

Glenthorne

Guest House and Conference Centre



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WELCOME PROJECT REPORT 2018

Hospitality to asylum seekers and refugees



The Welcome Project provides short respite holidays to groups of asylum seekers and refugees from the urban distribution centres throughout the mid and north of England. This report gives the details of the project's activities during 2018, the project finances and feedback from the beneficiaries.

In 2018, 6 groups came to Glenthorne, a total of 77 guests from 18 different countries on 5 weekends and one 3 day mid week break.

Each group was accompanied by a befriender from the group's organisation. Also this year we were lucky to have Chris Terry, a regular Glenthorne guest and supporter of the project help out with one of the groups. Our Friend in Residence, Terry Winterton hosted the weekends. Special thanks are due to Robin Hargreaves, a Glenthorne trustee, who accompanied one of the weekends and looked after the group from New Beginnings, Blackburn, on the August mid week break. Of course, we are very thankful for all the full time staff at Glenthorne who catered and looked after all the practical hospitality.



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 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 mid and 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.

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.

*Coming from a traumatic experience in my country, it feels so good to see people who treat you as a human being.
The smile of people here shows you that there is still humanity in this world.*

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.

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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.

There is free time until dinner and 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.

*It has helped me feel that we were equal – it doesn't matter where we
come from; colour, religion ...
I think the best things about this place is how the peoples personality is
so kind and makes everyone's sadness to happiness.*

2018 Welcome Project Facts and Figures

5 weekends and one mid week group came to Glenthorne between May and October 2018:

May - Leeds Solace
June – Preston Talk English
July – Blackburn ARC Project
August – Blackburn New Beginnings
September – Liverpool Asylum Link
October – Doncaster Conversation club

Total number of guests	77
Adult asylum seeker/refugee guests:	45
Children/young people as guests (infant to 16 years):	24
Accompanying befriender & volunteers:	8

Countries of origin of asylum seeker/refugee guests:

Afghanistan, Bahrain, Peru, Jamaica, Mongolia, Italy, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Congo, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Uganda, Cameroon, West Sudan, Pakistan, 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 30/11/17	£17,639
Total project cost in 2018	£13,564
Total income to Project, grants, donations since 30/11/15	£16,456
Balance of fund 30/11/18	£20,531

Average cost per guest for a weekend stay in 2018 £161.90 (£160.57 in 2017)

Appraisal

The Welcome Project has run every year since the pilot project in 2008. Over that time, 669 men, women and children refugees, asylum seekers and benders from 55 countries have benefited from a respite break at Glenthorne. Astoundingly, our Welcome Project guests came from 18 different countries in 2018 alone!



In the picture above we see something lovely and heartening. A family that came here on a

Welcome Project weekend in May 2016 returned to us with good news (we usually only see a person once on a respite holiday): this family, originally from Mongolia, had just been granted leave to remain a few week earlier and can start to rebuild their life after a number of years in limbo. You may recognise the young girl standing just behind the front row in the picture above: if you look at the picture on our donation sheet you will see her enjoying an ice-cream on her first visit here 2 ½ years ago! We took a similar picture of her this year for comparison! Here they are: it is a happy picture and a happy ending for this young refugee and we are delighted and privileged to have been a part of it.



I really needed this break, made me forget what we had been through.

The most happiness is to see my children enjoying so much and happy. All this beautiful place is like a dream.



The project continues to attract much interest and has led to the start of a similar project at Claridge House, a Quaker centre for rest and renewal in the south of England. We have also developed links with the Wordsworth Trust here in Grasmere and in April 2019 we are hosting a Children's Society refugee/migrant group from Bradford, who will be engaging with literature students from Birmingham University at Wordsworth's Dove cottage during their weekend stay here.

During 2018 we also gave a small subsidy of £290 to help a group of 30 volunteer leaders to stay at Glenthorne on a 2 day stay here. The retreat was organised by Quaker Peace and Social witness as part of the *Sanctuary Everywhere* initiative for Quaker Meeting houses to provide welcoming spaces for refugees and asylum seekers.



We are very grateful for the donations from trusts, Quaker Meetings and individuals who have made this project possible. We are planning to run the project as long as the need exists and we continue to get donations.

Read some of our guests comments to see the effect of this break on them:

It takes out my stress and loneliness. I felt that I am in the place I wanted to be. The days and nights that I spent here was the best that I have ever had. I am a totally different person now.

I felt so safe. two nights I didn't take my sleeping medication. I love this place so much. I feel like I am in a different world ... so safe and different. I met a loving people..

It has helped me feel that we were equal – it doesn't matter where we come from; colour, religion ... I think the best things about this place is how the people's personality is so kind and makes everyone's sadness to happiness.

I have met people of other nations and faiths who accepted me as a friend and who weren't suspicious of me.

Nobody has done anything for me before. I am happy someone thinks about me and tries to make me happy.

I really needed this break, made me forget what we had been through. The most happiness is to see my children enjoying so much and happy. All this beautiful place is like a dream.

It has helped as I was given a letter of eviction from G45, was very stressed on Thursday but thanks to this trip for taking away my worries – it has given me time off stress. Thank you Quakers.

Coming from a traumatic experience in my country, it feels so good to see people who treat you as a human being. The smile of people here shows you that there is still humanity in this world.



I feel like I am a member of a very large family. This is the most beautiful trip I have ever had in my life. Thank you very much for all of you.

For a while I got to forget about my situation and the stress of it. The trip helped me because it took all my business away and me getting wet in the rain was fun – ha ha ha.

Most of all the love and care we found that was really something very very special. We were not missing our homes and we will miss all the time we spend here.

Quakers helped bring everyone together – thank you for your happiness. Our family were overwhelmed.