

Annual Report 2013

European and Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF)

www.emeyf.org

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I. OVERVIEW

Spring Gathering took place at Ribbleshead in the Yorkshire Dales. Having the Spring Gathering in England allowed Young Friends from continental Europe to explore an area where Quakerism is part of the landscape. The Gathering was special in the close relationships we built with Friends of Settle Meeting. The theme of the Gathering was the relationship between our spirituality and our creativity, explored through worship, song, games, bodyprayer and theatre. Workshops facilitated by the Leaveners were central to this individual and collective exploration. Again, Young Friends from Georgia were prevented from joining us because of the impossibility of them getting UK visas.

Following a lead from Spring Gathering, EMEYF organised an all-generation **Open House Event** in the summer in France. The event was open to people regardless of their age, and it was an offer from EMEYF to Friends in the section to come and live as a community for a few days or a full week at Congenies. The Open House was not structured, leaving space and time to explore what it means to be open to the Spirit and to each other.

Annual Meeting in Brussels was – alongside the meeting for worship for business at Spring Gathering and two meetings of Communications Committee early in the year – focused on rethinking EMEYF's structures and relationships to other Quaker organisations, leading to structural changes, including constitutional amendments to allow for non-British trustees. At Annual Meeting, Marisa Johnson of FWCC-EMES and Sasha Bosbeer of QCEA were invited to join for discernment about EMEYF's relationship with EMES and QCEA.

Financial support from numerous Area Meetings of Britain Yearly Meeting as well as donations from Netherlands, Sweden, Germany and various local Meetings allowed participants who needed bursaries to attend our events. The exceptional support from British Area and Local Meetings on the occasion of Spring Gathering in England made an additional event possible, the Open House Event. The grant by JRCT covered core costs like planning these events and paying for secretarial services.

II. ELDERS' REPORT¹

2013 has been a bustling and dynamic year for EMEYF and full of changes and experiments. We have gathered for three main events: EMEYF's Spring Gathering in the Yorkshire Dales explored the connection between our spirituality and creativity. We met again in the summer for an all-age EMEYF Open House in Congénies, France, and lastly in autumn for our Annual Meeting in Brussels. For 2014 we are looking forward to a joint EMEYF–QCEA Study tour where we expect a strong presence of Young Friends, followed by our Spring Gathering in Macedonia, on the theme "Borders – within and without".

Please pass details of EMEYF to those Young Adult Friends aged 18-to-35ish in your meetings. Our EMEYF website www.emeyf.org has details of all events and allows Young Friends to subscribe to the mailing list for staying informed.

Gatherings are very important for many of us as these allow us to build friendships, explore our spirituality and leadings, and care for each other on our individual and communal journeys. Some Young Friends feel at home in their local Quaker communities, but lonely at the same time, so are looking forward to EMEYF gatherings as their other "home" meeting. Young Friends are not Friends who are not yet fully grown, not yet fully arrived—but Friends who are facing decisions about how they want to live their life and what difference they want to make. This can be a harsh and radical situation and a struggle at times. Being held and uplifted by community, company and spiritual friendship enables us to experience this as a chance and as a gift: we are aware of the impact each of our choices has to us and the world, and we are aware of being on a journey. Our faith is not easy, it is about this radicality and openness and the willingness to learn and grow. Because of this, our Gatherings are intense experiences—with deep worship, intimate connections and hilarious fun. This is us - living and celebrating the Quaker way.

Young Friends all over the section are finding their voices and leadings in their local and yearly meetings. As Young Friends, we know that we might be the future of the Religious Society, but for sure we are part of its present as well. In discerning EMEYF's relationship with other Quaker organisations, we understood why there are often misunderstandings: We want to be heard and seen, in our Quaker way, but not as "young people". We want to be heard as full-grown members of our community, who are on their spiritual journey, like other Friends of all generations, across the Ages.

