

banner



Journal of the Bahá'í Community of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Volume 19, No.8 – February, 2003 / 159BE

LARGE PRINT / Standard Print.

UK Community News

UK Community News

Philadelphia Bahá'í Youth Dance Workshop visit Nottingham

NOTTINGHAM recently had a very successful visit by the Philadelphia Bahá'í Youth Workshop. The visit, from November 27 to December 1, 2002, came about through the personal friendship of individuals in the West Bridgford and Philadelphia Bahá'í communities, and was intended to support the teaching efforts of the Nottinghamshire Bahá'ís. The trip was funded largely through the efforts and sacrifice of the workshop members themselves, with the Nottingham friends providing accommodation and transport within the United Kingdom. More than 40 of the friends from the area were involved in supporting the venture.



Philadelphia Bahá'í Youth Dance Workshop

The Workshop has been in existence for the best part of a decade, but this trip was their first venture out of the United States. The eleven dancers, aged 13 to 18, not all of them Bahá'ís, were accompanied by four adult members of the Workshop. The dances addressed social issues that afflict so many western cities, such as racism, drug abuse and violence, and conveyed positive messages of family, cultural and social unity. For Bahá'í audiences a very moving step dance on the theme of martyrdom was included.

On the first evening the group attended a Tranquillity Zone at Nottingham University. The following morning a few of the Workshop were interviewed on Radio Nottingham. Over the next three days the programme included performances in two primary schools, at a youth club in a very deprived area of the city, at the university, and at a conference seeking to address the problems of drugs and violence, culminating in a public performance in a community centre. The reception everywhere was very positive. The group was particularly impressed with the young schoolchildren's awareness of religions other than their own. The performance at the youth club was attended by the Chairman of the Nottinghamshire County Council, attired in her chains of office. She talked at length with the dancers, whose comment was that she was "just like the Queen"! On the final morning the group attended a session of the Nottingham Bahá'í School before its exhausted but elated members departed for their return by minibus to Heathrow Airport.

The visit of the Workshop has opened many doors for the Nottinghamshire friends, on which they will surely be knocking in the weeks ahead to ensure that the efforts of the American friends will be bountifully blessed.

Scholarly Scots

A DOZEN FRIENDS gathered at the

Marvig guesthouse in Moffat on December 14-15, for the first ever Association of Bahá'í Studies (ABS) weekend held in Scotland. In his introduction Dr Moojan Momen emphasised the great importance of Bahá'í scholarship for the defence, promotion, development and preservation of our Faith. Workshops the following day considered sections of The Secret of Divine Civilization regarding the ideal characteristics required of a Bahá'í scholar.



Some of the friends at the first ABS meeting held in Scotland

Other topics which were touched on included the dangers of scholarship and the history of scholarship in the Faith. It was interesting to discover that most early Bábis and Bahá'ís were scholars who had studied at the religious schools in Karbila and Najaf. Scholarship has always been encouraged by the central figures of the Faith – the Báb started this tradition while he was in Máh-Kú by asking his followers to write proofs of his mission. Finally we looked at how to construct an academic paper, using the examples of mysticism and globalisation in the Faith.

Inspired participants are now planning additional meetings to promote Bahá'í studies in Scotland and to encourage wider involvement in scholarship, especially from our youth. Who knows? Perhaps future generations will trace the origin of the next Scottish Enlightenment back to a wet weekend in Moffat.

Scottish Winter Gathering

30 December, 2002 – 3 January, 2003

When the Scottish Bahá'ís heard about the flooding of the hotel on Mull where the Winter School gathering was originally going to be held, there was a universal groan. Mull was going to be the best, the most popular, and the cheapest Winter School ever, and had been worked on by the Winter School committee for just about a year! And then the unforeseeable, the uncontrollable happened. The hotel was flooded, and the booking cancelled.

But the Scottish Bahá'ís are made of sterner stuff than that. For two weeks, the Scottish Bahá'í Council slogged away looking for a new venue at about the same price, a new programme, and tried to convince people to re-book. And they pulled it off. This year's alternative Scottish Winter Gathering happened in the Oban Youth Hostel and was populated by about thirty-five Bahá'ís each day.

There was a very full programme. In fact, I believe it to be one of the fullest Gatherings I have ever attended, and that certainly made it tiring, even though it only lasted for four days. But the activities were amazingly varied and diverse, especially considering the time the Council had to put it together. The youth and the adults had joint sessions for the most part, but the children had their own activities. There were sessions on cloning and genetics, on Bahá'í poetry, on the Message to the World's Religious Leaders, on the Seven Valleys, on relationships, on youth (presented by me!), and many, many more.

