

The Girls Friendly Society  
in England and Wales

# PLATFORM NEWS

AUTUMN/WINTER 2015



## 1875–2015: GFS celebrates 140th

We continue our  
birthday celebrations

## Calling all bookworms

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Reading Challenge

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# GFS 140th birthday: celebrations continue

GFS branches around the country have been in celebratory mode, enjoying a huge range of creative and fun activities.

## Northern area celebrations

Lots of Northern area branches joined together in April for the Northern Fun Day during which we also celebrated 140 years of GFS. This was held at St Nicholas Wrea Green branch and the girls demonstrated their ingenuity in craft activities, created decorative bunting and enjoyed a dance workshop, followed by an active worship service in the church. All the girls had a great day and the opportunity to make friends with girls from other branches.

## Wainfleet celebrations

This summer, Wainfleet branch has enjoyed an animal theme including crafts, visits and a very successful pets evening. We invited two veterinary nurses who spoke to the girls about how to care for their pets and ran a quiz. Then the girls had great fun meeting each other's rabbits, hamsters, guinea pigs, very large snails, a tortoise and a leader's puppy.

At May half-term, Skegness project joined Wainfleet branch for a games and crafts morning followed by a visit to the Parrot Zoo. The girls enjoyed the animals, particularly the tiger cubs, meerkats, lemurs, the many birds and the chance to go into a huge enclosure with parrots. They fed the birds, but had to watch that they didn't get their earrings nipped off!

## Furness Vale celebrations

In July, St John's Furness Vale branch went on an end of term picnic to Lime Park. It was a terrific day with the girls walking the woodland trail and enjoying time spent at the adventure park.

## Appley Bridge celebrations

Outdoor activities in the fresh air and our lovely countryside were high on the agenda this summer at All Saints Appley Bridge branch. Activities included a nature walk, treasure hunt, French cricket and skittles. This year cook-outs were a popular choice, toasting marshmallows and cooking hotdogs and corncobs, and the girls made peppermint creams for Father's Day which got a big thumbs up.

Where did the summer go? Autumn is already upon us, and plans for maypole dancing, T-shirt decorating and knitting all remain on our 'to do' list, but we have already made a start at learning to crochet!

Branch celebrations this summer read like an A to Z of action, activities, energy and fun. Photos by GFS



# Our growing worldwide family

It is 140 years since GFS started in this country. From here it has spread all over the world.



Junior Delegates from around the world, at the 2014 World Council in Wales. Photo by the Reverend Tim Williams

## World news

The GFS worldwide family continues to grow. As the worldwide rep on the Board of Trustees, I hope to share some news of this family from time to time.

Founded in September 1965, GFS in Korea has been celebrating its 50th anniversary. And our family is growing, with GFS starting in the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Rwanda and Swaziland. It is heartening to know that Mary Townsend's vision to befriend and guide girls is still inspiring new work.

## World Council 2017

It is over a year since Wales hosted the World Council and plans are underway for the next Council, to be held in July 2017 in Perth, Australia. We have been asked to send expressions of interest from those – of all ages – hoping to attend. It is difficult to sum up in a few words just what happens at World Council as each is different but, basically, it offers an opportunity for the worldwide family to meet, to share ideas, have fun and, perhaps most importantly, to share fellowship and to worship together.

*Catrina Charlesworth*

## Drumming up excitement

Young women at our GFS Great Yarmouth project enjoyed a workshop delivered by an all-female drumming group called DGAS. This event brought together young women from all strands of our service and together they produced some energising and interesting rhythms. It was lovely to see so many young women with different abilities and needs enjoying themselves together.

Photo by Lauren Randall



# In the swim of things

GFS Skegness project and Wainfleet branch have joined forces again, this time for a joint excursion to the aquarium.

On 13 August, GFS Skegness project and Wainfleet branch enjoyed a joint trip to Skegness Aquarium.

When we arrived at the aquarium, we were met by a member of staff who gave us a guided tour. We started off by visiting the touch pool area and everyone got to touch a starfish. Later on we watched the feeding show – this was very interactive and often funny.

After the feeding show, the younger girls from Wainfleet went to have fun in the play area and the young women from the Skegness project enjoyed ice cream on the beach.

The young women all seemed to get along well, and the older ones looked after the younger ones. It was a great trip and really nice to see the project and the branch working together, as well as all the girls bonding so well.

Our excursion to the aquarium was the second joint day out we've held this year; the first was a trip to the Parrot Zoo in May and we are now planning a party together to celebrate 140 years of GFS.



Photos by GFS

## Summer DIY project



Photos by Lauren Randall

The GFS Great Yarmouth project now has a lovely seaside themed upstairs kitchen and activity area that is bright and welcoming, thanks to the hard work of the young women attending SNAP – our special needs group – and two members of staff.

They have washed down cupboards and walls, sanded doors and noticeboards, and then repainted the entire room. The young women are currently working on seaside art to hang in the activity area.

The equipment and paint were kindly donated by various local companies, and Sainsbury's has given us vouchers to spend on kitchenware and also invited us to its local store to collect plates and mugs from its now closed staff canteen.