In our meetings for worship for business and in our committees, we are working on keeping EMEYF going and making EMEYF better. We try to become more vivid and open, both to the spirit and to the enthusiasm of Young Friends in the Section. In 2013, we focused on how to follow our passions and encourage ourselves and others to bring in and share gifts and leadings. This

¹ This Report was first published in EMES Annual report 2013

lead to discernments on our understanding of roles, our relationship to other Quaker organisations and to a new-style Open House event in the summer.

This phase of transition does not go without difficulties, and it took a lot of energy especially from those working on our committees. At the moment, EMEYF does not have a clerk. EMEYF's Communication Committee has entered a period of grounding and discernment about the way we work together as a committee and how to serve the wider community of EMEYF. Next year, we will need to fill some roles and find ways to make the roles more accessible to Young Friends, as well as to restructure our finances and funding, because our JRCT grant is ending. But we remain uplifted by the experience of the Young Friends meeting, sharing and supporting each other all over the section.

The **Spring Gathering in Ribbleshead**, in the Yorkshire Dales, brought EMEYF back to the area where Quakerism started. For those of us who came over from Continental Europe, visiting the old Meeting House in Settle was very impressive. Local Friends welcomed us and offered us situations to learn, have fun, explore and give back: we heard talks about the area, visited the meeting house, the nature reserve and did some secret caving, and spent a day volunteering on an organic farm. The Leaveners visited us for a day-long workshop inspired by our theme: "The Body Electric - Exploring our spirituality through creativity". We explored our community, the landscape, our spirituality and our creativity—as four shades of the same light.

The epistle from SG 2013 is a soundscape created from words shared and spoken throughout the Gathering, of songs, games, the wind, the river and the caves.

At Spring Gathering, we also discerned ways for EMEYFers to do what they feel enthusiastic about. An idea was born when we were talking about our wish to experience community with Friends, and we made it happen only a few months later:

The **EMEYF Open House in Congénies (France)** was an invitation to all Friends and attenders to spend some time together—regardless of their nationality, background and their age. In fact, there were nearly 70 years of age difference between the youngest and the oldest participant!

We enjoyed the summer in the South of France and the hospitality of the local Friends. Also, we learnt a lot about openness, just by living it: To be open to other people is sometimes challenging, but also enriching. It is a training for the openness towards the spirit. As individuals as well as communities, we were adventurous enough to not stay in our comfort zone, we made ourselves vulnerable—and found a much more valuable form of comfort, of which our minute of record tells:

"Our Open House has brought together people from all over Europe, Quaker and non-Quaker, who are all ages and speak many different languages. Despite such differences we found, and continue to find, ways to not just communicate together but to come together as a whole group; a family—one that keeps

expanding! With no set time schedule we have challenged ourselves in creating our event as a community. All participants had and found a role in contributing to the event. In this, we have had the young people taking care for the older in organising a hike in the woods; and we have learnt that age does not matter. We have been transformed and blessed by this community. We treasure the safety and the security we have built together, and we celebrate the way we have taken care for each other."

(Full text on www.emeyf.org)

In autumn, we have again been welcomed at Quaker House in Brussels by QCEA for our **EMEYF Annual Meeting**. We focused on our relationship with FWCC–EMES and QCEA, and welcomed Marisa Johnson and Alexandra Bosbeer who both talked about their work. We explored new ways of working together, from which sprung the idea for the joint EMEYF–QCEA Study Tour 2014. We are aware that our current transitions ask flexibility from the people and organisations with whom we work together and we are thankful for their support and understanding.

In short, we tried to be adventurous in the way we are living together, because we realize that being open for the needs of a community of Young Adults, dispersed over Europe, needs the willingness to change as well as to care for our roots. We continue to explore our faith and our tasks in life by seeking each others' F/friendship in community. We are thankful to the people, meetings and organisations who are supporting us spiritually and financially while we are finding our voices. We hope you will be following us with interest and hold us in the light as we approach the new adventures that are in store for us in 2014.

