

IRENE FAIRBAIRN

By Ruth Waterman South Australia

Irene Fairbairn's vision of providing opportunities for young women to travel and experience events within Australia and overseas led to the establishment of the Irene Fairbairn Fund in 1955.



THE IRENE FAIRBAIRN FUND

What is it?

The Irene Fairbairn Fund is a fund that helps support young Guides and Leaders (13 – 35yrs for Australian and 16-35yrs for International) attend Australian and International Events. In special circumstances funds are allowed for other ages.

Why was it started?

The Irene Fairbairn Fund was started to allow girls to go to National and International Events who could not otherwise afford to go. This fund has allowed many

Guiding young women to go to events!

How can a Guide get one of these grants?

The grants are advertised in newsletters that Leaders get.

How does the Irene Fairbairn Fund get its money?

The Irene Fairbairn Fund gets its money from donations.

Why should people give money to the fund?

People should donate

money to the fund to help Guides attend various events. Some people are lucky enough to be able to afford the costs of events, but others can't and the Guiding way is to be equal. By giving money to this fund, more girls will be able to attend events and help their local communities with what they learn.

What can I do to help?

You can help by donating money to her fund and raising awareness!



JUDY HARRIS IRENE FAIRBAIRN AWARD RECIPIENT

Judy Harris was awarded the Irene Fairbairn Award in 1998 after attending a National Selection weekend in Sydney, along with young Leaders from other States and Territories of Australia. Judy and Sarah Belsham (NT) were selected as the Irene Fairbairn Awardees to represent Girl Guides Australia at the 3rd Helen Storrow Seminar at Our Chalet, Switzerland. The focus of the seminar was focussed on refugees, and Judy found it to be an eye-opening experience - partly because of the information she learnt about refugees, but also because she learnt so much about customs, culture and Guiding in many other countries. There were 23 participants from 16 countries - from Egypt to Ireland, Guatemala to Burkina Faso! Judy also enjoyed the chance to visit Our Chalet, and experience Swiss snow for the first time!

The seminar was a life-changing experience for Judy, and so began many years of Guiding travels, including visits to the other three World Centres, volunteering at Our Chalet twice, and being appointed to the WAGGGS World Centres Committee as Centre Team Leader for Sangam.

Judy highly recommends that other young Leaders apply for international experiences. The World Centres are magical places, and provide opportunities to meet inspirational people from all over the World.

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TIMELINE OF IRENE'S LIFE

1899	-Irene Florence Ridley is born in Stamford Hill, Hackney, London.
1917	-Irene works as a volunteer aide at Hospital for Wounded Officers, London. - Is Awarded the British Red Cross Society's service medal.
1922	-Marries Charles Osborn Fairbairn. - Mrs Fairbairn joins Girl Guiding in Australia (Beaufort- Skipton Association, Victoria).
1924 1925	- Mrs Fairbairn becomes the first ever secretary for Beaufort- Skipton Association. - Mrs Fairbairn also becomes the Divisional Commissioner for Ballarat and Beaufort Districts.
1926	-Mrs Fairbairn represents the Girl Guides Association of Australia at the World Conference and continues to in another five until 1969.
1930	-Mrs Fairbairn becomes Commissioner for Rokewood. - Mrs Fairbairn wins a seat on the Victorian Executive Committee and continues to for a number of years.
1938	-Mrs Fairbairn becomes Honorary/ Federal Secretary for the Federal Council of the Girl Guides Association of Australia (until 1947).
1945	- Mrs Fairbairn's Son, is killed in Royal Australian Air Force on 1 st February.
1947	- Mrs Fairbairn becomes the first Federal Commissioner (until 1952). (In 1952 first Federal Commissioner becomes known as Chief Commissioner of Girl Guides Association of Australia).
1948	-Mrs Fairbairn is awarded the Silver fish (Guiding's highest honour).
1952	-With the name change from Federal Commissioner, Mrs Fairbairn continues as the Chief Commissioner for Australia (until 1955).
1953	- Mrs Fairbairn is appointed with an O.B.E.
1955	- Mrs Fairbairn retires as Chief Commissioner of Australia. - The Irene Fairbairn fund is established by Girl Guides Association of Australia to assist Girl Guides with travel interstate and overseas.
1958	- Mrs Fairbairn becomes State Commissioner for Girl Guides Victoria and continues to be State Commissioner until 1963.
1959	- Mrs Fairbairn's husband, Charles Osborn Fairbairn passes away. - Mrs Fairbairn becomes President of Rural Deanery Guilds of Ballarat (until 1970)
1969	- Mrs Fairbairn is appointed as a life Vice-President of Girl Guides Australia - Mrs Fairbairn is appointed C.B.E
1974	- Mrs Irene Fairbairn passes away on 14 th March in East Melbourne, Victoria.

IRENE FAIRBAIRN CHALLENGE

Mrs. Fairbairn always wanted people to have the best opportunities to go to events and was a strong believer that they should be able to go.

The Fairbairn Challenge is held periodically. A 'challenge' is set for applicants to complete and up to 2 members between 16 and 35 years are selected to receive the award. Successful Challenge awardees receive financial assistance to attend a selected overseas event. The Fairbairn Challenge brooch is presented to recipients. By helping Guides aged between 16 and 35 years go to these events, Guides are able to learn more from their Guiding sisters who have experienced international or national travel.

NON-GUIDING COMMITMENTS

Mrs. Fairbairn's life had more meaning than just in Guiding, she had other important commitments as well.

Some of these include:

- ♣ Being devoted to growing daffodils,
- ♣ Being a member of the Country Women's Association,
- ♣ Being a member of the Australian Red Cross Society,
- ♣ Being involved with the Citizens Welfare Service,
- ♣ Being a member of the Victoria League.



The Irene Fairbairn Fund aims to help girls and Leaders to attend special projects, trainings, camps and conferences in Australia and overseas.

AWARDS RECEIVED

Mrs. Fairbairn received many awards during her life. Some of these included:

- ♣ The British Red Cross Service Medal for her work as a volunteer at a hospital for wounded soldiers in London,
- ♣ The Silver Fish (highest award in Guiding at the time) given for her service to Guiding,
- ♣ And the Silver Elephant, from the Indian Guide Association for her work with Sangam.



Other awards/ acknowledgments include:

- ♣ A respected Show Judge for Daffodils,
- ♣ A stained glass window put in at the Christ Church of Skipton in 1992 for her service as the organist every Sunday.



Mrs Irene Fairbairn



When she (Irene Fairbairn) retired as Chief Commissioner in 1955, the Irene Fairbairn Fund was commenced to allow Mrs Fairbairn's vision that young members of the movement should have every opportunity to share Guiding with their sister Guides, both within Australian and overseas become a reality.

RAISING MONEY AND AWARENESS FOR THE FUND

Help support the Irene Fairbairn Fund, raise awareness and money!

Some suggestions for ways to raise money and awareness include:

- ♣ Have a meeting with daffodils and have girls buy them,
- ♣ Tell others in your unit about her work,
- ♣ Draw pictures of daffodils,
- ♣ Think about inspirational women you know and things you want to do,
- ♣ Reflect on who you are and how you could live in her footsteps!
- ♣ Ask your Leaders to let you know about international opportunities,
- ♣ Fundraise, fundraise, fundraise!
- ♣ Set up a cake stall and sell cakes, then send the money to the fund,
- ♣ Sell chocolates at school,
- ♣ And as a Patrol, take photos with daffodils and make a poster about Irene Fairbairn.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Go to the Girl Guides Australia's website!

Ask your Leader!

Use the internet!

Ask you Leaders to let you know any information they receive!