

The Girls Friendly Society  
in England and Wales

# PLATFORM NEWS

AUTUMN/WINTER 2014



## Our amazing worldwide family

Perspectives from  
GFS 21st World Council

## Branch highlights, and branching out

Activities, updates and  
new Lowestoft branch

## Marks scored = 10 out of 10

Youth café thumbs up  
for summer fun

# Our amazing worldwide family

## Four perspectives from the GFS 21st World Council, sharing our faith and promoting friendship around the world.

**Glenys Payne, Welsh and World President, writes:** What a wonderful time was had by all at our 21st Girls **FRIENDLY** Society World Council at Swansea University. The **FOOD** was delicious – thanks to the caterers! The **FAITH** and worship was awesome – thanks to the Clergy and all those who took part in worship. The **FUN** was so apparent – thanks to all those who entertained us through the week. The **FELLOWSHIP** was amazing – so many friendships rekindled and so many new friendships formed. The **FUTURE** looks so promising!

Our New World Project in Japan as a continuation of the tsunami project, the enthusiasm of our youth who are starting a new world youth initiative, and the inspiration of our speakers have given us plenty of **FOOD** for thought as we look **FORWARD** to the next three years under the guidance of Val Gribble, our new World President. Exciting times!

**Hazel Crompton, English President, writes:** 25 July, and GFS members were arriving from all round the world. It was great meeting old friends on that first day and quickly making new ones.

There was Council business to discuss but also plenty of time to spend together – in formal sessions, at the daily Eucharist, the services in Brecon Cathedral and St Mary's Swansea, simply chatting over meals, or taking part in social activities like the International Day when we were joined by young women from the Islington and Great Yarmouth projects, and young and not-so-young members from Welsh, Midland, Northern and Western area branches – proving how well GFS works together from whatever part of our worldwide family we come or how we experience GFS.



Worldwide delegates at the Opening Service in Brecon Cathedral. Photo by the Reverend Tim Williams

**Natasha Moore, English Junior Delegate, writes:** I wasn't sure what to expect from the World Council. All I had ever known about GFS was my branch, and some of the work of Head Office in London. This experience gave me an insight into the work of GFS internationally.

I made friends with people from all over the world, from the Philippines to Australia. We were all one big family.

The sessions allowed me to sink my teeth into the really important parts of GFS worldwide. To be given the opportunity to help make important decisions for the current work of GFS worldwide, as well as the future, was an honour. It is definitely something for all young women to aspire to do.

**Sarah Charlesworth, Junior Delegate for Wales, writes:** World Council was an amazing experience and one I definitely won't forget. I felt privileged to represent my country as Junior Delegate. Before World Council, I never really knew how important the work of GFS was, and the difference it made to people's lives. I feel really proud to be part of GFS.

I got the chance to meet fellow Christians from around the world and got a different perspective on their views of GFS. I look forward to Perth in 2017 and hope to see everyone there.



Hazel Crompton and Natasha Moore. Photo by Sharon Holland



Glenys Payne and the Reverend Rose Hudson-Wilkin. Photo by Sharon Holland



Sarah Charlesworth and Carole Gardener. Photo by Sharon Holland

# Celebrating our worldwide connections

Activities and bonding at GFS camp and World Council, seen through the eyes of branch members Megan and Rebecca.

## Diversity and unity

The GFS branch from St Catharine's Church met up in the summer with girls from other GFS branches for a camp at the Park Mill guide centre on the Gower, near Swansea. Other branches joined us from Cornwall and Birmingham. It was great to see old faces that we knew from previous camps and to make new friendships with others. During our stay we went to the beach, took part in archery and falconry, played many games and enjoyed some good food.

The main purpose of the trip was related to the GFS World Council. The Opening Service was held the Saturday before our camp in Brecon Cathedral. It was a very colourful event with all the delegates representing their countries dressed in national costumes, bringing along banners and flags from their groups around the world. Everyone congregated afterwards for photographs and it was quite spectacular to experience the diversity and unity of all the different nations coming together to celebrate the movement that supports young women all over the world.

As part of our camp we attended the International Day, held at Swansea University. Here the girls got the chance to go around stalls and activities set up by each country represented. On the stalls were gifts and presents made by GFS members from that country. The girls also got to dress up in some of the national costumes.

On our last day we went to the Closing Service at a church in Swansea. During the ceremony we sang a song in sign language. Other countries performed dances, sketches and readings in their own languages.

The ceremony was also to commission a new World President, Vice President and other Council members. It ended with a procession of all the banners and more photo opportunities.

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves, making friends and celebrating GFS worldwide.

