

Remembrance stories

These accounts are to be used with the Remembrance activities.

World War Two stories

James 'Mac' McCairns, DFC & Two Bars, MM 1919-1948

James 'Mac' McCairns was a fighter pilot for the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve who was awarded the Military Medal for his courageous work during WW2. During a mission in 1941 his plane was shot down and crash landed. James was captured but managed to escape back to Britain with the help of the Belgian resistance.

Once home James joined the No. 161 (Special Duties) Squadron who flew the secret agents of Britain into occupied France. James was a highly skilled pilot who could fly by using the moonlight reflecting in rivers and lakes to figure out where he was. Between October 1942 and November 1943, he completed 25 successful operations to and from occupied France, helping bring back other pilots who'd been shot down, secret agents and leaders of the French resistance. For this he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross three times.

Elizabeth Lucas Harrison MBE 1923-2006

Elizabeth was born in Germany, but moved to Belgium as the Nazi's power grew. Whilst there, Elizabeth even joined the Belgian Girl Guides! When Belgium was invaded she began helping with the Belgian Red Cross and the local resistance. But soon she had to flee to France.

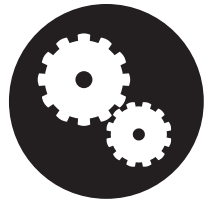
Elizabeth joined the French Resistance and helped to create fake documents to help people flee to safety. As France became free, she worked as a nurse looking after lots of people and soldiers. Elizabeth had kept all her brave and dangerous efforts a secret from her family. She did all this before the age of 21!

Elizabeth didn't stop helping when the war was over. She published a newsletter in German for the prisoners of war. She also used her amazing language skills after the war ended, helping lots of people. Elizabeth was awarded an MBE for all her work, including her charity work after the war.



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

Girlguiding



World War Two stories

Teresa Wilkinson World War Two

At 19 years old Teresa signed up to become an air raid warden. This job included making sure there was no light coming out of anyone's windows so enemy planes couldn't see where people lived, and fitting gas masks. Because Teresa was a woman, she was only paid two thirds the salary of a male warden. But she kept at it even with people telling her they thought women were too squeamish to be air raid wardens.

Teresa's biggest challenges came during the Blitz in 1940. People were losing their homes and everything they owned. One night after heavy bombing, the local school set alight. Teresa ran to the local fire station to get water but there wasn't any. The local Home Guard arrived on site and together they used the water from the school's toilets to put out the flames.

In 1941 once the raids had quietened down, Teresa joined the Auxiliary Territorial Services, the women's auxiliary (support) branch of the army. Teresa's experiences stopped her from being shy and made her a more confident woman.

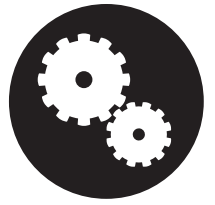
Nancy Grace Augusta Wake 1912-2011

Nancy was born in New Zealand in 1912 and ran away from home when she was 16. She worked as a nurse before moving to New York and London to become a journalist. In the mid-1930s Nancy moved to France and saw the rise of the Nazis.

Whilst in France she joined the southern France escape network, who helped people escape to freedom. The Germans learnt what Nancy was doing and she became their most wanted person in the Marseilles area. They even put out a reward of five million francs for her capture.

Nancy escaped into Spain and then made her way to Britain where she joined their new secret service – the Special Operations Executive. During her training she made some great friendships with other female agents. She was parachuted back into France in 1944, where she recruited, armed and organised a force of 7,000 members of the French Resistance.

Nancy Wake was awarded the George Medal, the US Medal of Freedom, the Médaille de la Résistance, Légion d'Honneur, and the Croix de Guerre, making her the most highly decorated Allied servicewoman of WW2.



Key worker stories

Police officer

'I love that every day's different. You're often only called by people when they're having some of the worst days of their life and it's an incredible privilege to help and support them. It's also very rewarding to make sure dangerous people aren't on the streets too, to keep everybody safe! During lockdown we had far fewer calls so we were able to be a lot more proactive. We were able to arrest people we'd been trying to find for a long time.

It's also made things harder for us as we're having to enforce rules making people stay at home, which in normal times would be at odds with what police should be doing - protecting our freedoms.

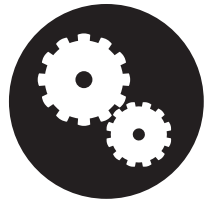
It has been great to see more recognition for the hard work that emergency services do and the sacrifices they make.'

NHS speech and language therapist

'I'm a speech and language therapist and I work with adults who've had a stroke. A stroke can change the way our brains send messages around the body. My job is to help people speak again. I love that I help people to relearn. I think it's important to support people who can't speak up for themselves.

When Covid-19 started a lot of us were scared. We had to wear lots of new equipment and visitors weren't allowed in. The patients we saw were often poorly and needed specialist care to help them breathe. We saw that some people were too scared to come into hospital in case they caught Covid-19, so they didn't get the right help at the right time. Now we have to wear PPE, and are using technology and video-calling to treat patients at home.

Most importantly, the hospital staff came together to support each other, some even changed jobs, like when our top managers helped out and served lunch in the canteen!'



Key worker stories

Supermarket worker

'I love my job because I work with some amazing and funny people. I've worked in a supermarket for five years and it always had its ups and downs.

Work changed a lot when Covid-19 happened, people started to panic buy which made it really hard to work. As soon as we were stocking the shelves, the food was gone. However, after a while people came together to make sure those that were vulnerable got what they needed in their local shops.

With the recent rule change meaning people have to wear face masks inside, it's really nice to see people following the rules. It helps keep me safe whilst working.

It's been weird to go from feeling invisible in the job I do to being in the spotlight during Covid-19. People say thank you to me for the job I do, which has been really nice.'

Care worker

'My job is to look after some of the most vulnerable people in society and keep them well and happy. I really like helping people. It's always been long hours and hard work but Covid-19 added a new challenge to my every day.

At the start both me and my clients were extremely worried about the virus but we couldn't stop the important work we do. Because of my work it means I can't keep the recommended distance from my clients as I have to do things like feed and bathe them. But without care workers there is no one to help the vulnerable, so we kept going even though it means risking catching the virus.

The Thursday night clap was great as it really felt like people were starting to understand how difficult being a care worker is. I hope everyone keeps saying thanks to all the key workers as it really helps you when you've had a rough day.'

Girlguiding wants to say a massive thank you to all the key workers that have helped everyone during recent difficult times.