

World Thinking day is arguably the most important event in the Guiding calendar. Celebrated on 22nd February each year to coincide with the birthdays of Lord Baden-Powell (founder of scouting) and his wife, Olave Baden Powell (the World Chief Guide). Although most Rainbow, Brownie and Guide units will do something to mark World Thinking Day, I realised that I know very little about how it began and had been celebrated in the past. Please enjoy reading below the result of that realisation - a brief history of World Thinking Day and its celebrations:

### 1926

In 1926 the 4th Girl Guide and Girl Scout world conference took place in the USA. Here it was agreed that one day each year should be set aside to think about Girl Guides and Girl Scouts around the world and give thanks for the movements. The date of 22nd February was chosen due to the link with the birthdays of Lord and Lady Baden-Powell, and the name 'Thinking Day' invented<sup>12</sup>.

### 1932

Six years later, at the 7th World conference in Poland<sup>3</sup>, a delegate from Belize suggested that as birthdays traditionally involved gifts, Thinking day could be used to raise money for the Girl Guide and Girl Scout movement. Olave Baden-Powell asked all Guides to donate one penny, enough to buy a loaf of bread. This was the beginning of the World thinking day fund<sup>4</sup> which still exists and is used to support girls across the world in the WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scout) movement<sup>5</sup>.



Olave Baden-Powell as World Chief Guide (a)

### 1933

The World Thinking Day Fund raised £520 12s 6d<sup>6</sup>, enough to buy a house<sup>7</sup>! In today's money that would be nearly £47,000<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/what-we-do/events-and-opportunities/events/world-thinking-day/what-is-world-thinking-day/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wagggs.org/en/what-we-do/world-thinking-day/history/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_Conference\\_\(World\\_Association\\_of\\_Girl\\_Guides\\_and\\_Girl\\_Scouts\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Conference_(World_Association_of_Girl_Guides_and_Girl_Scouts))

<sup>4</sup><https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/what-we-do/events-and-opportunities/events/world-thinking-day/what-is-world-thinking-day/>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/what-we-do/events-and-opportunities/events/world-thinking-day/the-world-thinking-day-fund/>

<sup>6</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_Thinking\\_Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Thinking_Day)

<sup>7</sup> Office for national statistics; Table 502 Housing market: house prices from 1930, annual house price inflation, United Kingdom, from 1970

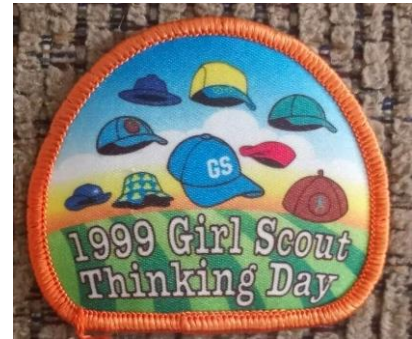
<sup>8</sup> <https://www.officialdata.org/uk/inflation/1933?amount=520>

## 1971

By this time WAGGGS had grown substantially from the 26 founding members to include nearly 90 countries<sup>9</sup> and with this growth Thinking Day became more widespread and commonly recognised, with the World Thinking Day Fund raising £35,346 in this year<sup>10</sup>. Today this amount would be worth £626,126<sup>11</sup>.

## 1999

The name is changed from 'Thinking Day' to 'World Thinking day' at the 30th World conference in Dublin. The idea was to make the emphasis on the global nature of the Girl Guide and Girl Scout movements<sup>12</sup>.



A 1999 World

## 2005

In recent years (the first I could find was 2005), WAGGGS have chosen a theme for World Thinking day. Many of these have been based around the UN Millenium development goals and have had activity packs and badges produced to encourage engagement with the theme. The theme for 2005 was 'Think about food'<sup>13</sup>.

## 2010s

In the UK it became increasingly common for girls to wear their Rainbow, Brownie or Guide uniform to school on World Thinking Day, however, this is not a nation-wide initiative and is still organised between units and the schools that their members attend.

## 2020

Although seemingly unconnected, the Corona virus outbreak had an effect on the way Thinking Day is celebrated in many parts of the world. Many units already had a tradition of exchanging letters, photographs or presents with Guiding groups in other countries for thinking day, however, programmes such as Teams and Zoom becoming more widespread meant that video chats with units around the world to share experiences, games, and culture were much easier to organise and have become relatively common. In 2021 I took part in a leaders meeting for World Thinking Day including adult members from the UK, South America and Canada among

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(a)[https://www.facebook.com/StAntoineScout/photos/olave-baden-powell-chief-girl-guidelady-olave-baden-powell-was-the-wife-of-lord-/2037452453203354/?paipv=0&eav=Afb1cNZZ1NZeHRQwPmbVjlpEpbge4h4zloRkXQgQelgUyCSpqGyGSm-F6xkAhlqpQuU&\\_rdr](https://www.facebook.com/StAntoineScout/photos/olave-baden-powell-chief-girl-guidelady-olave-baden-powell-was-the-wife-of-lord-/2037452453203354/?paipv=0&eav=Afb1cNZZ1NZeHRQwPmbVjlpEpbge4h4zloRkXQgQelgUyCSpqGyGSm-F6xkAhlqpQuU&_rdr)

<sup>9</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_World\\_Association\\_of\\_Girl\\_Guides\\_and\\_Girl\\_Scouts\\_members](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_World_Association_of_Girl_Guides_and_Girl_Scouts_members)

<sup>10</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_Thinking\\_Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Thinking_Day)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.officialdata.org/uk/inflation/1971?amount=35346>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/what-we-do/events-and-opportunities/events/world-thinking-day/what-is-world-thinking-day/>

<sup>13</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_Thinking\\_Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Thinking_Day)

(b)<https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/384375204449>

others. We shared stories and guiding experiences, showed some of our badges and talked about life and Guiding in our own countries, which was very interesting.

### 2023

Last year the WAGGGS theme was 'Our world, our peaceful future'. It featured a girl, Miku, going on a quest around the five WAGGGS regions and exploring their folktales to find peace and balance<sup>14</sup>. Over the last eight years WAGGGS have recorded a range of statistics about their World Thinking Day resources for anyone to see on their website. Last year:

- £64,050 was raised for the World Thinking Day fund (nearly £20,000 more than 2022)
- 39,000 activity packs were downloaded - the is a lot particularly when you consider that there would probably have been 1-3 downloads for each unit completing the activities
- 91,000 badges and 2,500 pins were sold
- The pack was translated into 13 languages<sup>15</sup>; the four official WAGGGS languages (English, Arabic, Spanish and French), Finnish, Greek, Icelandic, Chinese, Czech, Polish, Italian, German and traditional Chinese<sup>16</sup>.



The GirlGuiding UK

### 2024

This year the WAGGGS theme is 'Our World, Our Thriving Future'. Within my units this year we have decided not to complete the challenge pack, opting instead to carry out our own activities reflecting on Guiding around the world. With my Rainbows unit we are going to think about other countries where there are Rainbows and Brownies and then play games and make textured pictures of things from those countries. Whatever you choose to do and however you and your units celebrate -



The WAGGGS UK World Thinking Day

Happy World Thinking Day!

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.waggs.org/en/resources/world-thinking-day-2023-activity-pack/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.waggs.org/en/what-we-do/world-thinking-day/history/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.waggs.org/en/resources/world-thinking-day-2023-activity-pack/>

(c) <https://www.girlguidingshop.co.uk/product/7803>

(d) <https://www.waggs-shop.org/en/products/world-thinking-day/2024-world-thinking-day-badges>

