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Summer Schools and Events

## Summer school in Estonia

FOUR FRIENDS from the UK, Judy Findlay, Sarah Stephens and Parvin and Pat Morrissey, recently visited the Estonian summer school in Viljandi. It was an uplifting experience to meet with the believers in that country, many of whom have sacrificed so much to be there.



Friends gathered at the Estonian summer school in Viljandi

The programme was centred around a series of lectures and workshops given by Paddy O'Mara from Ireland on the topic of "The Century of Light". Mr O'Mara reviewed the progress of the Cause in the last century and drew out the significance of the development the Faith under the leadership of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, the Hands of the Cause and the Universal House of Justice. John Jason, a pioneer from Finland, gave a series of talks and a workshop on "Living with Bahá'u'lláh" that was informative and inspiring and, at times, very humorous.

One special blessing was being able to spend time with Brigitte Lundblade, the Knight of Bahá'u'lláh for the Shetland Islands. She was in fine form, as sharp as a pin, witty and learned – and a very loving soul. Brigitte will return to Shetland for the jubilee celebrations this year.

The organisers of the school had spent some time in Viljandi prior to the event liaising with local believers and had set up a service project that involved painting a wall in the market square which had been defaced with graffiti. Many of the friends helped to create a wonderful piece of artwork which carried a quotation from the Writings. The evening programme was truly open to all with a Tranquillity Zone, a drama based on the exiles of Bahá'u'lláh and a public talk given in a local cafe.

Estonia is a country of amazing contrasts given that it is still on the cusp of leaving behind its communist past and entering a new century as a democratic state. The vacuum left by the fall of the Soviet empire was filled by many of the worst aspects of materialism, yet there are still great opportunities to teach. Pioneers and travel-teachers will find the friends very, very welcoming and hospitable in this steadfast, committed and devoted community.

Pat Morrissey

## Infuse Project, 'The Journey'



I HAVE recently attended an INFUSE residential youth event called "The Journey" which was held at Burnlaw. We took part in four different sessions all related to the soul and the mind two of which I will talk about below

**The Soul in the Mirror:** there were three foundation points to this session: the structure according to levels of existence i.e. vegetable, mineral, animal etc.; manifestations of God and the soul. We discussed how, where and why Bahá'u'lláh's Writings applied across these areas. For me the most interesting part was seeing the connections between many different points. Also, it was good to see Bahá'u'lláh's Writings explaining all the aspects to give us clarification.

**The Truth is Out There:** we discussed the spiritual and psychic aspects of five categories that we experience: stars, dreams, meditation, other worlds and fruits of the spirit. We then explored how Bahá'u'lláh's writings applied to all of these aspects. In the session the discussions were stimulating and interesting. Many things that I had often questioned were explained. Lorna Silverstein particularly made an impact on me due to her knowledge and her willingness to help young people by teaching them.

Inspired! That is how I would describe my weekend. As well as feeling interested, refreshed, excited, impelled and motivated. It was great being able to discuss many issues that I had often thought about with a group of people who were very openminded. It was uplifting to be able to discuss these issues without having to always refer to teaching the Faith. The sessions and discussions were focused on the spirit, mind and body and developing oneself so that one is better able to teach others. After leaving I felt so stimulated that it took me a while to adjust to daily routine.

Jenna, aged 13 from London

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## Impressions of the 2003 Summer School in Cyprus

THE LONG-AWAITED Summer School in Limassol, Southern Cyprus, more than lived up to expectations! Planned as a joint celebration of 50 years since the arrival of the Knights of Bahá'u'lláh, Abbas and Semire Vakil and Violet and Hugh McKinley, and 25 years since the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly this became a joyous triple celebration following the unexpected opening of the barriers between North & South just a few weeks earlier, at Ridván, after 29 years.

The programme was of a high standard, with interlinking sessions throughout the week. Dr Hossein Danesh, Dr Guiseppa Robiati and Dr Graham Walker addressed their topics of "How do we Shape the Future" "The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh" and "Towards a Moral and Ethical Society" with great professionalism, yet in a way which enabled us to understand, and the long afternoon breaks became increasingly shorter as impromptu workshops and questions and answers sessions were generated from the main talks. Zarin Hainsworth-Fadaei gave a whistlestop presentation "Equality of Genders, the Next Step", assisted by Shirin Youssefian, a UK pioneer to Greece, impressing everyone with her knowledge and generating requests to return next year. (Zarin also stepped into the breach, assisting with the children's classes which were presenting quite a challenge with many French or Arabic speaking children). The Fadaees were warmly received into the Cyprus community, their children joining forces with the Dance troupe which had come from Greece, Soroosh filming the entire proceedings, and Zarin taking part in the Press Conference. They later stayed on for a two-week teaching project.

There were two more presentations – David Willis from Thessaloniki showed an excellent video on sustainable growth and spoke about the ongoing AGENDA 21 process, whilst Alan Freeman from the World Centre took us on a wonderful visit, with photos from unusual viewpoints, in the Holy Land.

There were several proclamation activities during the course of the School. Many dignitaries from both Northern and Southern Cyprus attended the Gala dinner, which was well-reported in Newspapers both sides of the border. During the Visit to the North the dance troupe stopped to perform at the Khan – a Caravanserai in Northern Nicosia, Lefkosa, which has recently been reclaimed and is now home to a number of handicraft and art galleries including the C-S-H Development Centre. Much more to follow in "The Dawn" of the Bahá'í

art galleries, including that of Sami Barakat, whose wife, vecine, is hostess at the Bahá'í Centre. Two Turkish journalists happened to be there and wrote a very favourable article about the Faith the next day! Later the dance troupe performed at an International Youth Conference in the South. Meanwhile Dr Danesh was invited to an NGO meeting in the North where he presented the Education for Peace Programme to more than 25 senior officials of UN, US Embassy, two MPs and other people of capacity. So much cross-border activity after so long!

Anita Graves, the island's archivist, tried to fit a century of Bahá'í history into one session. She failed, but was forgiven even though the Northern contingent were probably back in their beds by the time she was dragged off the podium. She certainly whetted our appetite for the fascinating role which Cyprus has played in the history of the Faith.

Suha Wakil Fanaian, whose parents were Knights of Bahá'u'lláh, and who returned to the island a few years ago, spoke about her parents' journey from Baghdad. Her mother was travelling against doctors' advice and stopped briefly in Turkey to give birth to her first child, Leroy, whilst her father continued to Nicosia at the behest of the Guardian, arriving at the same time as the McKinleys. Sadly, Semire was not at the Conference as she'd had to return to Canada for medical tests – before the border opening she had planned to try and get to the South via Istanbul and London, so keen was she to attend this historic gathering. Eric Hellicar, who has been a devoted pioneer in Cyprus for 35 years, spoke later in the week about the formation of the first National Assembly. The Universal House of Justice had called for this, despite the island being divided, and Marion Hofman was sent from the World Centre to assist in the process. Miraculously, the National Assembly was formed at Ridván 1977, and two other original members, Mustafa Salmán and Mehmet Ulgan were present. Over 40 different believers have served on the National Assembly since that time.

A final highlight of the School was the two-part presentation entitled “The Future: getting there” by Mr Douglas Martin, member of the Universal House of Justice, whose talk seamlessly complemented those of the other speakers. He later consulted with the Secretary of the Turkish National Assembly and then with the National Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Cyprus, and there was great excitement about the future of the island.

After the School, a group of 100 travelled on to the Holy Land for a three-day Pilgrimage, whilst a number of participants from the UK stayed on to teach as part of the Philip Hainsworth Campaign. Cyprus is surely blessed!

Carolyn Neogi