**Megan Hunt (aged 15)**  
**St Catharine's branch, Gloucester**



Young women who took part in the World Council residential. Photo by Claire Boothby

## Friendships and bonding

A group of young people went to the GFS World Council along with women from 23 different countries.

While we were there we got involved with the International Day event, and had an evening where many of the countries showcased different performances from around the world. It was very interesting and exciting to see, as we would never experience it again.

On the following day we started to talk to one another, getting to know each other, so it was not as nerve-racking.

Overall I feel every group bonded, new friendships were made, and everyone had their own unique experience as well as the group experiencing cultures from around the world that were different to what they are used to!

The residential camp was very busy, but everyone got to know each other and we are keeping in contact with each other.

My personal favourite experience was exchanging ideas and memories about GFS experiences with both young women and adults.

**Rebecca Clarke (aged 16)**  
**Great Yarmouth project**



GFS girls performing the signing song at the Closing Service. Photo by Carol Lee

Exchanging culture and artefacts at the International Day. Photo by Sharon Holland

# Books, branches and branching out

## Branches enjoyed exciting and active summer activities, while we branched out with a new branch in Lowestoft.

Branches had an active summer, not just with World Council, but with a host of other activities, camps and trips, including a Midlands area Fun Day, attended by 40 girls from branches across the region, and trips to Crocky Trails and Chester Zoo in Northern area.

Liverpool Diocese held an event in the autumn to commemorate the First World War. The event was attended by 70 current GFS members, who were joined by some former members, for stories, poetry and activities.

We have opened a new branch in Lowestoft! Red Oak Primary School contacted our Great Yarmouth project in April asking whether GFS could work with its year 6 girls to address a high level of bullying, and to explore the possibility of GFS opening a branch in the school.

This has been an exciting and rewarding process. Project staff delivered a six-week programme which was very well received by staff and girls, and in September we started delivering weekly sessions to prepare the girls for transition to high school.

But more exciting is the news that a new branch opened within the school in October, straight after school on Wednesdays. This new branch is being delivered by the school's head of pastoral care, supported by a worker from GFS Great Yarmouth. For now, the branch is open to girls attending the school and those who have just moved up to high school. Later on, it will open up membership to all young women living in the area.

This is a unique venture, the first branch started in a school supported by a GFS project, and hopefully the first of many.

## Coming up ... the GFS Reading Challenge 2015

WORLD  
BOOK  
DAY

Following the enthusiasm, excitement and fantastic response to our Top Books Competition in spring 2014,

we plan to expand it into a Reading Challenge in spring 2015.

The Reading Challenge builds on the long-standing GFS aim to help young women broaden their horizons. Encountering the views, thoughts and feelings of others through reading offers this opportunity and is as transformational today as when the Society was founded.

We have chosen 'War' as the theme. With the WWI anniversary, and conflicts around the world, there has been much attention on a very complex issue debated in the news, schools and churches, and

in conversations our young women will have heard or perhaps taken part in. The GFS challenge can offer a chance to consider some of the wider implications of war, through personal stories of other, very different people.

Most of all, the challenge will be interesting and fun. There will be a range of books to read, activities to take part in, and several different competitions focusing on writing and art, to make it accessible to as many girls as possible. The Reading Challenge will be timed to tie in with International Women's Day, World Book Day and the Women's World Day of Prayer, with activities galore.

We aim to make the Reading Challenge open to young women who do not currently take part in GFS groups, with entry forms available to download from our website.



The Board of Trustees has chosen this year's winner in our Christmas card competition. Well done to all applicants – the entries were all fantastic which made the decision very hard to make. Congratulations to Grace English (aged 9) from Stanwix branch in Carlisle.

# Marks scored = 10 out of 10

## New and exciting summer activities were chosen and enjoyed by the young women at the Skegness project youth café.

Earlier in the year, discussions took place with the young women at the youth café about what summer activities they wanted. They chose a visit to the Natureland Seal Sanctuary in Skegness and a trip to the local bowling alley.

From this we held a youth café session where the young women composed letters to both venues to negotiate a discount entry. Both venues replied with offers.

We visited Natureland Seal Sanctuary in August, and saw seal shows, performing penguins, tropical butterflies, crocodiles and meerkat family charades. We also visited the baby seal hospital, and found out about the local work of the sanctuary.

The young women also requested a sleepover as some had never had a night away from home before. Staff arranged this, aiming to build the girls' self-esteem and confidence, develop their communication skills and enable them to share their views with their peers, while preparing them for a future GFS residential.



Skegness girls at Natureland on their day trip. Photo by Hannah Salkeld

The sleepover included lots of fun activities and games, and we all sat together and had a family meal before retiring to chill in our PJs and watch a movie.

