

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE) Annual Report Year ended 30 September 2021

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Year ended 30 September 2021

FSSE (Friends Southern Summer Events) is a small Quaker charity, entirely run by volunteers, whose purpose is the advancement of the Religious Society of Friends through the provision of educational events for young people.

Object and Activities

FSSE's objects are:

- (a) to promote and advance the religious education of the community and in particular of young people, including those of the Quaker tradition, and others with an interest in learning more about Quakers;

AND in furtherance thereof:

- (b) to organise and promote events for the spiritual growth and moral benefit of the community and in particular of young people with an interest in Quakers;
- (c) to disseminate by whatever means the ideals of truth, non-violence and equality within a Quaker background; and
- (d) to promote any purpose that is charitable according to the laws of England and Wales and for the benefit of the public as may from time to time be determined by the trustees.

FSSE usually runs two week-long events: Junior Gathering, for 11-14 year olds; and Senior Conference for 15-18 year olds. The catchment area is southern England, though others are welcomed if there is space.

Public benefit statement

FSSE exists for the promotion and advancement of the spiritual nurture and religious education of young people including both those of the Quaker tradition, and those with an interest in learning more about Quakers and Quakerism. This benefits personally the participants who attend the events, and also benefits the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) more widely, through the spreading of Quaker ideas and ideals.

In carrying out these purposes, FSSE usually organises two annual residential Quaker events in August of each year: Junior Gathering (for young people aged 11-14) and Senior Conference (for older participants aged 15-18). These events benefit the young people who attend them enormously, by providing spiritual education through workshops which advocate the Quaker testimonies of peace, simplicity, equality and truth. The events provide spiritual nourishment from new (and old) friendships, shared worship and activities including sports, games, drama, music and other creative arts.

Based on the feedback participants provide, we know our events are significant in the lives of those who attend, helping to build confidence, knowledge and supportive friendships which in some cases last a lifetime. We see young people wanting to come back year on year, and also those who want to give back some of what they gained by helping at the events.

Funding

FSSE is funded primarily through participant fees. Fee income is supplemented by grants and gifts from charitable trusts, Quaker Meetings and individuals.

Some participant fees are funded in part or in whole by a young person's Local or Area Quaker Meeting. FSSE's aim is to ensure that no-one who wishes to come to Junior Gathering or Senior Conference is prevented from doing so for financial reasons. Grants and gifts enable us to support participation by young people who could not otherwise afford the full fees. Decisions to apply grants and gifts to support participation are taken by the bookings secretaries in consultation with the treasurer.

Achievement and Performance

In 2021, FSSE achieved a notable recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We report further in the trustees' report below and in the epistles of Junior Gathering and Senior Conference.

Trustees' Annual Report

2021 was a very unusual year for FSSE but in many ways showed the organisation at its most dedicated, creative and collaborative. 2020, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, had seen us take the necessary collective decision that FSSE's events would not run as in-person events. Junior Gathering for 11-14 year olds did not run, and Senior Conference for 15-18 year olds ran as a remote, technology-enabled event over the course of a shorter week than previously. The continued uncertainty around lockdown restrictions and social distancing left a certain amount of uncertainty around whether one or both events could run in-person this year.

To try and keep abreast of changing circumstances, and to forward-plan for their implications where possible, FSSE's event coordinators, trustees and officers met on a fortnightly basis in the six months leading to the event. Although prompted by the unique circumstances of 2021, this proved a very useful way of keeping in touch with each other, and for everyone involved to understand the tasks involved in running the events and the timescales required to achieve them, and to ensure all had the chance to express their ideas or any concerns. It is to be hoped that this style of working can be continued for future years, in some form.

We took on board feedback from FSSE stakeholders (participants, adult volunteers, parents and guardians) and made the decision that both Junior Gathering and Senior Conference should run as fully in-person events this year. We did so in full awareness of the risks involved, and planned mitigations where possible, at a time where many similar organisations, faced with this decision, had decided that their own events could not run safely. It would have been understandable if FSSE had come to the same conclusion; the arrangements teams' ability, willingness and commitment to the events and participants is inspiring. With careful planning, and appropriate additional health and safety measures such as the enabling of COVID 19 testing for all participants, no mid-week coach trips to Oxford and self-isolation for people who appeared to have developed COVID-19 symptoms, the events not only ran, but ran successfully. There being no positive test results was one indication of this; the overwhelmingly positive feedback received from participants, who

had missed the in-person nature of the events and the grounding they give to their lives, was another.

