in  
32 comparison to the urban cinema or streets.  
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40 ‘Doing’ nature thus remained a central element in addressing contemporary concerns about  
41 urban girls’ lives throughout the period, with the natural world being constructed as the anti-  
42 thesis of the urban. Subsequently, concerns proliferated that many members and leaders  
43 were choosing not to undertake outdoor activities and the town Guide was often positioned  
44 as a problem. Notions of authentic experiences of nature were central to these concerns  
45 with particular worries that Guide patrols were spending too much time indoors and were  
46 thus having unfulfilling nature experiences. In 1933, one member wrote to the Editor of *The*  
47 *Guider* and declared that: ‘These members of our great movement who have never been to  
48 camp lack some vital part of Guiding, for the clubroom can never give what a week spent in  
49 the open and in close contact with nature can.’<sup>xviii</sup> While, Elizabeth Brimelow declared in  
50 1957: ‘Guiding *is* essentially an outdoor game, as football is; and though, as for football, you  
51 can train for it indoors if need be, it isn’t any fun if you never go out and put it all into  
52 practice by playing the real game out of doors.’<sup>xix</sup> Such concerns were framed around the  
53 fact that members were seemingly rejecting the adventure and excitement of outdoor  
54 recreation for the comfort of indoor activities. This tendency had symbolic meaning as it  
55 reflected the inability of members to embody the basic Guiding characteristics of  
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3 preparedness, adventurousness, tenacity and commitment. This is best evidenced in the  
4 concerns about the reaction of members to bad weather.  
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7 Bad weather - usually meaning rain, thunderstorms or snow - was often celebrated by the  
8 movement as providing excitement, adventure and, most importantly, training in tenacity,  
9 which was a central principal of Guide character. Consequently, members were encouraged  
10 to partake in outdoor activities in all seasons. In a 1934 article on 'Rambling Among the  
11 Stars' *The Guider* contributor M.G. Sears informed readers that they should be engaging in  
12 outdoor activities in all weathers: 'Rambling is one of the most joyous pastimes in which a  
13 patrol can engage. Spring, summer, autumn, winter – it makes no difference. Each season  
14 has its own mysteries and spells with which to enchant.'<sup>xx</sup> While in 1958, Maynard  
15 recounted her experience of camping during a thunderstorm and the preparedness of the  
16 Guides in her company.  
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21 They were *prepared*. Almost as if it had been rehearsed the few Guides  
22 who were allowed to help rushed round in swim suits and sweaters,  
23 keeping the bell tents standing with the aid of ropes and pegs from the  
24 kitchen shelter; the others kept their bedding dry, ready for the worst  
25 should it happen. Not a tent standing. I asked one of the Guides at the  
26 end of the time if she had enjoyed the camp. 'Yes', she said, 'but I  
27 should have liked another storm!'<sup>xxi</sup>  
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31 Here Maynard was drawing upon the Scouting motto 'be prepared' to emphasise that, by  
32 camping in a thunderstorm, these members were successfully upholding and embodying  
33 Guiding principles. Such articles are evidence of the way that, throughout the period,  
34 weather, and bad weather specifically, were positioned as important educational  
35 experiences, as they encouraged closeness with nature and tested the strength and  
36 resolve of the individual. Yet, contributors to the magazines were often concerned that  
37 Guide companies were avoiding bad weather and darkness, particularly in wartime when  
38 the blackout, which was described by one contributor to *The Guide* as 'like a door shutting  
39 in so much that has been fun and worthwhile'<sup>xxii</sup>, limited the amount of time urban  
40 members could spend outdoors. This was partly understood to be a result of parental  
41 concerns as Bond commented in 1934: 'Sometimes Guiders say they cannot be much out  
42 of doors in winter because the parents would think it "queer" and perhaps would not like  
43 their children going out in the cold and dark.'<sup>xxiii</sup> According to Bond, this was true despite  
44 the fact that 'Most games are much more exciting played in the dark and there is real  
45 character training in being able to play happily and confidently in the dark. To some girls it  
46 is a revelation to go for the first time into a wood on a winter night and see the branches  
47 hung with stars.'<sup>xxiv</sup> Such statements reflect the almost transformative impact that nature  
48 was considered to have upon girls.  
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56 In reaction to this, drawing upon ideas of the innate adventurousness of their members,  
57 contributors called for Guides to undertake Guiding activities in all weathers. In December  
58 1944, *The Guide* encouraged members to 'Get out and Have Fun'. Contributor I. Morrison  
59 declared:  
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5 Christmas holidays, the time for MUD, possibly SNOW! Do we say to  
6 ourselves UGH! and cuddle deeper into our chairs by the fire and  
7 think about the fun we had out of doors in the summer, or read a  
8 book about other people being enterprising and having adventures;  
9 or are we the sort of people who like having them ourselves?<sup>xxv</sup>  
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12 While Brimelow, drew on similar understandings of adventure in the 1957:

