

Our Local Story

in partnership with



**Historic
England**

the **GIRLS'**
BRIGADE
ENGLAND & WALES



The organisation Historic England encourages young people to explore their local heritage and connect with their surroundings: they say that those who learn about their local heritage 'develop a sense of pride in where they live' and 'understand how local heritage relates to the national story'. (historicengland.org.uk)

Session 1 - Discovering Place



Spiritual Element

Bible focus: Psalm 95:4-5 – 'In his hand are the depths of the earth...'

Leader's blurb:

God is present not only in the skies above but in the ground beneath our feet, in the places where we live, play and grow. When we walk through our neighbourhood, we are walking through a story - a story of people who lived before us, a story of change and continuity, a story that reminds us that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. Just as the psalmist walked through fields and remembered the ancient hills, so we can walk and remember, appreciate and honour the places we inhabit.

We too are invited to notice the traces of time, to see how God's creative presence has shaped our world through architecture, community and story - and to respond with care and reverence.

Discussion questions:

- What building or place in your local area feels 'old' or 'special' to you - why?
- How does knowing the history of a place change how you feel about it?
- How might our community and our faith life be enriched by noticing and preserving the heritage around us?



Skill Element

Skill 1: Heritage Walk

- Take a guided 'heritage walk' in your local area (park, street, village) and look for the oldest building you can spot.
- Encourage participants to take photos or make sketches of interesting features: old chimneys, stonework, inscriptions, plaques.

- As you walk around ask the young people to order the buildings around you from oldest to newest. Remember, we don't need to be right - historians often make educated guesses by looking closely

Skill 2: Time Map

- Back at your meeting place: create a 'time-map' on large paper of your local area.
- Mark the building or spot you found, estimate its age (ask family or local history site), then add more recent buildings to show how the area has grown and changed.



Social Element

Social 1 (in group): Dig deeper

- Form pairs or small teams and each team shares one building they found on the walk.
- Then as a group pick one building to research a little more (on the internet or by asking a neighbour) and present one interesting fact to the rest of the group.

Social 2 (at home): Local memories

- Ask each young person to take a walk with a family member (or invite a neighbour) and together find an older building in their area they hadn't noticed before.
- At home have a short chat with that person about what they remember of the place, how it has changed, and write one sentence to share with your group next time: 'We found ... and it used to be ...'.

Historic England's resources encourage young people to think about how local history connects with bigger changes: using local heritage can support history and geography skills and 'encourages young people to value and protect the heritage around them.'
(historicengland.org.uk)

Session 2 - Layers of History



Spiritual Element

Bible focus: Ecclesiastes Ch.3 – 'A time for everything'

Leader's Blurb:

Just as the rings in a tree trunk tell us how many years it has lived, the buildings, streets and landscapes of our towns and villages hold layers of story - layers of human life, change, hope and challenge. The book of Ecclesiastes says, 'There is a time for everything ... a time to build, and a time to tear down.' Likewise, when we explore heritage, we are discovering layers of living-faith, of humanity responding to the divine creative impulse and even to the divine invitation to renew. In our faith journey we too are invited to unearth the deeper foundations of our beliefs, to ask what lies beneath, and to build on what endures.

Discussion questions:

- What do you think this place (a building, wall, street etc) might have been used for in the past?
- How does recognising the 'layered history; of a place (old, newer, changed) help you think about your own life journey?
- How can we as a faith community honour the older layers (people, places, stories) while also welcoming change and renewal?



Skill Element

Skill 1: Old and New

- Using local map-resources (or a print-out map of your town/village), draw on the map where you think the oldest part of your area is (you might use local records, ask family, or internet search)
- Then overlay where newer developments are.

- Ask the young people to: circle where they think the **oldest** part is and mark newer housing or developments. They can base this on: family knowledge, what they've seen or simple guesses

Skill 2: Heritage Hike

- Go on a 'heritage hike'.
- Choose a circular route through your local area that passes through as many different age-buildings/structures as you can (e.g., old church, Victorian house, modern development).
- Keep a tally of 'old/older/new' buildings and then compare findings in the group.



Social Element

Social 1 (in group): Stories of Heritage

- After the hike, each young person shares one surprising thing they found (old door, unusual inscription, building use).
- The group discusses how stories could be told about that place (e.g., short role-play, picture or poem).

Social 2 (at home): Changes Over Time

- Encourage each young person to interview a family member or neighbour about changes in the area.
- Ask 'What building was here when you were younger? What has changed? What would you like to see preserved?'.
- Then bring back one quote or story to share with the group.

Historic England's work reminds us that heritage is not just about the past, but about how we act now: their 'How To Guides' help to use local heritage resources and encourage young people to value their built environment. (historicengland.org.uk)

Session 3 - Heritage and Caring for Creation



Spiritual Element

Bible focus: Genesis Ch.2:15 – 'The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.'