III. EPISTLE OF SPRING GATHERING 2013

EMEYF would like to present the epistle from the Spring Gathering 2013 held at Gearstones Lodge, Ribbleshead, North Yorkshire. Our week was inspired by the theme of 'The Body Electric: exploring spirituality through creativity'. We were able to realise these themes through workshops, discovering the local area (hills, caves and red squirrels included) and through both programmed and unprogrammed time together. Our Meetings for Worship for Business led to an understanding that each member of EMEYF has an active role to play within our community. Our spirituality and creativity can allow us to do this.

Part One

Landscape of rolling hills

Giving room for creativity in the many adventurous routes

*Being amongst caring, open, loving, kind people,
'I do not ask any more delight, I swim in it as in a sea'*

Not much matters more than making people feel

*Be Yourself,
that is how I created you*

*Explore Your limits and borders,
extend them where you can*

Space

*A poem, a song, a painting or design somehow feels truer, simpler, a
reminder of a bygone age. It is a product and extension of self.*

*My spirituality and creativity are closely connected
and when they have to be separate, my work and my
worship feel incomplete*

Part Two:

Part two is a soundfile.

Listen at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHpWHVSAAnDY>

IV. REPORT OF SPRING GATHERING PLANNING COMMITTEE 2013

On a Friday early in April, I drove my wee car, full of candles and crafts, over the mountainous landscape towards Gearstones Lodge, set deep in the Yorkshire Dales. It had been an early start, and as I neared the flag on my satnav, the unexpected curves and twists of the road focussed my attention. However I was conscious of the bleak beauty of the countryside around me. Suddenly the sun came out, and the scenery was unimaginably transformed. Deep troughs of glinting snow remained, framing the stone walls, and contrasting with the golden grassy rises. Ahead, the white-tipped peak of Ingleborough beckoned. Even the sheep seemed to turn their faces upwards, and the lambs began to prance and bleat in sheer joy.

It was my first visit to the Dales, as it was for many of the group, and the incredible setting provided the perfect backdrop for our Gathering. It inspired awe and silence; it calmed our busy minds, and its vast power and austerity demanded attention. When the sun shone, we flocked outside to feel its warmth on our faces and breathe the air. Even the water we drank came from a local, natural spring!

In ones, twos and threes, our group gathered together, forming a close-knit troupe from all over Britain (Aberdeen to Brighton) and beyond (Norway, Germany, France and the Netherlands). It was noted by many that we formed a comfortingly close bond with each other; from a personal perspective, I found our dynamic to be particularly considerate and compassionate. The diversity amongst us was clear, both in language, culture and temperament. We created acceptance and adapted to support the needs of each other with ease.

We created a lot more than that though; our theme (*The Body Electric*, based on the Walt Whitman Poem) was to explore spirituality through creativity. Through workshops with the Leaveners, we explored how we use our bodies – to interact, to share emotion, to mirror one another and create relationships. We played games, becoming playful with each other, laughing at the frankly ridiculous noises we made at each other, and becoming intensely aware of each other in space. We created living statues with our bodies, representing hope, justice, truth and light. And finally we explored why we are creative, and why we are spiritual. For many, the two were, are, inextricably linked: *“When I am creative I am silent, and when I am silent I am spiritual.”* For some, creativity provides an outlet for deep-felt emotions, and spirituality provides time to process this. Both allow connection to others, through shared interpretations of words and thoughts as well as art. Our Epistle is created from words shared and spoken throughout the Gathering, and also includes an audio-file of a soundscape, produced by one member of the Gathering. It is a noise collage of songs, games, the wind, the river and the caves. It represents our week beautifully, and we are grateful for it.

We are also incredibly grateful and appreciative of the welcome we received in

Yorkshire. On our first full day, we welcomed John and Jean Asher to the Lodge for tea, and they gave us talks on the landscape, and nature of the Yorkshire people, and the sociological significance of their history in relation to the 1652 Quaker heritage. We discussed the Sufferings, and learned more about British Quaker history in the region. We were also able to meet Alison, who invited us to Settle Meeting House later in the week, and on our soggy arrival plied us with tea and coffee and a comforting sanctuary from the rain. We also met Chris Hart, who, along with his wife Jess, generously offered their time and expertise to take a group of us down the local caves.

