A Guide Rally inspected by Princess Margaret

by Jenny Lavender

Saturday May 26th 1956 was the day for which we had been waiting for some weeks – the visit of HRH Princess Margaret to Dunstall Park Racecourse for the Staffordshire County Rally of Girl Guides, Rangers and Brownies. I was in All Saints’ 1st Sedgley Guides, a patrol leader for the Chaffinch ‘six’; at the time Miss Gertie Jones was Guide Leader and Miss Woodcock was Brown Owl.

For over a month before the event, several of us from 1st Sedgley went to a Bilston Guide Troop to practise how to make the Union Jack Flag. We were working with other Guide Troops from across the Wolverhampton division. We had wide red, white and blue ribbons, with two Guides holding each end of the ribbon, which we then crossed over like wrapping a Maypole to make the flag. We had to practise making the flag perfectly, ready for the big day, as it was quite complicated to get the Union Jack formed correctly.

On the day, we arrived early at Dunstall Park to carry out marching and flag-making practice on site. There were over 8,000 Staffordshire Rangers, Guides and Brownies taking part. Following the National Anthem and Royal Salute, HRH Princess Margaret, who was Chief Ranger of British Commonwealth and Empire, inspected the troops before the March Past.

The making of the Union Jack was number five on the programme, and we were very lucky: our division’s flag-making was performed right in front of HRH Princess Margaret. It was an amazing day to have been part of.