Trustees are similarly confident that FSSE remains on a sure financial footing. With fewer transactions and decreased costs in 2021 – not least the savings made from the shift to Zoom-based planning meetings – we were able to save money, and are grateful for the large and small donations we receive to continue our work. We know many AMs and LMs support our participants, their families, and FSSE finances through part funding of participant places, and are glad that this approach continues so robustly.

We worked hard to make our events open to everyone, regardless of means. In previous years this has included helping participants with difficulties find bursary funding locally where possible, and where not possible, providing bursary funding from FSSE's own limited funds. Although we had fewer bursary requests this year than in previous years, we remain committed to ensuring no participants are excluded for financial reasons, and are pleased that our financial model allows us to do this.

We pay careful attention to the safety of our events, with designated trained safeguarding team members. We carefully assess possible risks so that we mitigate them, or are prepared should we have an emergency.

Being able to run both our events as fully in-person gatherings this year means we anticipate this pattern will continue for the future. We have learned, especially over the last 18 months, to be flexible to changing circumstances; regardless of what form future events take, we will continue to focus on increasing our participant numbers, as well as taking time over the next few years to scope out potential options for how we can meet the needs of our young people through the format of the events we run.

This year has demonstrated once again that FSSE's events are managed by skilled, conscientious, committed and courageous teams. External circumstances, and changing legal requirements, meant this has not always been a straightforward process, but FSSE has been able to thrive in these conditions. The sense of joy and inspiration FSSE events bring seems, in many ways, to have been heightened in 2021, and it remains a privilege to be connected to this organisation, its events and the people who contribute to them.

Thank you.

James Barnard – Clerk to FSSE trustees

Junior Gathering Epistle 2021

To all Friends everywhere,

From 14th to 21st August 2021, 38 young people and 15 staff gathered together for a week to explore the theme of “Caring for ourselves and others”.

It’s a Quaker event and everyone, whether familiar with Quakers or not, enjoyed finding peace and reflecting when we met for worship every morning. To help us focus, we sometimes had things to fiddle with such as playdough, cat’s cradle, friendship bracelets, and paper doves to write our worries on before releasing them.

After meeting for worship, we went to our chosen activities such as tie dye, debating, creative writing and listening, arts and crafts, outside sports and musical options.

Speakers from both outside and inside the event helped us to explore our theme of caring for ourselves and others. Some covered familiar topics such as mental health that many of us had discussed at school and others spoke of their personal experience, for example of meditation which gave everyone tips on how to be centred. It also included one of our staff who talked about her work as a doctor in Accident & Emergency and how the Covid lockdown had affected her, her job and the NHS. During these sessions we had activities and discussions led by the speakers.

For lots of us it was our first time at Junior Gathering, and our daily meetings in small basegroups were an important space for us to really get to know each other and have fun.

In the afternoon and evening every day we had various light-hearted sessions. Some of the highlights were: trash fashion (where we made colourful hats out of oddments of different materials, wore face paint and paraded down the catwalk) and marble runs made in groups from scrap cardboard (which were then judged against various criteria).

Lots of us enjoyed dancing at the “Under the sea” themed disco. And we also got insights into the lives of our amazing staff members in “Lifelines”.

At the end of each day during epilogue we had singing and music from staff, guided meditations, the light display in the middle of the room, and the freedom of sitting or lying on the floor. We also valued the darkness, even if it made some people sleepy.

The event happened shortly after release from most Covid lockdown restrictions, and it was weird at first but we soon got used to it. It was lovely to see and be close to people in a non-academic space. During lockdown, almost no-one had slept outside their own home. It was difficult to adjust to, but we gradually made the Gathering our home.