Leader's blurb:

When we think of heritage, we often think of old buildings, monuments and places. But the concept extends to caring for creation and passing on a healthy environment to future generations. In Genesis 2:15 we read that humanity is placed in the garden 'to work it and take care of it'. In other words, to care for what God has entrusted. In the same way, the built environment and historic places are part of creation and demand our stewardship.

Our task in faith is to honour what has come before while seeking to build sustainably and equitably for the future. We are called to active care - for our neighbourhoods, our historic places, our planet.

Discussion questions:

- How does a historic building or place link to caring for our environment and our communities?
- What could we, as young people and as a faith group, do to help preserve or enhance our local heritage and environment?
- In what ways might caring for the past be connected with caring for the future? How does our faith ask us to act now?

Explain simply:

History = learning about the past using evidence

Heritage = what has been passed down to us and is our responsibility to care for

Talk about:

Family heritage: traditions, celebrations, stories, special objects

Natural heritage: rivers, hills, woods, countryside

Built heritage: churches, old houses, memorials, bridges

Key message:

We didn't build these things – but we are trusted to look after them for the future.



Skill Element

Skill 1: Freedom Pathways

- Choose a local heritage site (or older building) and research whether any conservation or repair work is needed (either via internet, local council website, or ask residents).
- Create a 'care plan' poster: what could be done, who might help, what resources are needed.

Skill 2: Heritage Clean-Up Walk

- Organise a mini 'heritage clean-up walk' in your area.
- Pick a historic spot (old wall, church yard, boundary stone) and do some gentle physical work (clearing litter, sweeping pathways, trimming overgrowth) – with permission.
- Document before/after photos.



Social Element

Social 1 (in group): Heritage Improvements

- Plan and commit to one 'heritage improvement' action the group can do together in the next month (e.g., adopt a local bench, plant a tree near an old building, make signage for a historic spot).

Social 2 (at home): Heritage Walk

- Each young person invites a family member to join them in a heritage-and-environment walk (choose a route that passes historic buildings and green spaces).
- Take photos of places in need of care and write a short suggestion of how the community might help.
- Share findings at your next session.

Historic England emphasises that local heritage helps young people 'understand their place in time and the local area' and experience that 'using local heritage makes history relevant, real and fun'. (historicengland.org.uk)

Session 4 - Stories in Stone and Wood



Spiritual Element

Bible focus: Habakkuk Ch.2:3-4 – 'For the revelation awaits an appointed time...'

Leader's blurb:

The places we inherit from the past speak of many lives - built in stone, wood or brick, lived in, adapted, abandoned and renewed. Like the prophet Habakkuk whose vision looked 'to the hills' and asked what God was doing, we too are invited to look at our surroundings and ask: What stories are held here? Who came before us? What legacy do we have? These historic places can be like silent scriptures, offering us insight, inspiration and challenge. In our journey of faith we remember that we stand on the shoulders of many lives, and we are called to honour what has been while building what will be.

Discussion questions:

- What story might this building or place be telling if it could speak? What would it say?
- How does knowing the story behind a place affect how we feel about it and our role in caring for it?
- How can we, as people of faith, contribute to the story being told for future generations?



Skill Element

Skill 1: Storybook of heritage

- Create a 'storybook' of local heritage: each young person picks one historic feature (doorway, window, sign, plaque, tree) and writes or draws the story of 'who might have lived or worked here', imagining lives in the past, and then how that spot is used today.

Skill 2: Photo Trek

- Take a 'heritage photo-trek' around the area: in teams, walk a set route, find and photograph: plaques, date stones, reused buildings, different styles.

- Share the photos back at your venue.



Social Element

Social 1 (in group): Heritage Display

- As a group, compile the individual 'storybooks' into a collective heritage display (in your meeting room or online), with captions for each feature and drawing.
- Invite a guest (e.g., from the local heritage society) to view it.

Social 2 (at home) Stories of Heritage

- Each young person invites a parent, grandparent or neighbour to pick one historic place from their heritage walk and together tell one story (either real or imagined) about that place.
- Then the young person writes a short note of thanks to that person for sharing their memories and the story, and shares that note with the group.

Historic England's work is fundamentally about connecting people with heritage and ensuring that they understand the significance of where they live. This helps young people 'develop a sense of place' and see how their local heritage connects to national and global heritage.

Session 5 - Passing the Torch: Heritage for Tomorrow



Spiritual Element

Bible focus: 2 Timothy Ch.2:2 – 'And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.'