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15 Oh, yes, we have long, dark winters, and sometimes they are cold, and  
16 certainly it rains more often than not – but don't we live in the age of  
17 street lamps and electric torches, plastic macs and wellington boots?  
18 No child minds the rain or notices the darkness if bent on an  
19 enthralling pursuit, and few children feel cold when excitement is  
20 stirring their young blood.<sup>xxvi</sup>  
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24 These contributions are particularly important as they reveal the ways that the organisation,  
25 despite a regular focus on domesticity and homemaking, envisioned the outdoors as a site of  
26 adventure, freedom and escape for girls. Indeed, part of the concern that girls were avoiding  
27 bad weather was that members were becoming 'soft' and were failing to gain adequate  
28 training in preparedness. In 1958, Maynard declared: 'Treat them as sugar plums and we  
29 shall make them ones!<sup>xxvii</sup> Significantly, the idea of not wanting girls to become 'sugar  
30 plums', is reflective of the complex ideas of femininity at play in Guiding, with Maynard  
31 concerned that the movement was not teaching girls' resilience and commitment, key  
32 characteristics that distinguished Guides from 'other' girls. Such concerns reflected the way  
33 that the natural world remained central to the citizenship training of the movement  
34 throughout the mid-century, with the countryside positioned as a transformative space for  
35 the *becoming* of children.  
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40 Despite the somewhat mythological presence of the rural in the educational philosophy of the  
41 organisation, a study of Girlguiding also reveals the the movement consistently  
42 acknowledged the limitations of the urban 'realities' of some members, which meant that  
43 trips into the countryside were often difficult to achieve. Indeed, for many members the  
44 rural ideal remained illusive, with practical difficulties providing barriers against the  
45 undertaking of regular trips into the countryside. For some financial difficulties and lack of  
46 resources proved to be a problem. In the context of unemployment and economic hardship  
47 in some areas of Britain in the 1930s, for example, at times cost of travel, uniform and  
48 equipment made camping an impossibility, while the practicalities of many working class city  
49 homes meant that members had few green spaces to practice in. Addressing this issue in  
50 1937, Martin spoke of the concern for 'Special Areas' and called upon Guiders to run  
51 collective camps 'for inexperienced Guides and Guiders or to take camp children from the  
52 Special Areas who have had no previous camping experience.'<sup>xxviii</sup> Despite this intervention,  
53 concerns about lack of space continued into the post-war period when in 1947 *The Guider*  
54 reminded readers that 'Guiding Belongs Outdoors' the magazine acknowledged the  
55 limitations of space faced by many city Guides: 'As this I hear the city company cry, But  
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3 where can we do all this? We have a hall with no garden, and there are crowded streets all  
4 round us'.<sup>xxxix</sup> Further to economic limitations, Extension Guides, meaning those with a  
5 physical or learning difference, were also often limited in the extent to which they could  
6 'camp out' and explore the landscape. Although as *The Guide* noted in 1934, the Youth  
7 Hostel Association, could aid in this regarding helping the many girls who 'owing to delicate  
8 health or other reasons, are not allowed to sleep under Canvas'.<sup>xxx</sup> Alongside this, the  
9 declaration of the Second World War in 1939, with the introduction of the blackout and  
10 camping restrictions, saw urban girls' meet further barriers to outdoor recreation.  
11 Subsequently, the organisation provided advice and guidance on how to best undertake  
12 Guiding in towns. In doing so, they repackaged ideas of adventure and the natural world,  
13 reconstructing the 'natural' in an urban setting and encouraged girls to embed Guiding  
14 activities in the landscape of their day-to-day lives. As a result, the movement increasingly  
15 positioned urban spaces as a site of *being*, where members could demonstrate the skills and  
16 qualities developed through Guiding and embody the Guiding ethos on a daily basis.