Overall Junior Gathering was a welcoming and accepting safe space where everyone could be themselves. It was a great chance to meet new people and be away from home. Next time we’d like more time to shower and relax and socialise before bed!

As we come to the end of our week, we reflect on the friendships we've made and the fun we've had. We look forward to returning to Junior Gathering in 2022, hoping to explore the theme "Respecting all life, identities and opinions".

Signed in and on behalf of Junior Gathering 2021

Isabel P and Jojo J, clerks

Max H and Queenie K, elders

Senior Conference Epistle 2021

To all Friends everywhere,

From the 14th to the 21st of August 2021, 52 young Friends aged 15 to 18 and 11 adult volunteers gathered at Sibford School in Oxfordshire to explore the theme of 'Global Quaker Living'. This year's Senior Conference marked a return to form, as it was an in-person event, with only a few lingering pandemic constraints. Our time in quarantine had highlighted the importance of our wider Quaker networks; we decided therefore to explore the role of Quakers in different communities around the world as well as their different experiences of faith and living.

The first speaker was Colin South, who was the Director of Ramallah Friends School, in Palestine, from 2000 to 2004. He spoke about his experiences living and working in the school, talking about both the positive and negative elements of life in the West Bank in the early 2000s during the Second Intifada (Uprising). This was a period of intense violence in the region; however, the members of the school community came together to make the best of their situation. An example of their solidarity was when the students produced a play about national identity and perhaps most crucially, conflict resolution. This was in response to when a young member of the local community was harmed at the IDF (Israeli Defence Force) checkpoint on the way to school. Colin then also offered some reflections on the potential dangers of national identity.

The next speaker, Sergei Nikitin, was the head of Amnesty International Russia for 14 years. He talked about his experience being raised in the Soviet Union under an ideology of religious oppression, which limited spiritual options. He informed us of his work documenting Quaker relief work during the Great Famine between 1921 and 1931. This information had been repressed and was only known by a small number of people in the region; therefore, he published a book in Russian to help restore that knowledge to his compatriots. He then answered questions about his time with Amnesty International, primarily talking about his attempts to instigate human rights policy changes under the previous government, such as mitigating the brutality of the police force. He concluded by expressing concern for fellow Quakers at Friends House Moscow and all young people in Russia under the Putin administration. A specific quote that stayed in our minds when reflecting on how his life differed in England is when he said: "I no longer fear the knock on the door."

The fact that Sergei joined us on Zoom represented the changed nature of the event post-Covid; it worked well and we feel this is a positive possibility for future events. Additionally, the speakers highlighted to us changes we wanted to see in the world to contribute to a safer future, not only for our fellow Quakers but for humanity as a whole. Colin's speech included a particularly powerful and moving message on how the only thing we can do is try, even under extreme circumstances.

These sessions helped us to get a deeper grasp on the theme and the realities of those living among oppression – particularly the way in which the speakers maintained their faith in peace despite conflict around them. This was reflected in the 'Make a Country' workshop; a lively session in which we created fictitious countries and roleplayed conflict and negotiation between them.

We also used 'Chat Room' sessions, facilitated by the Arrangements Committee, to discuss global issues and the role Quakers play in UK politics, especially their involvement with peaceful protests. We looked at Quaker work abroad and how Friends work with those from all backgrounds and communities to contribute towards positive global change. These chat rooms incited lively, interesting debate whilst facilitating a safe space for participants to get to know each other, as due to the unusual circumstances of the past 18 months many of us were meeting for the first time.

Base Group sessions played a key role in fostering these relationships, with each consisting of 6-8 participants and acting as de-facto families, where newcomers could start to form bonds with other young Quakers. The Base Group Challenge acted as a catalyst for these bonds, as we had to face and tackle challenges together. We met several times a day allowing for some time to relax and talk in more intimate groups, as well as enabling us to look out for each other. Each participant was assigned a secret friend for the week: people would get fun surprises such as chocolate, kind notes and the occasional treasure hunt. This helped to establish a very caring atmosphere amongst all the delightful chaos.