All this hard work will benefit the many young women accessing our services for months to come. The young women from SNAP have better self-esteem and have learned new skills and – more importantly – have had a great deal of fun.

# Getting creative, getting inspired

Supported by our great volunteers, the GFS Islington project delivered a fun-filled and educational summer programme.



With the support of some great volunteers, we delivered a fun-filled and educational summer programme.



Marcella, aged 13, who recently moved to London from Guatemala.



What's cooking?  
All photos by Krystal Donaldson

Themed weeks included 'Get active', 'Get cooking', 'Get creative' and 'Get inspired'.

## Getting active

Girls were given an opportunity to join a cookery workshop at the renowned Jamie Oliver Fifteen restaurant, as well as trying new activities such as indoor trampolining, Zumba and Bollywood dancing. They also had the choice to enjoy favourite activities such as cultural cookery, basketball, drama, creative arts, and trips to the circus and theatre.

## Getting inspired

The summer scheme engaged a diverse group of young women from different backgrounds and age groups, but for one young woman it

was a particularly special summer. Marcella, aged 13, recently moved from Guatemala to London and signed up to our summer scheme. Islington Youth Worker Krystal spoke to Marcella about how the GFS summer programme has helped her.

**Krystal:** How long have you been living in the UK now?

**Marcella:** I have been living here for about four weeks.

**Krystal:** How did you hear about the summer scheme?

**Marcella:** I was walking past the Tompion Community Centre and I saw the summer scheme flyer on the window and thought this seems really cool.

**Krystal:** What has been your favourite session?

**Marcella:** I love arts and crafts, so all the creative sessions.

**Krystal:** Since being part of GFS, have you learned anything new?

**Marcella:** A few things actually. I have got to know London a bit more and meeting new people has helped me with my English.

**Krystal:** If you had to sum up your summer experience with GFS, what would it be?

**Marcella:** GFS has helped me meet young girls my age, and I love the idea that GFS encourages us to try new things.

**"I have recently moved to this country and was nervous about what I was going to do this summer, but GFS has made it a good summer for me and I have made new friends."** Marcella

## We love books

We're racing to Rio to read, so *get on your marks* for the 2016 GFS Reading Challenge. We will be celebrating next year's Olympics in Brazil with a feast of fiction, and maybe some facts, on South America and sport. We're in the planning stages, and we'd love to hear from anyone – adults or children – with any suggestions for books to go on our reading list for 6–25-year-olds, and any bright ideas about themed activities.

To find out more, email [Anna.Lindh@gfplatform.org.uk](mailto:Anna.Lindh@gfplatform.org.uk) or call Anna on 020 7837 9669.

The reading list pack will come out at the beginning of December so you can use the ideas to plan your activities for the spring term. The Reading Challenge itself will run from January to March, and we may make some sporty summer suggestions too.

# Winning hands down

GFS girls were in celebratory mood after achieving a perfect record.



Back: Councillor Trish Pemberton; front, from left to right: Laura Marshall, Katie Bowman, Lilly Tinkler, lyla Westwood-Fulcher, Sasha McGowan, Georgia Watson and Michaela Sams. Photo by Pam Hutchison

Our GFS branch in Bishop Auckland, St Mark's Eldon, was celebrating recently after the girls achieved a 100% result for their entries in the Diocesan GFS Competition Day.

Leader Janice Clark said: "We are delighted that the girls have achieved this, having come close in previous years. The items presented by the girls are independently assessed by visiting adjudicators. They have also won a number of shields. To celebrate, we held a service, followed by a coffee

evening. The girls were presented with their shields and certificates by Councillor Trish Pemberton, who was herself a GFS member when she was growing up in Liverpool."

The GFS branch in Eldon opened in 1969. Meetings are held in St Mark's Church every Wednesday evening during term time from 6.30–8.30pm. Members participate in a varied programme which includes activities prepared and led by girls taking part in the Junior Leader course.



## Save the date

Keep these dates free and in your diary.

We will be holding our **Annual General Meeting** on 19 March in London at the Park Crescent Conference Centre, International Students House in Great Portland Street. See you there.

After a fun and refreshing **Training Weekend** in 2015, we will be back in 2016 with another inspiring weekend of learning, connecting, making new friends and catching up with old friends. We'd love to see new volunteers and branch leaders who have not been before, so make sure you put the date in your diary! It's taking place from 23 to 25 September, at the Hayes Conference Centre in Alfreton, Derbyshire.

## GFS notable dates for 2016

25 February

**Investment Committee and Policy and Resources Committee**

19 March

**Board of Trustees meeting and Annual General Meeting**

20 to 22 May

**GFS Membership Weekend**  
Whalley Abbey, Lancashire

26 May

**Investment Committee and Policy and Resources Committee**

25 June

**Board of Trustees meeting**

23 to 25 September

**Training Weekend**  
Alfreton, Derbyshire



The photo on the front page shows young women from GFS Great Yarmouth, who did a fantastic seaside themed make-over job on the project's kitchen and activity area. Looks great! Read more on this story on page 4. Photo by Lauren Randall

GFS  
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YOUNG WOMEN



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