

Junior Holidays 2024

Report to QiY, January 2025

Curly Hill, June 2024

33 children aged 6 to 13, one teenage volunteer (with one former teenage volunteer visiting for the day on Saturday), 6 adult volunteers and one staff member travelled to the Curly Hill Centre in Ilkley in June 2024. The theme for the weekend was 'nurturing nature'.

We were lucky with the weather as places to do indoor activities were limited at this new site. With a marquee hired to host crafts (making lanterns was a popular activity), a bell tent for games and another tent for friendship and chats, we managed to make the most of the site.

A walk was enjoyed including stopping for lunch and skimming stones by the river and Saturday afternoon the one and only Egg Olympics was hosted. Nest groups worked together on each of the tasks set, eggs were balanced, decorated and more ending in the grand finale of an egg throwing competition. We all had an egg-cellent time. No Junior Holiday can reasonably avoid a game or two of Mafia, and there was a talent night too, expertly compared by one of the children.

The volunteers, as always, looked after each other with endless coffee and cake, appreciating each other's talents and working as a team, ably assisted by the teenager volunteer. The children helped each other settle – and the age differences seemed to support that connection. Several of our children were new to Junior Holiday; others were old timers. All took part in the daily epilogues and the Sunday Meeting for Worship, held outdoors; epilogues were enjoyed round the campfire which definitely added a spark to the weekend's magic.

Our group of children included those who were active in their Meetings as well as those who were new to Quakers. We have learnt about the importance of explaining why we do what we do as Quakers to help children new to our traditions to understand and feel included and involved.

Barmoor, September 2024

Twenty children and six volunteers travelled to Barmoor for a weekend of togetherness under the theme of "Friends and friends".

On the first evening after dinner we went up the hill in the dark, where we paused, looked at the stars and were lucky enough to see the Northern Lights which was a special moment for all.

Our walk the following day explored the beautiful north Yorkshire moors ending with an ice cream in the village. Some children enjoyed playing by the stream as others wandered back to play games at the house. Barmoor gives lovely opportunities to explore indoors and offers cosy spaces for reading, chatting, preparing for the talent show as well as a chance to run off all the cake in the garden. The talent show included jokes and riddles, magic tricks and music. After our show we had an Epilogue with our duvets where we thought more about what makes a good friend. Several staff who had attended Junior Holidays when they were children ministered about the friends they had made on those holidays and the role those friends play in their current life. By Sunday we had got to know each other better and we had a relaxed morning crafting, preparing Cozy Glows booklets and enjoying Meeting for Worship, letting quietness and peace wash over us.

Regarding finances, both holidays comfortably broke even and small forecast surpluses were used to ease the weight of bursaries to local meetings. We noted that bursaries do not fall evenly amongst sending meetings and that meetings with a couple of less monied families can be asked for significant funds regularly. We try, where we can, to ease this burden. Junior Holidays are really good value for families, with Curly Hill costing £60 per child and Barmoor £75. We've tried to encourage parents and volunteers to carshare where they can.

Plans for upcoming Junior Holidays

With a strong volunteer team next year we will be hosting three Junior Holidays, enabling us to host holidays with smaller age ranges, we feel this will enable us to especially look after the younger ones and provide for those in year 6,7, and 8 who have fewer Quaker Holiday opportunities.

Two of these holidays will take place at Barmoor, a firm favourite amongst staff and children. It is a safe place to be free in such beautiful surroundings.

For the holiday with a bigger age range, we are changing venue from Curly Hill Scout Camp in Ilkley to Raywell Park, another Scout camp near Hull. We will be able to explore new spaces, arrange our own activities but maybe even try some of the activities they have on offer like archery. The space is big, so we will be able to welcome as many children as want to come, whilst keeping costs affordable.

Reflections

The volunteer team has grown this last year with a mix of 'old hands' and new faces. Lacking a "chair" as such we have pooled together to make the holidays run as smoothly as possible. We have benefitted from Jo Baynham's expertise and guidance though volunteers ran the Barmoor weekend without him being there. Current volunteers are more enthusiastic about organising and running the holidays than they are about more generic 'committee duties' but we are trying to work as team to ensure these holidays continue.

We have been heartened by the numbers of children wanting to come to Junior Holidays - the challenge now is to keep those children involved in Quaker activities as they grow and move out of the Junior Holiday demographic.

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