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22 As part of this, although the organisation idealised rural activities and often constructed  
23 urban spaces as problematic, in the mid-twentieth century, the movement regularly  
24 provided guidance for town Guides on the best way to get the most out of the town  
25 environment and encouraged members to appreciate the natural world in all its forms. In  
26 1937 H. Severne, *The Guider* author, informed the readers of the 'Brownies' section that:

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31 There is plenty of woodcraft and Nature work to be done with a town  
32 pack even if the surroundings are not ideal ... We have outdoors all round  
33 us wherever we live. It is a mistake to think that because there are no  
34 woods and fields near us we must do all our woodcraft in the clubroom. It  
35 is true that it cannot be done on quite the same lines as that of country  
36 folk but we can have a special kind of our own.<sup>xxxi</sup>

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39 Eight years later, in September 1945, Thirza Robertson introduced her new series of articles  
40 in *The Guide* magazine on the town Guide and woodcraft activities. The series, and the wider  
41 advice published within both publications reveal the way that, while rural settings were  
42 romanticized, the Guide movement conceptualised nature much more broadly, encouraging  
43 members to embrace the world around them in all settings. Guiding was not simply a rural  
44 activity, as Robertson informed readers: 'It has been said that town Guides have not the  
45 same opportunities as country Guides for woodcraft, and so either make a bad job of it or  
46 leave it severely alone. I know this is wrong, and want each one of you who reads this article  
47 to prove it.'<sup>xxxii</sup>

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52 In fact, the limitations of town life provided the perfect opportunity for Guides to  
53 demonstrate their ingenuity and can-do attitude. In 1947, members were encouraged to  
54 (with permission) commandeer secluded or derelict gardens for outdoor activities.<sup>xxxiii</sup> While  
55 less controversially in a 1957 article on growing flowers and vegetables *The Guider*  
56 contributor Phyllis Whitfield reminded readers that: 'Just because some Guides or Brownies  
57 have no gardens in which to grow anything, it does not mean they need sit back and say 'I  
58 can't do that!' for there are always window-boxes or flower pots to use instead.'<sup>xxxiv</sup> While