Leader's blurb:

As faith-communities we believe that we are called not only to receive, but to hand on - to pass the torch of hope, justice, care and creativity to the next generation. As in 2 Timothy Ch.2:2, the historic places around us are part of a legacy we receive and are entrusted to protect and pass on. We too are invited to take responsibility - not just for ourselves, but for our place, our community and our world, for today and for future generations.

Discussion questions:

- What might our area look like in 50 years? What heritage might our children pass on?
- How can we, as individuals and as a faith group, help ensure that heritage (built, natural, cultural) is alive and meaningful for future generations?
- What heritage are you personally proud to hand on - and how will you do it?



Skill Element

Skill 1: Heritage Pledge

- Plan a 'heritage pledge' wall.
- Each young person writes or draws one way they will help preserve or celebrate heritage (local building, green space, community story).
- Display these pledges.

Skill 2: New Housing

- One day new housing will be old housing with its own story and heritage. Look at where new housing will be in your local area. How can GB groups reach out to the new people moving into those places and what can be gained, as well as lost, from new housing being built?



Social Element

Social 1 (in group): Group Project

- Commit to a group heritage project for the year ahead (e.g., adopt a local memorial, make a heritage film, collaborate with a local historic building or society).
- Plan next steps together: who will do what, when.

Social 2 (at home): Tea and Talk

- Encourage each young person to invite someone in the community (neighbour, older resident) to a short 'heritage tea and talk' at home or at a community venue.
- Ask them to share one memory of their local area, one building or place they remember, and how it has changed.
- The young person thanks the person and shares their own heritage pledge.
- Then write a short invite (or letter) summarising this to the group to inspire others.

Leaders Tips:

Keep pledges positive and achievable. Celebrate effort, not scale and end with reflection and thanks

Useful Local Heritage Research Tools and Resources on the Historic England Website

Explore the [Local Heritage Hub](#) to find out about the heritage of your city, town or village

Search the [National List for England](#) to find out about local listed buildings and protected places

Find archive aerial images of your local area to see how it has changed over time using the [Aerial Photo Explorer](#)

Explore the [Historic England Archive](#) and the [England's Places](#) collection for images of your local area

Use the Historic England Street Spotters Guide to spot features such as doors, windows, bricks and signs: <https://historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/education/explorer/street-spotters-guide-a6-colour-pdf/>

Print and make these cut-outs of houses through time to help recognise buildings from different eras in your local area: <https://historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/education/explorer/street-spotters-cut-outs-pdf/>

Many GB girls use church halls or meet at a church. Perhaps that would be a good site to do some caring for the environment? This resource will help you explore your local churchyard: <https://historicengland.org.uk/education/schools-resources/teaching-activities/investigating-our-local-churchyard/>



Leader's Notes

Using the Girls' Brigade Badge Programme

Purpose of the Badge Programme

The Girls' Brigade badge awards are designed to nurture the whole person—spiritually, emotionally, socially, and practically. The aim is not only to impart knowledge or teach skills but to create space for young people to explore faith, build relationships, and grow in confidence and compassion.

Spiritual, Social, and Skill Elements in the Badge Programme

Each Girls' Brigade badge is designed to contribute meaningfully to three areas of personal growth:



Spiritual Element

Helping young people explore faith, ask questions, and grow in their understanding of God and themselves. Each **Spiritual element** has:

- A **theme** rooted in life experience and Christian values.
- A **focus section** to guide session design and intention.
- A **biblical reference** to root learning in Scripture



Skill Element

Equipping young people with practical, emotional, and leadership skills that help them navigate life with confidence and creativity.



Social Element

Supporting young people to build relationships, grow in empathy, and learn how to contribute positively to the community around them.

Each badge and each session are based around these elements. It is not imperative that you complete every skill or social element in each session. Some elements will take up a whole session. This badge work is designed to be flexible and adaptable to suit each group setting.

How to engage with each element



Spiritual Element

Look for moments when a session helps young people:

- Explore a **biblical truth or story**
- Ask **questions about faith, God, or purpose**
- Reflect on values like love, justice, and peace
- Experience **stillness, prayer, or worship**
- Think about **how faith connects to everyday life**

Leader prompts:

- “Where do you see God in this?”
- “What do you think this story is saying to us today?”
- “What kind of world does Jesus invite us to build?”



Skill Element

Badge sessions often introduce or build on:

- **Practical life skills** (e.g. finance, safety, communication)
- **Creative skills** (e.g. drama, design, storytelling)
- **Leadership skills** (e.g. planning, presenting, decision-making)
- **Critical thinking** and self-awareness
- **Problem-solving** in group or individual tasks

Leader prompts:

- “What new thing did you try today?”
- “What would you do differently next time?”
- “How could you use this skill at home or school?”