The relationship between participants and the adult volunteers was also developed in a session called 'Lifelines', where three members of the 22+ team laid out their life stories using graphs to demonstrate the ups and downs of their lives, as well as offer insight into some of the challenges they have faced. Many of us found this to be a highly emotional and moving session, and we were very grateful that they shared their experiences and vulnerabilities.

Due to lingering Covid risks, the usual Oxford trip was cancelled. Not wanting to miss out on this key event, the spirit of Oxford was captured in 'Moxford' where the highlights of the trip were recreated in a satirical manner, akin to that of a summer fete. Booths ranged from 'Crymark' to 'MysTIKue's Fortune Telling', as well as a bouncy castle. Moxford was quite an affair, allowing us to procure costumes for the illustrious themed dinner. People dined dressed up as all sorts, from condiments to disciples, from monopoly characters to goths; but as in previous years we all looked sensational!

However, these costumes were merely a preview for the following night's 'Shrek' themed disco. People dressed in a highly creative and imaginative array of glamorous and sophisticated outfits and danced energetically and expressively.

Conferees this year left the event with a renewed and expanded sense of Quaker community, with old friendships rekindled and new ones forged. We reflected on historical and contemporary Quaker action and activism around the world, as well as how our lives of faith compel us to act. In the context of the last 18 months, we felt one of the most critical takeaways of the event was that we as Quakers should work towards fostering global communities of peace and togetherness, even in the most trying of times. We move out into the world with a greater sense of connection to that which is eternal in all of us.

Signed in and on behalf of all Senior Conference

Sammy G and Natalie A S; Clerks of 2021

FSSE Annual Accounts

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Friends Southern Summer Events (charity no. 1155420)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 30 September 2021.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Date: 12th July 2021

Name: Keith Barnes

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body: Fellow, CIMA

Address: 2 Beeforth Close
New Earswick
York
YO32 4DF

Receipts and payments to 30 September 2021

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE)

Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 30 September 2021 - Consolidated

	2021	2020
Receipts		
Grants, contributions & donations (Note	3,557	1,494
Participant fees (for 2020, donations)	33,470	70
Bank interest	0	0
Total receipts	37,027	1,564
Payments		
Pre-event		
Administration & marketing	503	0
Planning expenses	98	981
Skills development	1,165	97
Total pre-event	1,765	1,078
Event		
Accommodation	28,014	0
Staff event travel & services	1,293	79
Group event travel & services	1,230	0
Speakers expenses	90	0
Tuck shop deficit/(takings)	-61	0
Materials & supplies	828	110
Minor equipment	293	0
Miscellaneous	0	0
Total event expenditure	31,686	190
General		
Management meetings	0	109
Trustee expenses	0	220
Subscriptions	201	120
Insurance	544	474
Bank charges	88	60
Total general	833	983
Total payments	34,284	2,251
Receipts less Payments	2,743	-686
Balances brought forward at 1 October	21,688	22,375
Balances carried forward at 30 September	24,432	21,688
Prepayment for Sibford School	3,948	3,948
Cash at bank and in hand	34,447	17,753
Less payments not cleared at year end	13,963	12
Reserves	24,432	21,688

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE)

Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 30 September 2021 - Junior Gathering

	2021	2020
Receipts		
Grants, contributions & donations (Note	0	0
Participant fees	14,620	0
Bank interest	0	0
Total receipts	14,620	0
Payments		
Pre-event		
Administration & marketing	0	0
Planning expenses	98	249
Skills development	95	0
Total pre-event	193	249
Event		
Accommodation	14,355	0
Staff event travel & services	682	79
Group event travel & services	630	0
Speakers expenses	15	0
Tuck shop deficit/(takings)	-72	0
Materials & supplies	220	0
Minor equipment	257	0
Miscellaneous	0	0
Total event expenditure	16,087	79
General		
Management meetings	0	0
Trustee expenses	0	0
Subscriptions	0	0
Insurance	0	0
Bank charges	0	0
Total general	0	0
Total payments	16,279	329
Receipts less Payments	-1,659	-329

Notes

(1) 2021 fee income reflects 38 participants (2019: 52).

(2) Junior Gathering was not held in 2020. (Payments related to pre-Covid planning plus a residual event claim from 2019.)

