Spotlight on Hilary Hardy

Girlguiding South West England finds out more about Guiding on one of our Islands

Hilary Hardy is President of Girlguiding Jersey; she is also a Guide Leader, LQ Mentor, and Chair of the Region’s Awards Committee. Guiding on any of our Islands brings particular challenges, but can also be especially rewarding and it is always interesting to find out more about island life. We began by asking Hilary how long she has lived on Jersey, and how she spends her time when she is not Guiding:

“My husband’s job brought us to Jersey in 1981. Prior to that we lived in Hampshire and Somerset, but I am originally from Oxford. I trained as a Home Economics teacher and then some 20 years ago moved into Special Needs working with children with autism and social communication difficulties. I retired in 2015, but still support a small group of students with complex needs on a very part-time basis.”

“I trained as a Home Economics teacher...”
What about hobbies?

“I enjoy gardening, walking (we have some beautiful walks on the island and I have friends who I walk with regularly. We are still finding new places and lanes that we’ve not seen before!), visiting the family in the UK, holidaying in France and sewing. Until I retired I only read books when on holiday, but I have joined the Girlguiding Jersey “Adult Book Centenary Dare” with the aim of reading 100 pieces of literacy by the Centenary of Girlguiding Jersey in 2019 which has encouraged me to read more. My family would say my favourite band is Abba, but I also enjoy listening to classical music and take the opportunity to attend concerts when on the mainland.”

When we think of Jersey, one of the first things that comes to mind is your potatoes!

“My favourite food is fish and Jersey new potatoes – the first of the ‘royals’ are grown on steep fields and harvested by hand. We are spoilt here with a wonderful fish market which has an amazing selection of fresh fish throughout the year and in the summer it is possible to catch mackerel from the sea wall at the bottom of our garden.”

That sounds so lovely! Moving on though, how did you first become involved in Guiding?

“My mother had been a Guide (I still have her Promise Badge and wear it occasionally) and would talk of her days as a Guide, and in particular camping. She encouraged me to become a Brownie when I was seven – about 56 years ago! We had a very flourishing Brownie Unit attached to the church where my father was the Vicar. I loved it from day one and felt very important in my uniform (the brown tunic dress with the tie that was fastened at the back of the neck with a reef knot!).”

So what happened after Brownies?

“I went on to become a Guide and then a Ranger – all in Oxford, and then became a Brownie Leader in Hampshire. When we moved to Jersey I became a Guide Leader, District Commissioner, Assistant Island Commissioner (to Solange) and then Island Commissioner. I have also been Region Adviser for Members with additional needs.”

With the time you spent working in Special Needs, this appointment must have been particularly close to your heart…

“As a Committee I feel we raised our profile and encouraged Leaders to be more open to accepting and encouraging Members with additional needs to join Girlguiding.”
Has your very busy life in Guiding encouraged your daughters to also become involved?

“All three of my daughters have been Brownies and Guides and one of our two granddaughters is a Rainbow. She thinks it is the best thing ever and can’t wait to join Brownies! Our second granddaughter is due to join Rainbows very shortly.”

It must make you very proud to have four generations of your family involved in Girlguiding. What achievements during your Guiding journey have also made you proud?

“There are so many! Representing Oxfordshire at an international camp in France and the associated hospitality responsibilities when I was a Guide – all very challenging but a huge experience, and possibly why I have always encouraged Members to take up Region International opportunities. Achieving my Queen’s Guide Award which was presented by Princess Margaret. Being asked to be Island Commissioner in 2005 in what I consider to have been the most fantastic five years leading up to and celebrating the Centenary of Girlguiding.”

And also being Island President presumably?

“Absolutely! And I am still involved with adults and girls; supporting them, sharing skills, learning new ones and having fun!”

What has been your funniest moment?

“It has to be a District Camp when together with other Leaders I was encouraged – or rather pushed – into taking part in a water slalom which involved sliding down blue sheeting in lots of water and having immense fun!”

Your most exciting moment?

“The afternoon that Girlguiding Jersey entertained Sophie, Countess of Wessex and Prince Edward at Samares Manor. The afternoon was planned around ‘Cen TEA nary’ and the Rainbows’ activity was based on The Tiger Who Came to Tea. It will remain in my memory and in the memory of the hundreds of adults and girls who attended.”
That wasn’t the only time you have taken tea with royalty though was it?

“No, I have also enjoyed afternoon tea at St James’ Palace hosted by The Countess of Wessex which probably tops my list of places which I have visited through Girlguiding. It was a celebration of 100 years of Guiding and I took with me another Guide Leader from Jersey as my guest. I had never been in a royal palace before and it was a truly memorable occasion – the atmosphere, the décor – all the gold leaf – and a delicious tea! As I walked down The Mall on a bright, but cold November day, I reflected on the amazing journey Guiding had taken me on.”

What advice would you as an adult today, have given yourself as a child?

“Guiding will take you in many directions. Embrace each opportunity, you will be all the better for it!”

Do you still have Guiding ambitions?

“I think I’ve achieved most of them! Locally I would like to see Guiding continue to grow in Jersey, for more Members to join and for an increase in opportunities for our Members to experience Guiding ‘off island’. For the Region, I would like there to be more nominations for our Awards, especially the Compass Award. There are so many fantastic Leaders in our Region who need to be recognised and thanked for their commitment to Guiding. Saying ‘thank you’ means so much and the Compass Award is a fantastic way of doing just that.”

Thank you for taking the time to talk to us Hilary. In closing, what three words would you use to describe what Guiding means to you?

“Exciting; inspirational; friendship.”

What do you consider to be the best thing about modern Girlguiding?

“That it is inclusive with a wide range of opportunities for all our Members; that as an organisation we are continually updating our image and resources to meet the needs of the girls and adults of the 21st Century; and that we are looking at ways of ‘growing’ Guiding.”

Is there anything you would change to make Guiding even better?

“We need to look at ways of encouraging more volunteers to join to enable even more girls and young women to enjoy the huge range of opportunities that Guiding offers.”