

Glenthorne Quaker Centre and Guest House

Report for Quakers in Yorkshire on 2023

The Trustees held a creative listening session in January 2023 to revisit and update the Vision for Glenthorne produced in 2012. This included staff and Trustees. We were led by the Friend in Residence, Terry Winterton. The updated vision statement was set down in a minute at the time. This reads as follows

23.1 “We listened to each other’s thoughts and aspirations, about Glenthorne and its future focus. We recognise the existing community of individuals that work and support all that happens and celebrate the diversity and enthusiasm of this community and the special place that is created at Glenthorne. We are grateful for the dedication of all staff who give above and beyond our expectations to maintain what is done here. We recognise the need to work with BYM's Sustainability commitment but are aware of the wider aspect of this in sustaining the community of people and the business that supports all that we do. We heard the need to keep things simple and maintain the balance while allowing our best practice to develop further. We should listen and learn from all around us.”

The high demand for holidays in the UK continues, as does the considerable pressure in finding and maintaining staff levels. We are fortunate in that Laura Tortosa manages Glenthorne in a way that encourages loyalty from staff, creating a popular place to work. The year started with a high number of bookings. Over the year as a whole we achieved 73% occupancy. We sustained a loss of £20,343. This is within an acceptable range and reflects the rise in prices across the board for those providing hotel and catering facilities.

We have continued to work closely with Woodbrooke, holding four courses in 2023. More are planned for 2024 together with another full programme of courses. We have continued to develop a stronger focus on spirituality, of enabling adaptation to climate change and enabling younger people to enjoy the facilities and spiritual atmosphere of Glenthorne.

The Welcome Project thrives. A full report is available from Glenthorne via Terry Winterton, our Friend in Residence. In 2023 seven groups of asylum seekers/ refugees visited us, all from the north of England. Seventy seven individuals came from twenty-one different countries. This means that since the project started in 2008, nine hundred and twenty-three men, women and children from sixty-four countries have benefited from a respite break at Glenthorne. This year we also offered a short independent break to a couple from the Morecambe Bay Poverty Truth Commission. The couple happened to be refugees and so we funded the three day break from the Welcome Project funds. We are looking at other possible groups who are in need of the facilities we offer.

The role of the Friend in Residence has continued to be developed and he now takes a leading role not only in the spirituality of Glenthorne but within the wider community as co-chair of the Churches Together in Ambleside District and regular attendance as part of the Pastoral Care team in Swarthmore Area Meeting. As the only remaining Quaker Residential Centre in the UK with a Resident Friend we have continued to meet with other Quaker Centres annually at the Quaker Centres Gathering. Of particular note is the number of other denominations booking the house for their Retreats. He continues to be available to individuals or groups seeking guidance for their own retreats.

You are considering a request from Glenthorne Trustees for Quakers in Yorkshire to release the remains of the Linton Taylor Fund you hold on Glenthorne's behalf. Should our request be granted, we will create a designated Linton Taylor Fund within the Glenthorne accounts that will be used for capital works directed at sustainability improvements and measures to lower the carbon footprint of Glenthorne. This request links to the results of the Quinquennial Survey which took place in 2023. Rather than doing this in-house as in the past, we decided to commission the survey from Underwood Associates. They have produced a five-year plan. Substantial work is needed and £75,000 has been allocated for the first year. In addition we have continued to maintain the buildings as problems arise. The strategy is to implement a programme of planned maintenance and then to maintain it bearing in mind the joint principles of enhancing the condition of the buildings while improving our carbon footprint and environmental impact.

The garden has continued to be maintained and is much appreciated as a place where guests can sit in peace and quiet reflection. It has received a low priority in the demand for resources but we hope to improve the habitat for our local wildlife and increase biodiversity.

I conclude with acknowledgement that the success of our work depends on the dedication and efforts of our staff who have created a very welcoming and spiritual place for all our guests, something that many comment on. There is a tension, inevitable in a place run as a Quaker Centre, for the staff, who are not themselves Quakers, facilitating Quaker activities. Terry our Friend in Residence is central to managing this tension with the support of a small Group of Trustees. This aspect of maintaining Glenthorne as a community focused on spirituality and love-centred activity is core to our purpose.

Jym Paris Co-Clerk to the Trustees.