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3 members of school Guiding patrols could benefit from the available space provided by the  
4 school grounds. Such spaces could be central to contributing to the wider community  
5 through food production and fund-raising. For example, in 1952, the front page of *The Guide*  
6 celebrated the efforts of Guides belonging to the Croydon Hall School, Watchet, whom  
7 raised funds for the company by raising the school pigs and creating a 'pig club', which was  
8 registers with the Small Pig Keepers Council. The pigs were then sold to the Ministry of  
9 Food.<sup>xxxv</sup> Such activities were celebrated for being 'Good Turns' and Guides were seen as  
10 fulfilling their obligations regarding service and duty to society. Therefore, while access to  
11 the countryside might be limited, a service to the nation *through* the natural world was  
12 maintained as an expectation.  
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17 Public parks could also provide opportunities to 'do nature'. In 1934 Bond encouraged  
18 Commissioners to advise their Guiders that there were lots of activities that could be  
19 undertaken in public parks including the study of trees or discovery games. Bond informed  
20 listeners at the County Commissioners conference that: 'Guiders sometimes say they can't  
21 do tracking in the park because of all the little boys who will remove the tracks. Now it is  
22 ridiculous that the training of the Guide movement should be controlled by little boys in  
23 parks.'<sup>xxxvi</sup> Similarly, in 1937 Severne wrote of the proximity of many town Guides to nature.  
24 'We have parks, some tree-lined streets, and, also, residential streets with gardens. If these  
25 are not too far from the clubroom we can go out for five minute expeditions, even in the  
26 winter, to try to recognise a leaf by its smell and feel, or cut it out in brown paper on our  
27 return.'<sup>xxxvii</sup> While the limitations of wartime restrictions saw the movement encourage the  
28 regular use of local parks during the Second World War. The 'possibilities of parks' was  
29 identified by *The Guide* author C. Falcon in 1941: 'Journeys into the country present a  
30 difficulty to many companies in these days, and one wonders do these Companies make as  
31 full use as they might of the parks which lie close to their headquarters.'<sup>xxxviii</sup> Although not as  
32 authentic as the 'real' country, Guiding in parks could serve to prepare members for a time  
33 when they could venture into the countryside. In 1937, *The Guider* advised readers that  
34 preparatory activities including sense games and the handling of insects and spiders could  
35 'accustom the Guides to being out of doors, facing the elements in the right spirit'.<sup>xxxix</sup>  
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43 Underpinning such activities was an emphasis on teaching members skills of observation and  
44 instilling a keen interest in learning about the world around them. As *The Guider*  
45 contributor, B Whiteside, wrote when talking of younger members of the organisation in  
46 1952: 'We may not be able to offer our Brownies green fields and country lanes each week,  
47 but we can help them to appreciate what is there and to use their eyes and ears.'<sup>xl</sup> In a  
48 discussion of the Second Class Test in *The Guider* magazine, which required Guides to  
49 'recognize twelve living things and observe something of interest about each', *The Guider*  
50 contributor E.D. Tinne expressed that:  
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54 By the time the Guide can recognise twelve living things and has  
55 watched them enough to find out something about each, she will  
56 be a good way along the path to the wild and, well equipped with  
57 an enquiring mind, sharp eyes and listening ears, her life will always  
58 be full interest.<sup>xli</sup>  
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5 The skill of 'noticing eyes'<sup>xliii</sup>, as Severne refereed to it in 1937, was one that could be  
6 practiced in all environments and was central to the development of the child. Severne told  
7 readers that: 'A life full of interest is a happy life, and if we bring up our Brownies with the  
8 idea that their surroundings are full of interest wherever they live, we shall have put in a  
9 large stake for their future happiness.'<sup>xliii</sup> Urban members were thus encouraged to take  
10 note of the world around them, through 'beauty quests', observation games and nature  
11 study in their local area. In 1930, *The Guide* included contributions from members of the  
12 organisation on the topic of beauty quests, an activity where members would go in search of  
13 natural beauty and wildlife, usually in the countryside. Despite this, the letters reveal the  
14 way that Guide companies continued to participate in such activities even in towns. As the  
15 Lieutenant of the 1<sup>st</sup> Thornhill Pack documented: 'We live in a dull part near King's Cross,  
16 London, but that does not stop us being tremendously keen 'Beauty-Questers''<sup>xliv</sup>. While  
17 articles within organisational publications continually encouraged urban Guides to monitor  
18 town wildlife including household animals, birds, spiders, wasps and flies. In 1937, *The*  
19 *Guider* suggested that town Brownies should 'compare notes on how many dogs and cats  
20 live in their respective streets, what colours and shapes they are, and where they are usually  
21 to be found'<sup>xlv</sup>. Additionally, the same article suggested that members should track the trails  
22 left my animals in their area, including rats, mice and birds, using grease proof paper, salad  
23 oil and candle smoke to catch the 'smutty footmarks' left behind.<sup>xlvi</sup> Such articles stressed  
24 that the natural world was all around members, often hidden but always there. Similarly, in  
25 1945 Robertson issued town Guides with a 'challenge to Woodcraft', she wrote: 'You know  
26 about at least one tree in the neighbourhood – you will have studied a dog and a cat a little  
27 – and if you have been lucky you will have watched a cat stalk a bird, and if wise you will  
28 have stalked a bird yourself.'<sup>xlvii</sup> While in 1952, *The Guider* encouraged readers to encourage  
29 Brownies and Guides to engage with the environment in their locality by creating trails,  
30 treasure hunts and tracking activities. Such activities Severne suggested would turn  
31 members 'into capable self reliant people who have the outdoor world as their familiar  
32 friend.'<sup>xlviii</sup>

