

Glenthorne

Guest House and Conference Centre



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WELCOME PROJECT REPORT 2017

Hospitality to asylum seekers and refugees



In 2017, 63 men, women and children refugees and asylum seekers, from 18 countries stayed at Glenthorne over 4 weekends and one mid week break. Each group was accompanied by a local befriender from the group. Our Friend in Residence, Terry Winterton, some volunteers, and Glenthorne staff acted as hosts.

This report gives the details of the activities during 2017, the project finances and feedback from the beneficiaries.



Purpose and Benefits of the Project

The project is an initiative started by Glenthorne trustees to provide short respite holidays to groups of asylum seekers, refugees and those made destitute when their asylum claim fails.

We also sometimes extend the scope to include those who have volunteered or carried out relief work with refugees and asylum seekers.

We have developed links with faith and community groups supporting asylum seekers in the urban areas across the north of England. The asylum claim process is a very stressful time, characterised by uncertainty and often lasting for years. Mental health, social isolation and radicalisation are strong concerns. The situation becomes desperate 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 most beautiful thing is that you give love to us and it was love for free.

Through the Welcome Project we provide a short break from this situation. We give welcome, support and perhaps above all, human goodwill, in a relaxing and hospitable environment with our other guests.



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 guests share friendly company with Glenthorne visitors, staff and different faiths, families and nationalities, promoting relaxed social integration and understanding. The Project also extends practical and moral support 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.

Typical weekend.

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 drive in the South Lakes community minibus to Ambleside and take 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.

The people in our group have been thrown around by life but here we are held gently.

There is free time until dinner and then afterwards with other guests, perhaps around communal jigsaw puzzles or games. We also enjoy 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 explore locally, walking up towards Easedale Tarn and Helm Crag or spend time walking at Tarn Hows, a local beauty spot near Hawkshead. It is then time for a packed lunch, good wishes and goodbyes.



2017 Welcome Project Facts and Figures

4 weekends and one mid week group came to Glenthorne between April and October 2017:

Hope Project - Birmingham
 Lancaster
 Leicester After 18
 Sheffield Assist
 Bolton Brass

Total number of guests	63
Adult asylum seeker/refugee guests:	42
Children/young people as guests (infant to 16 years):	15
Accompanying befrienders	6

Countries of origin of asylum seeker/refugee guests:

Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Congo, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Uganda, Cameroon, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Egypt, Pakistan, Philippines, Iran, Iraq, Kurdistan, Albania,

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 30/11/16	£10,429
Total project cost in 2016	£9,994
Total income to Project, grants, donations since 30/11/15	£16,158
Balance of fund 30/11/17	£16,593

Total cost per guest in 2017 £149.02 (£142.19 in 2016)



Appraisal

The project continues to be very successful and increasingly well known: it has been running since 2008 and therefore this is the tenth year! In that time more than 500 people from over 40 different countries have benefited from the project.

2017 has seen increased support and need and as a result we are now planning to extend the project for the next three years.

It is worth remembering that all the staff and trustees at Glenthorne are very proud to be able to contribute to this pioneering project; in a recent staff/trustee meeting it was observed that this humanitarian work was a prime reason for remaining to work at Glenthorne.

Two new refugee and asylum seeker groups were hosted in 2017: the Hope Project from Birmingham, organised by Rosemary Crawley from Lichfield Quaker Meeting and a group led by Mo Kelly from Lancaster Meeting: part of this group were exhilarated by a day walking on the fells led by two very experienced walkers from Lancaster, climbing Helm Crag, High Raise and Sergeant Mann Fells. The Leicester after 18 club came as two small family groups in August this year. We were also contacted by a new group from Preston, which we expect to include in the 2018 programme.

I felt safe here. I felt like I am living in a different world, free from hatred and discrimination

A particularly exciting link has been established with the Wordsworth Trust in Grasmere: We are planning to jointly host a group of refugees and asylum seekers from Birmingham on a weekend that involves them exploring what the writing of the famous Lake District poet, William Wordsworth, might mean to them. They will spend time at Dove Cottage (Wordsworth's first home in the Lake district) and the Wordsworth museum and it is intended they also meet residents of Grasmere village.

Here are some of the things our guests wrote during their stay here:

It's been wonderful. It took my mind off things(stress and worries), the atmosphere is pure heaven. I was able to attend Meeting for Worship; it was a real eye opener.

I didn't have flashbacks here because there are so many beautiful places and people.

*|The time was full of resting, laughter and getting to know others. I feel so emotional because it seems like I gained beautiful friends and met amazing people.
I will never forget this in my life time.*

I love the fact that people did not judge me by the hijab (scarf) I am wearing but treated me as who I am. It like felt days away from reality. I felt just like a dream, in heaven.

My visit here is like a counselling session- a big fat free therapy offered to me. It has changed my life – helpful is an understatement. I have enjoyed nature in a different way. I have a story to tell It has been once of those days which I would love to live again. It has been and extra-ordinary experience of my life.

I have learnt that even though things might be difficult in your life, there are people who care and can help to make you feel better, to make you realise that you are still a human being. With all the



restrictions of the home office the visit could not have come at a better time.

I stay in this country for five years. It has many stresses. I saw many things bad. I have been homeless for a long time, but finally I found nice people help me like Sheffield Assist and Quakers. I feel like born again. God bless you!

The kindness of people here have made me cry with happiness.

The most beautiful thing is that you give love to us and it was love for free. Not every people know what is love and they don't know what it is. Thanks for every beautiful moment you give us.

It was the best weekend I have had since I came to the UK. I love the Lake district and I love you all. Thanks you for everything!