Social Element

Each badge includes opportunities for:

- **Teamwork** and relationship-building
- Practising **kindness, respect, and empathy**
- Discussing **community, diversity, and justice**
- Building **confidence to speak and listen** in groups
- Understanding **how our actions affect others**

Leader prompts:

- “How can we help each other this week?”
- “What does it mean to be a good friend, even when it’s hard?”
- “How could we use what we’ve learned to help our community?”

Putting It All Together

Each badge is different, and one badge may lean more heavily on one area over another, but all three elements are included.

For example:

Badge	Spiritual	Social	Skill
Money	Trusting God with resources; values around money	Discussing generosity; teamwork in budgeting games	Budgeting, understanding accounts, practical money tips
Heritage	Faith stories in GB's past; Hebrews Ch.12:1	Learning from women of faith; building GB identity	Research, storytelling, presentation
Friendship	Love and kindness in the Bible	Making and sustaining healthy relationships	Communication, empathy, conflict resolution
Caring	Caring as part of discipleship (Philippians Ch.2:4)	Encouraging service and compassion	Basic care skills, understanding needs, volunteering

General Guidance

1. Badgework is for all ages.

Girls' Brigade badgework is mostly all age - recognising that many Girls' Brigade groups have a wide range of ages in their groups.

You will see these logos throughout the badge guidance to help you recognise the different elements of the badgework.



Spiritual



Skill



Social

When you see these logos are square (below), that means that badgework is intentionally **written for older young people** and may cover themes that are not appropriate for younger people.



Sessions are written to be all age in mind, but leaders should feel free and confident to adapt:

- Use **storytelling, crafts, games, and sensory play** for younger groups
- Use **discussion, roleplay, creative media, and deeper reflection** for older groups
- Offer **choice and leadership roles** to older young people within a session (e.g. planning an activity)

2. Session Flexibility

Each badge includes multiple sessions, often designed around **5-week blocks**. However:

- You can run them weekly, monthly, or in condensed formats
- Sessions can stand alone or build on one another
- You may choose to focus more on a particular theme if it fits local needs
- Some badges, such as the Church Year badge, are intentionally written to be spaced out throughout the year.

3. Faith Engagement

The biblical references are chosen to support the theme and invite reflection, not to impose belief. Leaders are encouraged to:

- Share the Scripture in an age-appropriate and inclusive way
- Allow time for **open-ended wondering questions** ('What do you think this means?')
- Model faith as a journey, not a set of fixed answers

4. Inclusion & Safety

Sessions are written to reflect **GB's commitment to inclusion**. This includes:

- Creating a safe and welcoming space for all young people, regardless of background or belief
- Addressing topics like **mental health, LGBTQ+ inclusion** and **gender justice** with sensitivity and confidence
- Allowing room for **personal stories, questions, and disagreement**

The Girls' Brigade safeguarding policy, EDI guidance and gender guidance can be found in Life to the Full, [click here to read them](#).

If a session covers a potentially sensitive topic, leaders should:

- Check in advance what support is available if a young person is affected
- Remind the group of ground rules and confidentiality
- Signpost where further help is available

Practical Tips for Leaders

Prepare Well

- Read the session materials in advance.
- Adapt activities to your group's size, space, and needs.
- Have resources (e.g. Bibles, paper, craft materials) ready beforehand.

Start With Connection

- Always begin sessions by checking in - how are they feeling today?
- Build trust before diving into deeper content.

Make It Fun and Meaningful

- Use **games and activities** as tools for connection and reflection.
- Mix physical movement with quiet time.
- Include creative expression - art, drama, storytelling, song.

End With Prayer or Reflection

- Offer a moment of stillness at the end of each session.
- Encourage young people to write, draw, or quietly think about what they've learned.
- Keep prayers simple and invitational.

Awarding Badges

- Badges are awarded not just for attendance, but for engagement, reflection, and growth.
- Celebrate learning with the group: you could hold a **badge ceremony, parents' evening**, or make space for young people to **share what they've learned**.
- Encourage peer encouragement – 'What did you notice others doing well this term?'

Encouraging Leadership

- Older young people can and should be encouraged to **co-lead sessions, mentor younger groups**, or help design part of the badge journey.
- This supports leadership development and gives them agency in their own growth.

Final thoughts:

- When planning or reflecting on a session, ask yourself:
'Where is the spiritual moment? What social connection is happening? What skill is being learned?'
- You might want to **highlight or debrief** at the end of each session, helping the group name what they've experienced or learned.
- Celebrate growth in **all three areas**, not just the visible outcomes.

Over many years our dedicated leaders will have come up with or used a variety of games and activities. We encourage you to use them all in your groups. The activities, games and tasks are related to the theme of the week but they are by no means the be all and end all. Your experience is valuable and we encourage you to draw upon it.

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