

# Scout war memorials



War Memorials Trust

On this sheet you will learn:

- about the **contribution** of Scouts to the war effort in the First and Second World Wars.
- about the **war memorials** that commemorate the involvement of Scouts in the First and Second World Wars.

The involvement of Scouts in World Wars is **commemorated** by a number of Scout war memorials across the UK. These are a unique record of the actions and sacrifices of Scouts, leaders and former Scouts who served and fell during the First and Second World Wars.

## The First World War

When the First World War began the Scout Association had only been established for a few years but the **skills** that Scouts had developed in that time proved valuable. Many Scouts took on duties that contributed to the war effort and freed up adult men for **military service**. Such duties included acting as **messengers** for government departments and coastguard stations, **guarding** bridges, railways and ports, assisting with **farming** work (especially during the harvest) and using their previously acquired **First Aid** training to help in hospitals. Many troops carried out paid work to fundraise for **ambulances** at the front and other similar projects.

There were also, of course, many Scouts and Scout leaders who **fought** in the war and made the ultimate sacrifice. From figures compiled at the end of the war by Scout HQ, the Scout Association estimates that around **84,000** British Scouts served in the First World War and that 8000 of these did not return. At least fifteen were awarded the **Victoria Cross**, the highest military decoration. The most well known of these was **Jack Cornwell**, who was killed at the Battle of Jutland in 1916 at the age of 16. He was posthumously awarded the V.C. and in the following years his

story led to the creation of the **Cornwell Badge**. This is still in existence today and is awarded to Scouts for showing courage under extreme conditions.

## Between the wars

In the immediate aftermath of the First World War the contribution of Scouts was recognised and the Association **praised** for the way it trained 'future generations' of citizens and leaders. Like many other communities of the time, Scout troops across the UK erected **memorials** to their members who had fought. One example of these is the memorial to the 24<sup>th</sup> Nottingham Scouts, which consists of gates to the Blackwoods Scout site at Sherwood, Nottingham. This was erected in 1927 by the Rover Scout section of the 24<sup>th</sup> Nottingham Scouts (the Rover Scout section was established in 1917 for over-18s who wanted to continue in Scouting without becoming a leader, and was originally known as the Senior Scouts). The Scout troop remains **responsible** for the war memorial today.



Inscription on the memorial gates dedicated to the 24th Nottingham Scouts. © War Memorials Trust, 2011

## The Second World War

The Scout Association also made significant contributions to the Second World War. The skills gained through Scouting once

again proved useful, especially during the **Blitz**, when, among other tasks, Scouts acted as **messengers** for the police, **assistants** to fire crews, and **stretcher** bearers. Many also received awards for **bravery** shown during air raids, when the Scout Promise was really put to the test. For example one Scout received the **Silver Cross** Award for his part in rescuing three children from a bombed house in London. Many older Scouts also took over as Scout **leaders** when the adults joined the Armed Forces, so keeping troops going and enabling the Scouting movement to continue and develop in the post-war years.

## Scout war memorials

Sadly the Second World War led to the creation of further war memorials, or additions to memorials from the First World War, to commemorate this service and remember those who did not survive.



Memorial to the 5th Balham Scout group. The troop no longer exists and the memorial is now situated at Gilwell Park. © War Memorials Trust, 2006.

Scout memorials vary, but often consist of **plaques** bearing names situated where the troop meet or used to meet. It is common, and rather poignant, for these to carry the Scout tracking **symbol** meaning 'I have gone home,' which consists of a circle with a dot in the middle. The same symbol is carved onto Baden-Powell's gravestone. Other memorials feature **statues** or other images of Scouts or the Scouting **motto**.

The Scout Association plays a significant role in many local **Remembrance** services. Since 1922 Scouts have formed an Honour

Guard at the **Cenotaph** in London during the service on Remembrance Sunday and many Scouts take part in the **parade** past the Cenotaph after the service.

There are many varieties of Scout memorial and many **legacies** of wartime scouting that can still be seen today. They all help us to remember the contribution made by previous generations of Scouts to the war effort, and are a unique part of Scouting history.

## Summary

- During the First and Second World Wars Scouts made a significant **contribution** to the war effort. Many older Scouts and leaders **fought** while younger boys acted as messengers, guards and stretcher bearers.
- The contribution of Scouts was **praised** after the war and many troops created **memorials** to remember their fallen.
- Scout war memorials often feature the Scout tracking symbol meaning 'I have gone home' (a circle with a dot in the middle), other **images** related to Scouting, or references to the Scout **motto**.