

ATGA REPORT TO 2008 GATHERING

Presented 30th August 2008.

As ATGA I have written a report covering the past two years. That report will be available by download from the Girl Guides Australia website. State Advisers have been given a copy.

Most will have noticed that Trefoil Guild is now taking advantage of modern technology. Over the past few years all Trefoil Guild Advisers have gradually moved toward the use of email for communication and circulation of information, including newsletters. It is fast and cheap.

I appreciate that not all Guilds can follow our lead but suggest you explore the possibility. Most States have a Trefoil Guild page on their State Guide website, and the Girl Guides Australia website provides a place for our news and announcements. From the Australian site you have access to any reports from the ATGA and the 'Australian Fellowship news'. The AFN is published after every National Joint Council meeting and explains the items dealt with at that meeting.

If none of your Guild's members have internet access - how about engaging the services of your grandchildren?

I have just returned from the International Scout and Guide World Conference held last weekend in Vienna. I was aware that countries organise and run their Fellowships differently but as I listened to the delegates argue points which were important to them, the differences became more apparent.

In the Netherlands the name for their adult fellowship is "Scouts Plus" and, as part of their Scout program, Scouts Plus is a Section - just as are Cubs and Scouts. At about 26, after the Rover Section, young men and women are encouraged to move on to Scouts Plus where they wear uniform and have special badges and emblems.

In Germany they are pushing "Family Guiding". Here the young families are encouraged to join with all their children. Activities are family oriented with adults and children joining together. The aim is to promote family life and to encourage the children to join scouts

At the other end of the variations is the UK Trefoil Guild who, with 20,000 members makes up almost 1/3rd of the ISGF membership. There were about 30 TG members at the Conference, many with their grey hair and walking sticks, but having great fun.

Another apparent difference was the structure of the youth movements in other countries. Many have just one administration for the boys and girls and tend to refer to themselves as 'Scouts'. Their international body is therefore WOSM and they speak of Jamborees rather than acknowledge that there are also Guide International Camps. I feel that 'Guides' as an entity were not recognised.

The expectations differ noticeably from one country to another.

At the social level none of the above mattered. I've been spoken to, smiled at, greeted as from 'down under' by all nations. The Malaysians invited us "to the pub" and some of us became bosom pals with six Italians despite having to use sign language when their few words of English failed.

However when it came to working on an Action Plan listing priorities for the next three years; understanding and accepting proposed changes to the constitution; and determining priorities as to what to do and how to do it - we were frequently in disagreement.

I have spoken to the Advisers about a couple of the business items from the Conference which may impinge on Australia, and they will keep them in mind.

To move to local matters, I have listed items from our Advisers meeting. Since 2005 we have meet annually and use an Administration manual and the Handbook which are regularly revised so we ensure we keep up to date. A number of our agenda items this year were to clarify and improve our administration procedures and to agree on programming for 2010 for Trefoil Guilds. There was lots of interchange of information and suggestions.

1. We are looking into the possibilities of organising a trip to Sangam. We are sure that, from all over Australia, we would have Trefoil Guild members interested in visiting this World Centre. You will be kept informed of the result of these enquiries but a decision was taken that, if the number of participants is limited, Trefoil Guild members will be given priority. Only if we were unable to fill our quota would an invitation be issued to partners and friends.
2. Among reports received was the Finance statement which thankfully is still in the black. The Dark Horse Venture is progressing. (A meeting of members already enrolled in this program, plus those interested in hearing more will be held 4pm Saturday in the coffee shop.)
3. Items relating to the Administration manual included membership. It was clarified that Multiple members can take office in any Guild to which they belong. The only restriction on Multiple-membership is that, when votes are called by the State or Nationally, this member votes only once - in the Guild to which she pays her membership subscription.
4. At Adviser meetings the Advisers take the opportunity to exchange information on what happens in their State. Trefoil Guild is very conscious of the need for all States to work toward unity of procedures Australia wide and to support each other by sharing and adopting each other's good ideas. This is done by compromise - we usually start "poles apart", but at the end we act as Australian Trefoil Guild - not as competing States. One of our topics was uniformity for Advisers when applying for Long Service awards. Trefoil Guild Advisers will use the Australian form when applying for these awards on your behalf.
5. We also try to learn from experience. States that have run a National Gathering are in a position to share the knowledge gained and have contributed that knowledge to the Administration Manual in a chapter on "Running a Gathering". This chapter is being studied by Advisers to ascertain if yet more "hints" could be added.

6. Having just elected a new Australian Trefoil Guild Adviser we were also in the position to compile guidelines for the selection of Australian and State Trefoil Guild Advisers. Both selections will involve interview by a representative panel.

7. Some of our forms came in for revision. The one of most interest for you is the annual Census report form. With the registration of members being automated we will be able to provide Guilds with names and contact details of current members. Annually we shall ask Guilds to correct this list. Guilds would also add detail of new members, and delete detail of anyone no longer in the Guild.

8. We are looking into the practicability of making the Trefoil Guide Promise badge larger. This request came from those whose fingers have lost their agility. However, don't get too excited, we have to use up stocks before we can absorb any new cost and the cost will be greater due to inflation and the need for a new die.

9. Also to do with badges - the restriction as to the number of badges Trefoil Guild members can wear on their badge tab has been lifted. Just remember it is a place for Guide badges and don't be tempted to add those of the Red Cross or one gifted by your grandson from his McDonald Junior meal.

10. The good news is that we are to receive a further \$7,800 from NJC. It was agreed that this be placed in a special account to be used as a loan the State organising the next National Gathering. With our move to accommodation more suited to our age group, costs are rising and Hotels demand a high deposit to secure a booking.

11. Also on finance we noted the rise in our Girl Guides Australia membership quota (which is part of the portion we pay through our State organisation). It is also necessary to raise the portion of our fee which goes to the Australian Trefoil Guild Adviser to cover the administration, travel and other expense of the Australian Trefoil Guild. This has been held at 50 cents per head for many years - it was agreed to raise this portion to \$1.

12. Finally, after lengthy discussion, we agreed on what Trefoil Guild would do during the Centenary year. Individual States will carry out what ever good ideas their members have suggested, but as "Australia", we have three projects.

1. As their celebration of the Centenary of Guiding, Australian Trefoil Guilds will contribute "birthday gifts" to Guide Units, districts, regions or States throughout Australia.
2. That Trefoil Guild run activities resulting which result in the making of quilts to be given to Guiding Centres in Australia.
3. That a travelling Teddy Bear carrying a suitcase containing messages from Trefoil Guilds visit each State, and finally visit the 19th National Trefoil Gathering as part of the Girl Guide Centenary Celebrations.

You will be receiving more detail from your State Adviser.

We were pleased to have Lynne Price with us on Thursday evening and used the opportunity to discuss matters of mutual interest.

This is my last report as ATGA. I am going to miss the close relation with the State Advisers who have been so enthusiastic and supportive.

Thinking back to the beginning I recall that first steep learning curve then the variety of challenges, but that was the past. The only important time is NOW.

NOW is the time to enjoy what we do.

We do need to do some preparation for the future, but what happens in the future will depend on the people who are there in the future. We must alter with the arrival of opportunity, with changing attitudes and the introduction of new possibilities.

I am not saying goodbye. In two days I'm just changing my job in Trefoil Guild and leaving the task of doing this job to someone else.

Continue to have fun and enjoyment.

Yvonne James