

Elfreda's Story

Volunteering in WW2

Elfreda was born in Hendon, London in 1903 into a family steeped in architecture. Her Father was George C. Audsley, an architect, and her grandfather was George Ashdown Audsley, an architect and organ designer. An organ is an instrument used in churches and Cathedrals to play beautiful music. Elfreda wrote and illustrated children's books, including *Quiddlekin : A Modern Fairy-Tale*.

During World War II she volunteered with the St Paul's Watch. The St Paul's Watch was a group of determined and hardworking volunteers who protected the Cathedral during the Blitz. While others protected themselves and their families in shelters, the St Paul's Watch volunteers were in the Cathedral, protecting it from destruction and risking their own safety. If it wasn't for their effort, the Cathedral would not have survived.

Their main role was to put out the fires caused by incendiaries (small bombs that caused fires) and report any damage made to the Cathedral as they kept watch over it each night during the Blitz.

They came from all walks of life; they were architects and academics, civil servants and clergy. There were over 25 women in the St Paul's Watch, many of whom were First Aiders with the St John's Ambulance. Elfreda was one of these brave First Aiders.

The members of the St Paul's Watch had two things in common: their love for the Cathedral and their desire to do something to help. **They were ordinary people doing extraordinary things in a time of crisis.**

After the war Elfreda was a founding member of the Friends of St Paul's Cathedral and continued volunteering in the Cathedral that she loved and protected.

Learn more about Elfreda and what it means to be a volunteer in the following activities.

We don't know what Elfreda looked like, but we know she was a First Aider and perhaps would have dressed like the woman pictured here who was part of the Watch. **Notice the cross symbol on her helmet showing her important role.**



Elfreda Audsley wrote an article about her time in the Watch in 1943, from which you get a good sense of her voice and character:

*The Watch was 'a small army of fire-fighters and first-aiders... after **black-out** [the cathedral] is lighted only by a red and blue lamp, set under the dome... Above stretches **the golden cross**, like a **serene symbol of protection** mounting guard over the Heart of the Commonwealth, and below lies London, **battle-scarred and defiant, but very much alive**'.*

What is volunteering?

Activity 1:

What is special about being a volunteer? From the options below, circle the phrases that apply to a volunteer:

They don't get paid

They get paid extra

This is their job

This is an extra job

Volunteering is a commitment

Volunteers do something worthwhile

Volunteers help people

Volunteers give up their time

Volunteers are not skilled

Volunteers share their skills

Activity 2:

Volunteering is all about helping people and supporting your community by giving up your time, taking part in special events (like bake sales or fun runs) and having fun making new friends. You have probably volunteered before! Share three volunteering ideas below that might help people in your community:

1.

2.

3.

Try and think about how you can turn your ideas into actions and be a volunteer yourself!

Activity 3:

After reading Elfreda's story, see if you can think about what motivated her to volunteer to protect St Paul's Cathedral. Write 3 reasons you think she volunteered as part of the St Paul's Watch below:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Activity 4:

Make a Thank You Poster

People have volunteered for lots of different reasons throughout history, usually to help people and to make a difference. At the moment communities are pulling together to support each other during Covid-19.

500,000 people have signed up to volunteer with the NHS, people are cooking meals for families, and are fetching shopping and medicine for their elderly, vulnerable or isolating neighbours. Like Elfreda, they want to do something to help in a difficult time.

If you know someone who has volunteered *or* even if you don't, **make a Thank You Poster** for them and display it in your window. Things to think about for your poster:

Why are you grateful for their volunteer work and community kindness?

What inspires you about their volunteering work and community kindness?

Decorate with pictures and symbols of hope and happiness. If you have already created a rainbow of hope in your window, maybe add it to your beautiful display!

If you haven't seen the rainbows or done one yourself check out the Newsround link below:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/52034134>

Activity 5:

Make a Paper Chain of Kindness

Volunteering isn't just something you can do in your wider community, it is something we can do in our homes too. Right now, while we are all spending more time indoors with our families, why don't we think of ways we can volunteer our time to help out and complete acts of kindness at home?

Make a paper chain of kindness with your family and display it in your home. Refer to it each day and pick something to complete that day to help someone, lend a hand or do something kind.

What you will need:

Colourful paper

Scissors

Felt Pens

Glue or tape

***Step 1:***

Cut coloured paper into long strips - around 2cm wide and 20cm long. Cut between 10-15 and share them out between people in your house equally.

Step 2:

Choose your acts of kindness or tasks; one for each strip of paper you have. For example; HOOVER THE HOUSE, MAKE A CUP OF TEA FOR ..., BAKE CAKE FOR EVERYONE, GIVE A HUG, CREATE A GAME FOR US TO PLAY etc.

Once you have decided what your acts of kindness are, write them in felt tip on the strips of paper.

Step 3:

Put all your strips of paper together and, with the writing on the outside, curl your strip of paper into a circle. Use glue or tape to join them together at the ends.

Get the next strip, feed it through the middle of the first link and create a second circle. Curl this one around and glue it at the ends to make the second link. Make sure your writing is always on the outside and continue until all your strips are gone.

Step 4:

Display your paper chain in your home and refer to it each day to complete an act of kindness. Think about how these acts can be extended to your community, school and the world.

Share your poster and paperchains with us on twitter @stpaulsedu and think about Elfreda next time you visit St Paul's Cathedral.

If you want to learn more about volunteering at St Paul's Cathedral, ask one of our Friends in the Cathedral, they are volunteers who are visible by their red sashes and are always happy to help!

Reflect

After you have finished all of your activities, sit quietly for a few seconds. Think carefully about some of the people in the world that are living in difficulty, fear or loneliness. Think about those who are currently separated from their families and friends. Think about how daily life for you and others is being affected.

In your moment of quiet think about all the wonderful things people are doing to spread hope and joy. Think about how people are following in the footsteps of Elfreda and volunteering in any way they can to help. Think about what you might do to make your community stronger in the future.



Light a candle with your family to reflect on these things together for a few minutes.