



## **County Commissioner's Report**

2019 started with a reunion for the members who attended the county international trip to Gdansk in Poland in 2018. At this event, girls from around the county got to meet each other again and enjoy fun, friendship and food. Knowing these young members asked for this, and aspire to be our leaders for the future, gives me a great sense of pride that the voices of our younger members are being heard and more importantly listened to, as we all carry out our day to day promise.

I was invited to each division meeting and these were on a similar theme to the reunion, wherever the location they involved fun, friendship and food. It was good to see commissioners in their divisions, some in post 19 days, others 4 years , having a great turnout of volunteers who really do work together to make our local events and the running of divisions, districts and units happen. Despite the length of time in any role, the one thing that inspires me as county commissioner is the enthusiasm of our volunteers, and how much they do over and above their weekly meetings. There is always something going on somewhere, which means there are always leaders going the extra mile. I do try to attend as many events as I can within the divisions, and throughout 2019, each one has been fantastically organised resulting in our members having lots of fun.

In February, we held the dedication of flags service for 1<sup>st</sup> Carlin How Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers and it was a lovely day to see the newly opened units share their affiliation with the Royal British Legion. It was great to see so much support from the local community which confirmed our decision to branch out and open units in their area. I have visited the units since and the continued support from the local area is fantastic.

At last year's county annual meeting, it was an absolute honour to present our leaders with awards, from thanks badges, good service awards and long service awards too. It is such recognition, that compliments the fact that we are all paid in smiles!

Trefoil Guilds have enjoyed lovely evenings and events, and it was lovely to share both their county and region annual meetings with members from around the county. Again it was a lovely day filled with fun, friendship and food! Stockton Guild were presented

with a beautiful Mackenzie Thorpe picture, presented by the then Mayor, Lynn Hall, which now hangs proudly in the Stockton room at our county house in Egton. We also have a carved wooden trefoil hanging proudly, presented as a gift from Hartlepool Guild.

In April South Langbaugh leaders enjoyed a trip to Sangam, in Pune, India, which is one of our world Centres. We had a volunteer there at the time, so it was lovely for members of Cleveland to be in person with one of our leaders so far across the world. This special holiday ended with a leader being presented with her 40 year service award at arrivals at the airport, after a 24 hour journey home, by me. You just never know where I will pop up next to say thank you!

I've been invited to unit events, to special birthday parties, to present awards, to trefoil guilds meetings, to outdoor activities, the list could go on – and this is all down to our amazing volunteers. I also had the honour of meeting Amanda Medler, our Chief Guide, twice in 2019. Amanda is a grass roots leader, still running her Friday evening guide unit with a vision of moving Guiding forward through the eyes of a **volunteer!**

We held our county training day in June, followed by a social afternoon for leaders to give ideas for county events which they would have liked to have seen carried out in 2020, however the pandemic put plans on hold. We supported the Race For Life in Middlesbrough again and many divisions have held recruitment events. My thanks go to our Marketing and Communications team for organising recruitments in colleges and universities and also to Lindsey Sampson who writes a monthly column in the Evening Gazette.

We are currently receiving £300 per year sponsorship from the Freemasons York Branch and this money in 2019 was used towards donations for funding international expeditions due to take place in 2020. In 2018, we had leaders selected to attend events in 2019 which included the World Scout Jamboree, where Cleveland Scouts teamed up with the Girlguiding North East contingent and headed off to the USA. We also had volunteers selected to attend India, Canada and Sri Lanka, which due to the sad attacks taking place was changed to Nepal.

We enjoyed our final Baden-Powell Overnight at our Marske Guide House, as we said goodbye to our old programme. I was part of this event and great fun was had by all and I thank Tina Richardson for all her support in her county role with Baden-Powell in its final year, along with our guide leaders who kept the support going in the units, to ensure girls completed the award ahead of the end of the era which came with the change to the new Program in July.

We ended the year, with another surprise and that was thanking Louise Dallin for all she did in her role as division commissioner with North Langbaugh. I timed my speech to perfection as the lights dimmed in the cinema, leaving Louise to then say her own very quick thank you by smartphone camera light!

I always say I may be a pivotal figurehead, but it is you, our amazing volunteers that make it all happen, and 2019 proved this. I was hit by sudden illness which took me away from guiding for 4 months, and I returned to my front line volunteering, just days ahead of the national Big Gig event in Sheffield, and what a fantastic atmosphere. Cleveland sent busloads of members, and to see thousands of screaming young girls, shouting for their favourite pop idol at a concert containing at least 10 pop stars, reminds us of some of the special events that you only get from Guiding.

If I could sum up 2019 in a nutshell, the 3F's of fun, friendship and food were as evident as always, from rainbows through to trefoil, and having fun has to be at the heart of all we do. My thanks go to every single volunteer as 2019 saw a big change in the programme for us all, and my thanks go to those who stepped up and kept Cleveland great when I wasn't around, especially the county trustees and especially Valerie Milsom who does a great job as our treasurer, keeping us afloat and in comfort that we can survive a rainy day!

As a county we started networking and sharing ideas as we got familiar with the new programme, and these actions have led to new and younger leaders becoming more confident and empowered to become involved in task and finish groups as Cleveland looks towards the future. Our younger members have achieved hundreds of gold awards, and again this is due to the dedication and support from our amazing volunteers in units, empowering our younger members.

County President, you've listened, you've laughed, you've kept me focused and you've came on county training weekends to get to know more of our amazing volunteers. You've cared and helped, and as we look to move forward from the current situation your enthusiasm to return to the greatness we have in Cleveland has never faltered.

Thank you!

Val Cullen  
County Commissioner