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42 This notion of developing friendship between girls and the natural world is significant as it  
43 speaks to the complexity of the way the organisation understood nature study - it was not  
44 simply as an educational activity but was a transformative exercise with regards to the way  
45 members perceived and interacted with the world around them. Bond best expressed this in  
46 1934:

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49 We want to avoid thinking of it as that slightly anaemic occupation  
50 known as "doing nature." If you look at the men who know most about  
51 Nature, they are not the ones who have studied it under the  
52 microscope, they are the ones to whom Nature has been the  
53 inescapable background to life, with which they have had to reckon.  
54 The kind of woodcraft we want to encourage is that intimacy with  
55 Nature that makes the child aware of the things around her ...  
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Nature observation was therefore, as James Robinson and Sarah Mills have identified, a



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3 complex activity involving the acquisition of 'embodied knowledge' about the 'self, others  
4 and nature' (Robinson & Mills, 2012, p.423). Subsequently, the magazines encouraged  
5 readers to see nature observation, not as an activity to 'do' but as an undertaking embedded  
6 in their day-to-day, often gendered, routines, including when walking to school, undertaking  
7 daily chores, going shopping or Guiding. In 1931, *The Guider* suggested that Town Brownies  
8 should pay attention to the kinds of fruit being sold in shops at different times of the year,  
9 with the aim of getting a better understanding of agriculture.<sup>xlix</sup> Similarly, in 1957 Tinne  
10 suggested that members make the effort to note the trees and surrounding plants and  
11 flowers that grow in their locality: 'You can play a game in your company with trees. Each  
12 Guide must 'adopt' a tree, one that she sees each day on her way to school or passes on her  
13 way to the clubroom on Guide night.<sup>l</sup> As a result of this, sites that were not necessarily  
14 considered 'authentic' in terms of nature, including the local timber yard, could be vital to  
15 the development of happy, productive citizens. Nature observation was thus constructed as  
16 being an almost active part of the everyday life of Guides, supporting the notion that  
17 Guiding was a 'way of being' rather than an extra-curricular activity. Guides were expected  
18 to apply 'noticing eyes' in their daily routines, and to the buildings, streets and parks around  
19 them. Members were informed in 1945 that they should practice 'Kim's Game' (an  
20 observation activity based on the work of Rudyard Kipling) 'in every place at all times.' The  
21 article informed readers of *The Guide* that: 'There are interesting exciting things around us  
22 all the time, but familiarity makes us ignore them.'<sup>li</sup> The town, it was thus suggested, could  
23 provide ample opportunity for growth, training and personal development, if the Guide had  
24 the skill to see the beauty that was around them. Such observations were, as James  
25 Robinson and Sarah Mills identified, presented as embodied practices, shaping the day-to-  
26 day experiences and interactions of members (Robinson & Mills, 2012, p.412).