All the young women gave the sleepover 10 out of 10. Here's what they said:

*"I liked yesterday night because I had a laugh and had lots of fun."*

*"I just had a good night."*

*"Enjoyed being away from home."*

After the sleepover one young woman, who had never slept away from home before, then went on to stay over at her friend's house for two nights. It came as a pleasant surprise to her family that she was confident enough to do this.



Young women from Skegness project having a girlie sleepover. Photo by Hannah Salkeld

The summer programme finale was an afternoon of competitive fun at the local bowling alley. This is what some of the young women had to say about the bowling:

*"It was fun competing with the other girls."*

*"It was amazing, can we go again?"*

*"I'm glad we beat the staff."*

All the young women seemed to agree on this last point!

As well as being new and enjoyable, our summer programme ensured that the young women were able to access a variety of activities while building on their relationship as a group.



## Fashion showcase

Young women from GFS Islington project took part in a 10-week fashion programme called 'Let your clothes do the talking'. The young women explored topics such as identity, culture and creative expression, and they got creative by customising their own brands of clothing for an exhibition showcase that they devised.

"All our own work." Photo by Krystal Donaldson

At the one-hour event, the young women showcased and modelled their customised clothing, expressing their identity through dresses, hats and T-shirts. The showcase included young women demonstrating their talents by playing a musical instrument, singing, reciting poetry and displaying their artwork. We were also glad to welcome Patricia Foster, the well-renowned spoken word poet, who performed at the event.

# Branch work recognition

## Community Award for Stella Hazard for her outstanding contribution.

Carlisle City Council presented Stella Hazard with a Community Award on 27 March in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the City of Carlisle.

Stella's involvement with GFS began when she was a founder member of the St Michael's Church Stanwix branch in December 1951. She became branch leader in 1959, retiring from this post in 2001. Stella has served as secretary, treasurer and president of the GFS Carlisle Diocese, and as vice president of the Northern area. She was invited to represent GFS at the Queen Mother's Birthday Parades in 1990 and 2000, and also invited to the Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in 2001.

The Stanwix branch provides opportunities in the local community for girls aged six and over to meet together, and take part in many activities, often with parental support and with girls from other branches. Activities include fundraising for world projects and placing flowers on the Tait Memorial in Stanwix churchyard each year to commemorate the deaths of the daughters of Dean



Well done Stella! Photo by Tim Hazard

Tait, a former Dean of Carlisle and Archbishop of Canterbury, whose wife was involved with the start of GFS nationally in 1875. In addition, the girls usually sing carols at Barn Close and Henry Lonsdale residential homes. These activities all help to develop the girls and raise their community awareness.

Stella continues her involvement with Stanwix branch as a helper and supporter of the present leader and as the Diocesan secretary. Over the years she has encouraged and supported many many girls to play their part in the life of their local church and community.

## St Paul's Lodge – closure

With regret, the Board of Trustees has taken the decision to close the service at St Paul's Lodge in Great Yarmouth, that for over 15 years has housed young mothers and their babies. In May, a service review was undertaken after a long period of low referrals and occupancy. GFS provides a service for 'low need' clients and evidence from the review clearly showed that this client group was no longer in need of the housing we were offering. Therefore – based on sustainability, cost, relevance and practicality – the Trustees concluded that the current service was no longer required or viable, and we said goodbye to the staff team on 10 October. We thank them for their commitment and dedication on behalf of all the mothers they have supported, giving them and their families a positive start in life.

## GFS notable dates for 2015

28 February  
**Youth Work Committee**

5 March  
**Investment Committee and Policy and Resources Committee**

28 March  
**Board of Trustees meeting**

16 May  
**Youth Work Committee**

22 to 24 May  
**GFS Membership Weekend**  
The Royal Foundation of St Katharine, London

6 June  
**Board of Trustees and General Meeting**

16 July  
**Investment Committee and Policy and Resources Committee**

22 August  
**Youth Work Committee**

26 September  
**Board of Trustees meeting**



The photo on the front cover shows four Junior Delegates enjoying their day on the beach during the World Council event in Wales – young women displaying the true spirit of GFS. Photo by Natasha Moore

GFS  
**PLATFORM**  
YOUNG WOMEN



GFS is moving: please check our website for up-to-date contact details.

**GFS Platform** Unit 2, Angel Gate,  
326 City Road, London EC1V 2PT

T 020 7837 9669 • F 020 7837 4107

E [info@gfsplatform.org.uk](mailto:info@gfsplatform.org.uk)

[www.gfsplatform.org.uk](http://www.gfsplatform.org.uk)

Registered charity number 1054310  
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