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE)
Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 30 September 2021 -
Senior Conference

	2021	2020
Receipts		
Grants, contributions & donations (Note	0	0
Participant fees (for 2020, donations)	18,850	70
Bank interest	0	0
Total receipts	18,850	70
Payments		
Pre-event		
Administration & marketing	0	0
Planning expenses	0	732
Skills development	210	97
Total pre-event	210	829
Event		
Accommodation	13,660	0
Staff event travel & services	611	0
Group event travel & services	600	0
Speakers expenses	75	0
Tuck shop deficit/(takings)	10	0
Materials & supplies	607	110
Minor equipment	35.97	0
Miscellaneous	0	0
Total event expenditure	15,599	110
General		
Management meetings	0	0
Trustee expenses	0	0
Subscriptions	0	0
Insurance	0	0
Bank charges	0	0
Total general	0	0
Total payments	15,809	939
Receipts less Payments	3,041	-869

Notes

- (1) 2021 fee income reflects 52 participants (2019: 83)
(2) Senior Conference was held online in 2020.

Friends Southern Summer Events (FSSE)
Statement of Financial Activities for year ended 30 September 2021 -
General Income & Expenditure

	2021	2020
Receipts		
Grants, contributions & donations	3,557	1,494
Participant fees	0	0
Bank interest	0	0
Total receipts	3,557	1,494
Payments		
Pre-event		
Administration & marketing	503	0
Planning expenses	0	0
Skills development	860	0
Total pre-event	1,363	0
Event		
Accommodation	0	0
Staff event travel & services	0	0
Group event travel & services	0	0
Speakers expenses	0	0
Tuck shop deficit/(takings)	0	0
Materials & supplies	0	0
Minor equipment	0	0
Miscellaneous	0	0
Total event expenditure	0	0
General		
Management meetings	0	109
Trustee expenses	0	220
Subscriptions	201	120
Insurance	544	474
Bank charges	88	60
Total general	833	983
Total payments	2,196	983
Receipts less Payments	1,362	511

Notes

(1) In 2021, grants, contributions and donations comprised: £2,000 from Ruth Webb, £1,000 from the C B and H H Taylor 1984 Trust, £175 from Banbury & Evesham Area Quaker Meeting, £50 from Dorchester Quaker Meeting, and other personal donations totalling £332. The grant from the C B and H H Taylor 1984 Trust supported participation by three young people who would not otherwise have afforded the fees.

Statement of assets and liabilities at 30 September 2021

The charity had no material assets or liabilities at the end of the period other than the net Reserves (£24,432) reported under Receipts and payments.

The Trustees declare that the charity has given no guarantee where potential liability is outstanding at the date of the statement of assets & liabilities.

The Trustees declare that the charity has no outstanding debts which are secured by an express charge on any of the assets of the charity at the date of the statement of assets & liabilities.

Appendix 1: Reference and Administrative Details

Name: Friends Southern Summer Events, known also as FSSE.

Charity registration number: 1155420

Governing Document: FSSE is governed by its constitution, a copy of which may be found on FSSE's website at <http://fsse.org.uk/files/FSSE-CIO-Constitution.pdf>

Contact address: 30 Lucombe Way, New Earswick, York, YO32 4DS

Trustees: James Barnard, Anya Nanning Ramamurthy, Kit King

Clerk to trustees: James Barnard

Clerk to management committee: Oliver Waterhouse

Treasurer: Graham Torr

Bankers: CAF Bank, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4TA

Appendix 2: Reserves and Investments Policy

Reserves

FSSE requires reserves for normal operational reasons, as follows:

1. cash flow during the year;
2. planned additional expenditure in a particular year;
3. expenditure higher than expected;
4. income lower than expected.

We understand that it is normal practice for a charity to hold 25%-50% of annual expenditure as an operational reserve. With experience of our cash flow requirements, we agree that we will budget to hold between 30% and 50% of the previous year's expenditure.

Investment

We will hold our reserves as liquid assets to support the operations of FSSE, in a manner in keeping with Quaker principles. If it is possible to keep some in a higher-interest bearing account without operational difficulties, the Treasurer is requested to do so.