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35 The town was thus understood as an educational space for members, although the  
36 organisation regularly had to remind members of the opportunities that urban areas could  
37 provide, with suggestions for Woodcraft games, tracking activities and observation quests.  
38 In 1945, an article in *The Guide* announced that: 'A town Guide can hold her own with any  
39 country Guide'.<sup>lii</sup> While two years later *The Guider* questioned readers: 'are you quite sure  
40 you have exhausted all possibilities of your neighbourhood?'<sup>liii</sup> Shifting the dominant focus  
41 on rural spaces, numerous articles within organisational magazines encouraged members to  
42 observe the interesting elements of the urban environment that they found themselves in.  
43 In 1942, an article in *The Guide* entitled 'No Adventure in Town Guiding', encouraged  
44 readers to see the richness of the urban environment in which they found themselves. It  
45 declared:  
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51 Are you a city Guide? Do you hold many of your meetings indoors  
52 because the only immediate outdoors is a street streaming with  
53 traffic or, at best, an asphalt yard? ... in case there are any city  
54 Guides who think that stalking is an activity to be reserved for  
55 occasional country outings, let us talk for a while about stalking  
56 games in towns.<sup>liv</sup>  
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3 Tracking in a town setting could include following the different marks made by the public,  
4 traffic and local animals, particularly in bad weather, as the rain would aid in the leaving of  
5 footprints. The article concluded that 'I am sure you are now just longing for some rain to try  
6 out all these ideas.'<sup>iv</sup> Such articles redefined traditional notions of 'natural beauty',  
7 encouraging members to think about the concept further. The same 1942 article suggested  
8 to readers that: 'What about "natural cover" in a city? No bracken or undergrowth; no  
9 bumps in the middle of pavements as there are in fields. But then these things would not be  
10 "natural cover" in a town. They would be most unnatural!'<sup>vi</sup> Meanwhile, everyday spaces  
11 including shopping centres, the local streets or buses could provide exciting opportunities  
12 for adventure and observation. An article in Robertson's series on Town Guiding suggested  
13 that readers monitor their day-to-day interactions in these spaces, noting the specific details  
14 of prices, clothing and behaviour of others and comparing their findings to other Guides'  
15 observations.<sup>vii</sup> Rather than the 'humdrum round of everyday'<sup>viii</sup> described by the Health  
16 and Cleanliness council in 1931, the everyday interactions within, and spaces of, the town  
17 environment was often positioned to members as an opportunity for adventure and  
18 successful Guiding.

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25 Indeed, the obstacles frequently found in urban spaces, including lack of space, freedom and  
26 'authentic' nature, were celebrated as they provided members with an unexpected  
27 opportunity to develop their Guiding skills. For example, the presence of the general public  
28 could provide an opportunity to improve one's stalking abilities and resilience, as members  
29 would have to share and negotiate public space. In July 1931, *The Guider* suggested  
30 Woodcraft games for towns including a hide-and-seek game, which made the space of the  
31 town to help members develop observation and stalking skills. The article excitedly noted  
32 that: 'The skill of this will be playing it without the public realizing what is going on.'<sup>lix</sup> The  
33 difficulty of Guiding in public spaces thus served an educational purpose. Similarly, in 1942,  
34 *The Guide* discussed the difficulties faced by girls that were attempting to undertake tracking  
35 activities in towns. The article suggested to readers that:

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In busy streets how can you lay tracking signs – people will trample on  
them or boys destroy them. Yes! I realise that, but "Where there's a  
will there's a way." And this is where you score over country Guides.  
You have to be even more ingenious and invent ways whereby you and  
the Guides can follow, yet the public will not destroy by trampling or  
naughty boys realise what you are trying to do. It really does not  
matter if you have to adapt your signs slightly to meet your own  
needs.<sup>lx</sup>

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The difficulties of urban Guiding could thus encourage tenacity, perseverance and ingenuity  
and was positioned as an exciting opportunity. Similarly, it was suggested that the disruption  
of urban traffic, could provide the opportunity to develop agility and 'controlled and  
balanced' stalking. While 'shadowy doorways, the columns of porches, corners of walls and  
houses, call boxes, stone drinking fountains stationary lorries'<sup>lxi</sup>, could provide cover during  
stalking games. The limitations of urban space, was thus celebrated as being an opportunity  
for Guides to show their resourcefulness and tracking skills. In doing so, the organised

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3 encouraged members to maintain an active presence in public spaces and to participate in  
4 'adventurous' games and activities, which stretched traditional understandings of girls'  
5 roles. In 1942, for example, *The Guide* encouraged girls to participate in role playing  
6 activities including, war games, where members were required to navigate their way across  
7 town without running into an 'enemy' patrol.<sup>lxii</sup> While in 1957 Elizabeth Brimelow noted that  
8 she had a sudden influx of new recruits to her company when rumours spread 'about our  
9 'goings on' in the streets around our hut'.<sup>lxiii</sup>

