

## JYM Report- Moya Barnett

When I first arrived at JYM I was a little apprehensive, not least because I was surrounded by a group of teenagers I had never met before. It was hosted in Lee Valley Youth Hostel, open to the public, so I expected that our quirky Quaker ways would be toned down a little.... Unsurprisingly, it didn't turn out like that! From squeezing around twenty people into a tiny phone box, to water fights, to a ceilidh, we definitely lived adventurously.

Of course, it wasn't all fun and games, we did have a serious topic to discuss; the revision of Quaker Faith and Practice, both whether we wanted it to be revised, which we were overwhelmingly positive about, and how; suggestions ranged from including audio clips of particularly spiritual music or birdsong to creating a dictionary like section, so that newcomers wouldn't be daunted by our, sometimes strange, vocabulary. We conducted our own threshing meeting with the help of Melinda Wenner Bradley, who works with Quaker children in Pennsylvania, where we talked about the testimonies and how we followed them, or at least attempted to.

We also had a visit from Rhiannon Grant, who co-wrote the book *God Words and Us* and we discussed our use of vocabulary and how it could potentially scare off newcomers, or more agnostic Friends. I very much enjoyed being so involved with what was happening in the yearly meeting as a whole, it was amazing to realise that the adults actually cared about our opinions on such a weighty subject. This gave some of us, myself included, the courage to speak in the meeting for worship for business of the entire yearly meeting.

Of course it wouldn't be a Quaker event without a certain amount of craziness... we had wacky activities, such as dressing up as a Disney character using rubbish, and were given a set of clues and told to wander around the countryside to try and find a riddle, which would then give us the next clue for the next riddle, which would give us the clue for another riddle, and so on, of course each riddle was accompanied by a staff member in fancy dress, what better to stumble upon on a morning ramble through the countryside?

There were two things which I particularly liked about JYM, which is very possibly my favourite Quaker event so far, the first is the range of people: I only knew three people there at the start but by the end I had made many firm friends, everyone was friendly, inclusive and very open about their lives, which facilitated the formation of a really strong bond between all of us. A lot of us were studying for GCSEs or A levels and we organised our own little study morning out in the sun, with the more organised sharing text books with people like me who'd forgotten altogether. We sang songs, or rather one song ("riptide") on repeat, painted everybody's faces rainbow and of course we took advantage of the lovely weather with plenty of ice cream and water fights, nonviolent of course!

The other highlight of the weekend for me personally was speaking in meeting for worship for business, I had ministered only once before and never in such a huge gathering of people. But the atmosphere was so accepting that when I felt moved to speak I didn't stifle the urge and stood to minister among the adults. It was amazing to feel included in these discussions; three young people ministered in that particular business meeting, more than I had ever experienced before and it was wonderful to feel that our opinions were valued just as much as older Friends'.

I came away from JYM with many new friendships and also many new questions, it caused me to think about how I express my faith and how I can contribute towards the change which we will be going through over the next few years, or more likely the next few decades. I think JYM left us re-engaged and questioning ourselves and being more critical of the things we just blindly accept, it was also a welcome break from exam stress and an experience I would highly recommend to any other Quaker young people.