We also celebrated Hogmanay in true Scottish style – with a ceilidh. Well, it would have been a ceilidh if we had had a bit more dancing and Scottish music. Okay, so it was really just a fun night, but it said ceilidh on the programme. We all gathered in the main room and sang songs, had jokes told by the children, and had a bit of improvisation as well. We even had the bagpipes played, with one (unnamed) Bahá'í dancing the Highland fling. So there, it was a ceilidh! Then, just before the New Year, we all joined hands and sang Auld Lang Syne.

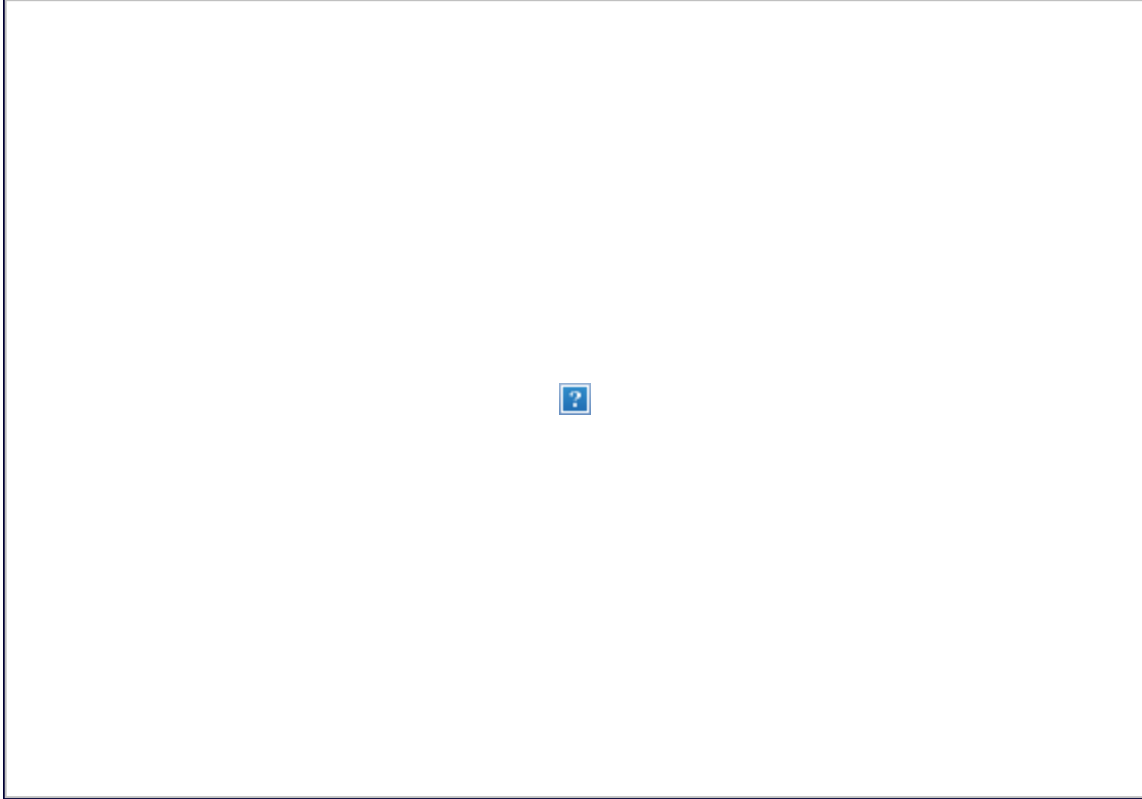
One comment on the night which I dread to put in this report, but I am told I must, was made by a Bahá'í who would prefer to remain anonymous (unsurprisingly), who said, “what kind of a gig is this: the cards are swiped and the cake is Stöllen.” Please all join me

in a groan.

In other news, the children's class decorated their hallway and their room, and made little trinkets to sell for the Fund. And, the youth made a presentation on relationships, called "Bahá'í Date", which had a whole load of people in hysterics.

All in all, this year's Scottish Winter School was a success, and was made an even bigger one because of all the obstacles that had to be overcome. I think this shows just how hardy the Bahá'ís of the world really are, and I think we all deserve a big pat on the back for that. I hope you all had a great Gregorian new year, the Scottish Bahá'ís certainly did.

Naysun Alae-Carew



Friends at the Scottish Winter Gathering in Oban



Copyright, © 2003, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom. All rights reserved.