For many, this was the highlight of the trip, and with a bit of quick negotiating with the equipment hire company in Ingleton, a dozen Young Friends went down underground for a morning, learning more about the geological relevance of the area. Again there are pictures in the collection.

We were also delighted to meet Judith Bromley and Friends from Wensleydale and Swaledale Meeting, who took us on a peaceful wooded walk near Hawes. Led by Judith, we explored different ways of walking, sometimes alone, sometimes in silence, and at the end of the walk were rewarded by the red squirrel reserve, which lived up to all expectations. The squirrels were completely aware of our presence, and completely unfazed. It was just lovely.

Judith returned to us the following day and led a workshop in Body Prayer, stretching our physical and emotional selves in the sunshine, and holding each other in the Light as we did so. It was an incredibly powerful moment, as we sat together appreciating the beauty around us, and the bonds forming between us as a group, as well as with the landscape were palpable.

Now, catering for 25 for a week is no mean feat, especially our unique combination of vegans and vegetarians. But we all mucked in, and cheerfully produced hearty meals, primarily featuring vegetables from the local organic farm, run by Quakers. One aspect of our week was using our entire bodies as tools for creativity and spirituality – and what better way to explore this than to volunteer at the Farm for a day, not only providing a service with our able bodies, but also giving back to the local community which had welcomed us so warmly. So off we went, in the community-run Little White Bus, and worked for the day digging compost and planting seeds. We even rebuilt a wall! We were privileged to be able to see exactly where our veggies had come from, and to help produce the next harvest. It was a wonderful, head-clearing day after what had been an intense week of processing and worship. Some of those hop-plant-roots got the better of us though, as you can see in the pictures!

Our Meetings for Worship for Business formed an important part of the week, and immediately helped to create a sense of self, as those who were new to EMEYF and old timers alike grappled with ideals and practicalities. We were reminded of the quotation, “Business Meeting, where Minutes take Hours.” However we discerned a strong feeling amongst the group present that outreach to isolated Young Friends in Eastern Europe and the Middle East must

be a priority, and therefore decided upon Macedonia as the location for Spring Gathering 2014. We hope that the accessibility will encourage more Friends from these regions to join us, and are committed to making this a reality. Our involvement in the wider Quaker community was also raised, and we ultimately felt that as well as grounding us as part of a wider network of Friends, these Meetings helped to galvanise and shape our vision for what EMEYF can be and do. We took Advices and Queries 27 to our hearts:

“Live adventurously. When choices arise, do you take the way that offers the fullest opportunity for the use of your gifts in the service of God and the community? Let your life speak. When decisions have to be made, are you ready to join with others in seeking clearness, asking for God's guidance and offering counsel to one another?”

On a lighter note, we set up a Secret Friends game, which, with 25 of us, resulted in gift-giving on a colossal scale! We also held an Easter Egg Hunt, made badges for each other, jammed together on a motley collection of instruments, and visited the local pub where we bewildered the locals with a raucous game of Unwilling/Unable in the corner. We packed in really quite a lot.

I suppose if I had to sum up the Gathering in three words it would have to be singing, laughter and silence. We sang almost constantly; whilst cooking, walking, digging earth or making friendship bracelets. There was always a melody in the air, and always a harmony quick to follow. *“We are a gentle, angry people and we are singing, singing for our lives.”* And we laughed; at ourselves, at each other and at our mistakes, but also for our delightful successes, in celebration of an absurd moment, and at the joy of being together. Most of all, we appreciated the chance to be silent, to raise ourselves and each other to heights of spiritual contemplation we had not necessarily anticipated, and to be accepted for our desire to do so. We gathered together in song, in laughter and in silence. What greater gift can there be?

V. CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNTS 2013

European and Middle East Young Friends – Consolidated Accounts – FY2013

IN	FY2013	Category	Euros €	£ Sterling	£ As Euro	Consolidated €	
Grants	FWCC–EMES YFGM JRCT	JRCT	4,300.00 €			4,300.00 €	(1)
Donations	Individuals Collections YF Groups MMs YMs Inland Revenue Gift Aid	DONATION – INDIVIDUALS DONATION – COLLECTION DONATION – MEETING DONATION – YM		£84.00	101.06 €	101.06 €	(2)
Activities	Spring Gathering	Surplus Subsidy Refund Fundraising		£5,030.05	6,051.65 €	6,051.65 €	(4)
	Annual Meeting	Cash Returned					(4)
Interest		ANNUAL MEETING – CASH RETURNED INTEREST	5.77 €	£12.24	14.73 €	20.50 €	
Other	Others Secretariat	OTHER	5.00 €			5.00 €	(5)
Transfers							
Exchange Rate Differences							
Subtotal Income			5,939.38 €	£5,325.67	6,407.31 €	12,346.69 €	
OUT	FY2013	Category	Euros €	£ Sterling	£ As Euro	Consolidated €	
Annual Report & publicity							
Spring Gathering	Planning Group n+1 Subsidy	SG2014 SG2013					(6)
Annual Meeting	Travel CC Bursaries Food Accommodation Stationary & sundries	AM – TRAVEL ANNUAL MEETING – FOOD	69.90 € 24.82 €			69.90 € 24.82 €	(8) (9)
CC Meeting	Travel Accommodation Expenses	CC – TRAVEL CC – ACCOMODATION CC – FOOD	240.30 € 50.00 € 125.09 €			240.30 € 50.00 € 125.09 €	
Openhouse		OPEN HOUSE	1,560.00 €	£3,013.00	3,624.94 €	5,184.94 €	(10)
Administrative Expenses	Secretariat Stationary & sundries Bank charges	SECRETARIAT STATIONERY SUNDRIES BANK	2,220.00 € 34.16 €			2,220.00 € 34.16 €	(11) (12)
Exchange Rate Difference							
Representatives	QCEA EMES Others	REP – EMES	230.00 €			230.00 €	
Transfers							
Other	Outreach Trees for Africa contribution Training	CONTRIBUTION					(13)
Subtotal Expenditure			4,554.27 €	£3,013.00	3,624.94 €	8,179.21 €	
Income over expenditure						4,167.48 €	
Balance Sheet	FY2013		Euros €	£ Sterling	£ As Euro	Consolidated €	
Assets	Bank accounts Cash in hand of officers/secretary		11,356.89 € 36.78 €	£10,984.32	13,215.24 €	24,572.13 € 36.78 €	(14)
	Total Assets					24,608.91 €	
Liabilities	Accounts payable	Travel expenses not yet processed Total Liabilities		£926.78	1,115.01 €	1,115.01 € 1,115.01 €	(15)
Net assets at end FY2013			£:€ 1.2031	http://www.xe.com/currencytables/?from=EUR&date=2013-12-31		23,493.90 €	(16)

EMEYF FY2013 Notes to the consolidated accounts

- (1) Three-year JRCT grant received towards core costs and main objectives
 - (2) National groups, other than YFGM, and German YF, which is now paid directly by German YM
 - (3) Includes significant one-off donation from Sweden Yearly Meeting
 - (4) Surplus returned – Includes fundraising received directly into SG2013 account
 - (4) *Included in above*
 - (4) *Included in above*
 - (5) Cash paid into bank instead of Brussels cashbox
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- (6) Not drawn during FY2013; planning meeting for SG2014 held during early FY2014 instead
- (7) SG2013 in UK returned a significant surplus carried forward to Openhouse 2013 and SG2014
- (8) Partial AM2012 expenses; remainder and AM2013 expenses shown in liabilities below
- (9) Subsidy to balance AM2013 food donations shortfall

- (10) Openhouse 2013 summer event deposit and subsidy
- (11) Invoices for both FY2012 and FY2013 received in FY2013; plus related travel overheads
- (12) See postage note in income

- (13) To be transferred later in FY2014
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- (14) Brussels cashbox not used during FY2013; carried over from FY2012

- (15) Includes one SG2013 attendee cancellation fee
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- (16) Increase on FY2013 attributable to one-off donations and major fundraising drive prior to SG2013