

An update from The Grange

January 2014

Happy New Year! As 2014 begins, we thought it would be a good time to send a quick update on what has been happening at The Grange over the past year and some thoughts on our plans for the future.

Firstly, **thank you** to everyone who has been a part of our journey here over the past two years. The project, offering sanctuary to those whose have experienced extreme violence and torture, has grown due to the energy of every single person who has visited and we thank you all deeply.

Throughout this summer and autumn we have welcomed over 100 people from around thirty countries on therapeutic retreats, holidays and craft courses. The feedback we get continues to be humbling and hugely supportive. Here are a few quotes from survivors who have visited this year:



"These days were my best time. I was free from my tension...I still feel relaxed when I think about those days [at The Grange]."

"It has helped me conquer some of my fears when out in the dark because I had never thought of ever being able to go out in the trees out in the dark but I managed to do it. Thank you."

"[The retreat] made me over come my fear and with this retreat I know the sky is not my limit."

'It has changed me... and now I am more hopeful.'

Here are some highlights from the last 12 months...

Retreats

In 2013 we have been able to build on the success of the pilot retreats that took place in 2012 and we are delighted that both groups that came that year have been back – and we have also welcomed new groups to The Grange.

Our partners at *Room to Heal* have brought three groups on intensive therapeutic retreats this year including a women and children's group, a men's group and a mixed group. All of the retreats have been incredible experiences for us. It has been wonderful to welcome back some Room to Heal members who have now been several times and to watch them feel increasingly at home.

The *Baobab Centre for Young Survivors in Exile* brought 12 young people and 5 staff for a week-long holiday in August. It was a packed week including horse riding, walking in Thetford Forest and a trip to the beach but the highlight for us was the building of a cob pizza oven in the garden.

This year we were also visited by a group from the natural growth project at *Freedom From Torture*. It was a really successful visit and we look forward to working more with FFT in the future. Huge thanks for all the work you did on the garden as well!

Most of the retreats this year have benefitted from yoga sessions from Mike and Camilla who run *The Weekend Yoga Place* in Swaffham. These sessions have been really popular and we look forward to developing more yoga offerings in the future.

Craft retreats

Early in 2013 we received a grant from the *Allen Lane Foundation* to pilot some craft based retreats at The Grange.



In July the amazing local textiles worker – *Mary Attard* – ran a four day weaving, knitting and felting retreat for three women and one staff member from Room to Heal. The feedback on the therapeutic effects of this retreat have been particularly positive so we look forward to working with our partners to see how we can offer more opportunities for skills based learning.

Building on the success of this course, we were also able to offer a one-day course with Mary for some members of the *ESCAPE* project based in Swaffham. *ESCAPE* offers opportunities for people with mental health issues and disabilities to work together outside. We used the theme of gardening to create natural looms. The pieces created are unique and beautiful and now grace the *ESCAPE* allotment in Swaffham.

Holidays

We were thrilled to welcome back someone who first visited us last year on the Freedom From Torture holiday scheme and returned with his family for a summer holiday. We also hosted one other young man from Freedom From Torture on their holiday scheme this year and it was partly through his lobbying that FFT visited again with the natural growth group later in the year – so thank you!



Other visitors and helpers

The primary function of The Grange is to offer a space to survivors of torture and that will continue to be our focus. However, we recognise that we can also offer a wonderful space to other groups who share our general ethos. Hence, we had our first *Tai Chi* retreat for three sunny days at the end of August which had very positive feedback. We also once again hosted one of the weekends of the *West Norfolk Permaculture Design Course*.

We have also been joined by a swarm of bees kindly offered by *Sharon Harvey* who is helping us to learn to care for them. They have provided us with honey, enjoyment for many visitors and some hilarious photos of people in bee suits.

So what about 2014...

We are really excited about the potential for this year. It looks like all the groups who have been before will come again, as well as some new groups that we are currently talking to.

We have just finished a detailed evaluation and reflection on the past two years and as we start to plan for the next few years we feel full of excitement and anticipation about where the journey may take us. The Grange journey is made by every one of you, your ideas, energy and support. We always value your input on how we can continue to facilitate this project to offer the best possible venue for people who have experienced trauma.

To finish with the words of one person who visited this year, coming to The Grange, '*brings back [my] spirits to cleanse my soul and mind.*'

We wish you a peaceful and prosperous 2014 and thank you for being a part of The Grange.

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