



# Glenthorne Quaker Centre and Guest House

Easedale Road, Grasmere, Cumbria, LA22 9QH

Registered Charity no 232575

## WELCOME PROJECT – Hospitality to asylum seekers and refugees

### Annual Report 2013

#### 1) Introduction

Glenthorne's **Welcome Project** provides hospitality and support in the form of short respite holidays to groups of asylum seekers, refugees and those made destitute when their asylum claim fails. Glenthorne operates this project by making links with faith and community groups supporting asylum seekers in



towns and cities in the north of England. One of our trustees, Anne Tunnicliffe, outreaches these local groups and currently coordinates a 2 year cycle of their uptake of the project. In 2013, seventy four men, women and children from over seventeen countries stayed at Glenthorne over 5 weekends. Each group was accompanied and our Friend in Residence. Terry Winterton, volunteers and Glenthorne Staff acted as minibus drivers and hosts.

#### 2) Purpose and Benefits of the Project

Asylum seekers in the UK commonly endure great stress while going through the process of claiming asylum. Health and well-being are even more severely impacted upon when an asylum claim fails and the claimant is left with no State support, barred by law from working and contributing to society, yet unable to return home for fear of persecution or death.

The Welcome Project provides a respite from this stress and a sense of welcome in a relaxing rural setting. During the weekends when Welcome Project guests stay with us, we make the most of Glenthorne’s beautiful and peaceful Lakeland surroundings; going for walks, trips in the boats on the lakes and strolling round the nearby towns and villages.

Our Welcome Project guests also share friendly company with other Glenthorne visitors and staff, promoting relaxed social integration.

The Project extends practical and moral solidarity to the staff working in asylum seeker support agencies – often over-strained in trying to meet the needs of people in destitution. Included in this report is feedback from our Welcome Project guests and support workers, illustrating the impact of the Project on well-being.



### **3) 2013 Welcome Project Facts and Figures**

2013 is the sixth year of the Welcome Project.

#### **Five groups came to Glenthorne between May and October 2013:**

- Leeds City College (Ensol group)
- Oldham Unity
- Leeds Women Asylum Seekers Toether (WAST) & Solace
- New Shamwari Project (Rochdale)
- Huddersfield Sanctuary (through Huddersfield Local Quaker Meeting)

<b>Total number of guests in 5 groups</b>	<b>74</b>
Adult asylum seeker/refugee guests:	44
Children/young people as guests (infant to 16 years):	23
Accompanying befrienders	7

#### **Countries of origin of asylum seeker/refugee guests:**

Algeria, Congo, Eritrea, Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Guinea (West Africa), Iran, Lithuania, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Uganda, Zimbabwe.

#### **Costs:**

- Full board accommodation at Glenthorne.
- Support for travel costs for guests to get to Glenthorne (train fares, vehicle hire and fuel)
- Pocket money given to guests (£10 per adult, £5 per child)
- Hire of South Lakes community minibus for duration of each visit
- Sundry items e.g. boat trips on the Lakes

Total project cost in 2013:	£11,598.92
Total cost per guest	£156.74 (£133.66 in 2012)
Total income to Project (grants, other donations) since 1/1/13	£8,861.00

#### **4) Appraisal**

Once again it has been a huge privilege to be able to host and spend time with our asylum seeker guests. The group size has increased to an average of fifteen from twelve last year and there is a continued demand for these respite breaks. All our guests have expressed their deep gratitude at our hospitality.

We were fortunate this year with the weather: most of the Welcome project weekends enjoyed warm and sunny weather allowing our visitors to relax and enjoy the surroundings and scenery.

The groups generally arrive by train around 6.00pm on Friday and are picked up in the South Lakes community minibus, which is used for the weekend. Dinner is at 7.00pm with the other guests and then mingling in the lounge after dinner, settling in, often playing games and just chatting or reading. On Saturday, after breakfast and Meeting for worship together, we have driven by minibus to Ambleside and taken a boat trip, stopping off at Bowness for a browse in the shops or a walk up to a local viewing point. Then back on the boat, stopping to explore at Brockholes visitor centre on the way, to arrive back at Glenthorne in time for afternoon tea. Free time follows until dinner at 7.00pm. After dinner, time is spent with other guests, perhaps around communal jigsaw puzzles or games. We have also enjoyed evenings in the Sybil Taylor room playing table tennis or with an impromptu entertainments session.



This extract from one of the poems written and presented in one of the sessions gave glimpses of some of the difficulties encountered by those seeking refugee status here.

*Arrived young and agile,  
With dreams and ambitions  
And families who had had hopes in us  
All shattered  
It is a life of no choice basis  
Where it is a crime to touch money  
Never able to work  
No documents to do so  
No choice of supermarket  
The voucher comes with its own conditionalites  
Thrives on Palfus used clothes  
No choice of place to stay  
Belongings remain packed for the next move Anytime, anywhere,  
anyhow as the law commands or dictates. (M. Catula)*





On Sundays we have explored locally and spent time walking at Tarn Hows, a local beauty spot near Hawkshead. They have particularly had fun being introduced to walking and singing in the rain in these lovely surroundings!

They depart from Glenthorne mid afternoon, with many smiles and hugs and having enjoyed a brief respite from the urban environment and life's uncertainties.

Our guests have also been introduced to the short sessions of Quaker worship in the mornings at Glenthorne and there has been much interest in Quakers as a result of the welcome and hospitality here.



Some of the comments from our visitors give an insight into their experiences:

*“Leaving Glenthorne came too soon, but we felt we had done so much in such a short time – yet without rushing or stressing even once. Returning home means facing up once again to unchanged circumstances, of course, but we had been in an oasis from the challenges that normally besiege us – and we knew we were taking some new strength and fond memories to go forward with.”*

*“We gained peace of mind and felt the real life of nature. We left all our troubles behind for three days... it was a wonderful experience especially to describe the place of wandering in nature. We socialised with different kinds of people and got to know each other. I am excited and wish it could happen again.”*



*“It is difficult to describe in words the generosity and kindness of the people who made this trip happen. We appreciate it very much. We learned about the Quaker community's attitude to foreigners. Our spirits were uplifted to know there are people who listen to us, who respect us and see us as human beings.”*

Plans and dates are in place to host five more groups at Glenthorne between May and September 2014.