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13 Such examples suggest that while domestic training remained prominent throughout the  
14 mid-twentieth century, urban outdoor spaces (similar to rural spaces) could provide a  
15 modicum of freedom for girls, with members being encouraged to independently navigate  
16 and explore their locality. This is significant as, while the neighbourhood street has been  
17 popularly remembered as a site of unimpeded play and childhood autonomy, recent  
18 scholarship by Krista Cowman, has identified that in the twentieth century, and particularly  
19 in the post-war period, childhood participation in urban streets could be impeded by the  
20 demands of urban living, and particularly street traffic (Cowman, 2017, p.234). Such dangers  
21 went largely unaddressed in the magazines, although Guide training did include road safety,  
22 traffic was largely discussed as an annoyance rather than a hazard. Thus, the concerns  
23 identified by Matthew Thomson regarding the relationship between the child and the  
24 outside world did not permeate the organisation in the 1950s (Thomson, 2013, 1-2). Town  
25 guiding, at least in principle, allowed girls' an active presence on the street, through the  
26 legitimacy of the organisation and the educational activities being undertaken.

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33 However, while, members were encouraged to inhabit and explore urban spaces, these  
34 spaces were not unlimited and, throughout the period girls were expected to perform  
35 elements of behavior and citizenship, which were ultimately gendered. For example, town  
36 members were reminded that during their games and activities in public spaces they needed  
37 to consistently conform to accepted standards of public conduct. In 1942, while members  
38 were encouraged to have adventures in the town, they were to always remember the  
39 following: 'do remember always when you are playing stalking or any other games in the  
40 streets, that the law of courtesy must be kept. Never force people out of their path, or cut  
41 across in front of them or spoil a flower bed by crouching on it.'<sup>lxiv</sup> The busyness of many  
42 urban settings therefore provided a great opportunity to exhibit and uphold the Guide law  
43 that 'A Guide is Courteous'<sup>lxv</sup>. The ability to navigate stressful social situations was  
44 particularly understood as being a strength of urban girls, who had more opportunities to  
45 learn social conduct. In 1931, *The Guider* contributor G. Woosnam wrote an article for the  
46 magazine in which she discussed the difficulties of being a country Ranger, which included  
47 among other things loneliness, lack of time and lack of resources. Woosnam noted that 'So  
48 few country girls know anything about the great art, the art of travelling with the least  
49 possible inconvenience to one's fellow passengers, and the greatest possible comfort and  
50 safety to oneself.'<sup>lxvi</sup> Such comments are evidence of the way that good public citizenship  
51 was conceptualised around everyday spaces, with Guide behaviour in such spaces being  
52 indicative of their character. Guides were expected to be unobtrusive, polite and courteous  
53 at all times. The author even going as far to suggest that Country Rangers should be trained  
54 in appropriate public behaviour before they venture into towns: 'Many amusing evenings  
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3 can be spent in the clubroom beforehand, with the Rangers representing different railway  
4 officials, etc., not forgetting even the old man in the corner seat who wants the windows  
5 permanently shut!<sup>lxvii</sup> These were such experiences that, it was assumed, town Guides  
6 would have plenty of and would therefore excel in.  
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10 Nonetheless, town members were also encouraged to learn correct behaviour on public  
11 transport. In a 1949 series in *The Guide*, 'You and the World', the magazine suggest being 'at  
12 Home with your Local Bus' was an important element of Guiding citizenship:  
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14 All Guides have a special code of 'bus behaviour. A Guide always gives  
15 up her seat to anyone elderly, lame, blind or tired-looking, or to a  
16 mother with young children. ... They keep their shoes off the seats and,  
17 as they step out, put their used tickets in the receptacle provided.<sup>lxviii</sup>  
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21 This code of behaviour reflected broader conceptualisations of good citizenship within the  
22 organisation, with an emphasis on service to others, selflessness, and politeness. Guides  
23 were reminded in 1955, for example, that a knowledge of local bus routes could be vital in  
24 providing a service to the local community: 'Whatever the kind of neighbourhood in which  
25 you live, the important thing is that you should be as well prepared as possible *to help other*  
26 *people*, and should regard it as a disgrace if when asked to help in this way you cannot give  
27 some intelligent and helpful information.'<sup>lxix</sup> Understanding how to behave in such contexts  
28 was so important, prominent author Verily Anderson suggested, that readers should get  
29 acquainted with local bus routes by following a bus, on foot or on bicycle, and mapping its  
30 route. Such activity, she recommended, might be particularly exciting for London Guides  
31 who can have 'the thrill of diving underground in a double-decker tram'<sup>lxx</sup>. This emphasis on  
32 public transport therefore suggests that concepts of adventure were not exclusively rural  
33 within the organisation, with authors encouraging members to see excitement and  
34 adventure in their everyday activities and to maintain their characteristics of Guiding in day-  
35 to-day circumstances.  
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41 Additionally, beyond the regulation of girls' behaviour, the grounding of Guiding in the  
42 everyday, further served to reinforce the gendered expectations of citizenship placed upon  
43 girls. For example, in Thirza Robertson's 1945 series, girls were encouraged to undertake  
44 observations while 'shopping for mother', including recalling details of the butcher's shop  
45 and listing the objects displayed in shop windows.<sup>lxxi</sup> Such suggestions were commonplace  
46 throughout the period and suggest that, rather than transgressing gendered expectations,  
47 by encouraging girls to fit Guiding into their everyday activities, the organisation reinforced  
48 ideas about girls' domestic role. This supports Sarah Mill's assertion that girls were 'taught  
49 to perform particular roles in society through observational practices' (Mills, 2014a, p.423).  
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## 54 Conclusion

