

Glenthorne

Guest House and Conference Centre



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WELCOME PROJECT REPORT 2014 Hospitality to asylum seekers and refugees



2014 was the seventh year of Glenthorne's **Welcome Project** to provide 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 has made links with faith and community groups supporting asylum seekers in towns and cities in the north of England and coordinates a 2 year cycle of their uptake of the project. In 2014, fifty seven men, women and children, predominately Muslim and Christian, from seventeen countries stayed at Glenthorne over 5 weekends. Each group was accompanied by a befriender. Our Friend in Residence, Terry Winterton, volunteers and Glenthorne Staff acted as hosts.

Purpose and Benefits of the Project

Asylum seekers commonly endure great stress while going through the process of claiming asylum in the UK. 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. Social isolation and radicalisation are also strong concerns.



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 share friendly company with Glenthorne visitors and staff and different faiths, families and nationalities, promoting relaxed social integration and understanding.

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

2014 Welcome Project Facts and Figures

Five groups came to Glenthorne between June and October 2014:

Blackburn Asylum/Refugee Community (ARC)
Sheffield Assist
Blackburn Refugee and Asylum Seeker Project (RASP)
Bury Eagles Wing
York Refugees and Asylum (RAY)

Total number of guests in 5 groups **57**

Adult asylum seeker/refugee guests: 32
Children/young people as guests (infant to 16 years): 17
Accompanying befrienders 8

Countries of origin of asylum seeker/refugee guests:

Guyana, Sudan, Jamaica, Bangladesh, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, Eritrea, Kuwait, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Sri Lanka, Syria and Guinea.

Costs:

Full board accommodation at Glenthorne and staff cost.
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

Balance of fund 1/1/14 £8,866.00
Total project cost in 2014 £8,436.63
Total income to Project, grants, donations since 1/1/14 £12,588.19
Balance of fund 1/1/15 £13,013.39

Total cost per guest in 2014 £148.01 (£156.74 in 2013)

Appraisal

It has been another successful, worthwhile and rewarding year running the Project. The number of guests was down from 2013, mainly because of some last minute cancellations and changes. The cost per guest was lower, due to some group organisations contributing to towards travel expenses. The need remains high and we have made links with two new groups during the year; Blackburn Refugee and Asylum Support Project (RASP) who stayed with us in August 2014 and Asylum Link Merseyside (ALM) who will be with us in May 2015. The weekends are offered to groups within a reasonable travelling distance from Glenthorne for practical reasons of time and expense. Our financial support has been good with donations from many Quaker Meetings and generous grants from a number of trusts nationally. It means that we can continue offer respite throughout 2015 and we have planned a further 5 weekends for 2015, from May through to September.



Groups generally arrive by train, car or minibus early on Friday evening in time for dinner at 7.00pm with the other guests. They mingle 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 in the South Lakes community 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 and sometimes for a swim in the lake. There is free time until dinner and then afterwards with other guests, perhaps around communal jigsaw puzzles or games. We have also enjoyed evenings in the Sybil Taylor room playing table tennis or an impromptu entertainments session with singing or sharing good things. No two groups are the same.



On Sunday mornings we have explored locally, walking up towards Easedale Tarn and Helm Crag or spent time walking at Tarn Hows, a local beauty spot near Hawkshead. The wishing tree there always creates interest and amusement.



By mid afternoon it is time to leave Glenthorne, always waving and sad to go but with happy memories, new friends and a bit more faith in other human beings.

What did our guests say?

“Bringing different families of different immigration status together gives support, strength and hope”.

“We really loved the place”. “This is my peaceful moment”.

“Gives you a warm nice feeling that somebody cares”.

“These days will always be in our minds and we will never forget how much you did for us. It helped me forget my situation and worries for a while”.

“I am still living in my own little cloud having had such a wonderful weekend with you in the Lake district”.

One of our guests penned this poem during his time with us in 2014

The Splendour of Creation

*Coming to Glenthorne House
Looking at the beautiful manicured lawns
Gazing around the fields,
Seeing the hills surrounding the house
The hills jutting into the sky and seemingly
Puncturing albeit gently, the clouds:
The amazing beauty of it,
Appeared to me like I'm having a "peep" of heaven.*

*Driving down to Ambleside,
Taking a a boat ride to Bowness.
Watching the water as the boat sliced
Gently the life giving fluid of Lake Windermere
Leaving a beautiful wake behind us.
I could not help but feel that
I was again having a "peep" of heaven*

*The climb to Loughrigg,
That awe inspiring wonder of nature,
It was beckoning us to take the challenge,
To scale it's 320 metre height.
Huffing and puffing we made our way up.
Each metre up getting harder.
Spurred on by the feeling of getting to the summit
Wanting to have a "peep" of heaven.*

*Once up right on top,
With a birds eye view of the scenery below,
I looked from behind me and behold , a water body,
Turning to the left I cast my eyes on a tarn.
In front of me I saw again the clear water of a lake.
Finally to the right Grasmere waters.
Again I felt I was having a peep of heaven.*

Victor Mujakachi (Zimbabwe) 27 July 2014

These words came from an organiser in one of the support groups after a weekend here:

"Please pass on our thanks to everyone involved with the Welcome project and tell them that this lovely idea really makes a big difference to our friends who have to face such difficulties most of the time and can barely imagine a life without stress".