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56 Through a study of the 'problem' of the town Guide, this article has revealed that, although  
57 natural spaces remained dominant in the education and training provided by the Girl Guides,  
58 throughout the period from 1930-1960, urban spaces were also important in the movement.  
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3 Indeed, while rural sites offered chances for 'extraordinary' (Kyle, 2014, p.22) experiences,  
4 for urban members the movement acknowledged the importance of urban outdoor spaces  
5 in reinforcing Guiding attributes in everyday life and encouraging process of continual  
6 learning and self-development. The city or town was thus positioned as an educative space,  
7 which was equally important, although perhaps not equally as symbolic, as rural spaces; as  
8 the organisation encouraged members to see Guiding not as an educational or leisure  
9 activity but as a way of *being*, a set of characteristics that could be, and should be,  
10 developed and exhibited in in the everyday. Urban spaces were thus central to developing  
11 members as citizens in the present, reflecting the way the organisation negotiated idealised  
12 rural Guiding with the practicalities of member's everyday lives. Thus while Richard Kyle has  
13 argued that 'indoor and outdoor spaces of informal education are locked in continual  
14 processes of co-creation' (Kyle, 2014, p.22), this article has suggested that we must also  
15 understand urban and rural spaces as being in a similar process. Indeed, the emphasis of the  
16 movement on the educational possibilities of urban spaces suggests that the training of the  
17 organisation traversed both spatial and temporal boundaries: if the rural was envisioned as  
18 a site of child *becoming*, than the urban was positioned as a space of Guide *being*, where  
19 everyday activities and situations could provide the opportunity for self-development and  
20 the embodiment of Guiding principles.  
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28 Such findings also have significant implications to the way in which we understand the  
29 gendered nature of the training provided by the movement. As girls were encouraged to  
30 explore their urban locality, sometimes independently, and often without supervision, with  
31 little concern for the moral or physical dangers that urban spaces might pose. This suggests  
32 that, rather than being sites of restriction, urban outdoor spaces were positioned as  
33 providing the opportunity for adventurous activities and growth outside of the domestic  
34 sphere. However, at the same time advice was often grounded in expectations about girls  
35 behaviour and day-to-day lives, supporting Stephanie Spencer's argument that the city was  
36 constructed as a space of both 'freedom and containment' for adolescent girls (Spencer,  
37 2006, p.122). Despite this, the advice given to urban members suggests that while outdoor  
38 spaces arguably became restricted for children after the war, the organisation provided a  
39 means through which girls' presence in public spaces was legitimised and encouraged.  
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