

UK Friends of Abraham's Path



ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2014

Registered office: St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, 78 Bishopsgate, London, EC2N 4AG

Registered charity no [1142073](#)

Company no 7469327

UK FRIENDS OF ABRAHAM'S PATH
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Front cover: UK Friend Angela Bailey with Syrian children from a tented camp in South Amman

OBJECTS OF THE COMPANY

The UK Friends of Abraham's Path (Masar Ibrahim) was formed in 2011 as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. It has no share capital and is registered with the Charity Commission.

The charitable object of the company is *'the advancement of education for the public benefit, in particular but not exclusively in:*

- the history of Abraham/Ibrahim and its contemporary significance*
- inter-religious and cultural relations between the Abrahamic traditions*
- the practical skills to promote mutual understanding between different religious and racial groups*
- and the Abraham's Path route through countries of the Eastern Mediterranean and its development as a route of walking and pilgrimage'.*

The company also has a working statement of the charity's vision, mission and values, used in all our public communication to help convey our goals to a broad audience. It is important to us that our definition of the term "Abrahamic" is contemporary and wide - a metaphor for inclusiveness, respect and hospitality towards all cultures and faiths.

Statement of Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

We want to see Abraham's Path (Masar Ibrahim) flourish in the Middle East and its values embodied and reflected in the UK.

Mission

To educate people in the UK about Abraham's Path (Masar Ibrahim) and to inspire them to walk and support it.

We do this by:

- Generating interest in the path through educational and cultural activities
- Facilitating UK travellers wanting to walk the path
- Developing practical skills in promoting understanding between diverse groups
- Raising funds to support our work and the development of the path

Values (we stand for...)

- Meeting and dialogue
- Hospitality and respect
- Shared humanity and recognition of diversity
- Social empowerment (including economic development in the Middle East and empowerment of people in the UK to participate in the Path, raise funds, and take learning back to their communities)

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

Directors and Trustees

During the year, the Trustee/Directors of the Company who served throughout the year were:

Debbie Young-Somers

Max Farrar

Sean Gallagher (Treasurer)

Helen Carvalhido-Gilbert

Anam Hoque

Louise Sibley (Chair)

Louise Sibley is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Abraham Path Initiative (API), the non-profit company registered in the U.S. that provides expert input, technical and funding support to local partners in developing the Abraham Path as a long-distance walking trail. In this capacity, Louise represents the interests of British walkers and of the UK charity in extending the API's support network in Europe.

Review of the Year

A journey in Jordan

Our second UK-led journey took a mixed-age group of 12 people on an adventure to walk in northern Jordan, partly on the most well-established segment of the Abraham Path (first developed by a party of Jordanian and British students from Yarmouk and Leeds Metropolitan Universities in 2008, led by the API team in north Jordan) and partly on new trail territory that has just opened up all the way north to Pella. It was a beautiful four days walking in varied landscapes from the hills of Ajloun down to the Jordan valley. However, for many of on the trip, arguably the most poignant memories arise from our three days of community service at the end of our walk. We spent one day in an ecological park helping prepare a garden and filling plastic bottles with sand to make a bird hide wall; then two days with Syrian refugees - at a tented village in South Amman and visiting some abandoned shacks near the border now housing ten families. A short account of the visit is given at the back of this report and there is a longer, very detailed account on our website.

A visit to the uk

In a turn of the tables, the UK Friends played host in May to a group from the Middle East in 2014. Four media students from Jenin University and their teacher Dr Rola Jadallah arrived in London for a packed week of activities. Coming from a very restricted background at home, they were eager for every experience, from a trip down Oxford Street to attending a village Church for Sunday Service. UK Friends Anam, Brendan and Rukiyah took them on a series of whistle stop tours around London while Louise provided beds and breakfast at home. Thanks to a generous donation from another UK Friend, we were

able to fund their stay here - and we hope to have repaid at least some of the hospitality we experience on our trips to their home towns.

Student trip to Israel and Palestine

For the second year running Leeds Metropolitan University (now renamed Leeds Beckett) ran a student volunteering and walking trip to Israel and Palestine. We were delighted to see this journey establish itself with on-the-ground leadership from Oriel Kenney as well as the student volunteering office. A re-design of the previous year's experience to bring a little more balance refined the trip and it again achieving good support from the students. A detailed account of the trip by one of the participants is given at the back of this Report



Schoolchildren waving to walkers (left); media students from Jenin on the South Bank in London

Outreach and education

With such good Path resources now available from the API's online guide, The UK Friends decided it was time for a re-build and to focus our website on outreach. We now have a simpler, easier to update website with a special page of the names and faces of people who are willing to talk to prospective travellers about their experiences and to help encourage self-organising travellers.

We were fortunate enough to attract a grant from SOAS to fund an intern to help us with outreach and even more fortunate to recruit Masters student Mia Tamarin to the role. Regrettably the outbreak of conflict between Gaza and Israel just as Mia started with us led to a decision to postpone until a more auspicious time the direct outreach programme we had planned in order to recruit more Friends. Instead Mia focussed on building a solid set of data for the future, supporting a traveller survey and research work being led by the API and organising in Leeds an information and celebration event for the end of her internship. With a lot of volunteer help, for which we are extremely grateful, this was a great success and had given us many new Friends who we hope will join us on future journeys.

Donations and funds

In the year ended December 31st 2014, the charity received donations of £4,295.

These donations have been used, primarily to fund the following:

- Work on the UK Friends' website
- An information and celebration for the public held in Leeds
- A visit to the UK for students from Jenin University
- Programme work by the API and local partners in the Middle East, including support for hospitality and guide training

During the year we established with HMRC gift aid refunding. This enabled the charity to match fund a grant from SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies) for employing a student intern on a variety of community research and outreach projects.

We would like to thank all our donors for their great generosity which makes this possible.

We will continue to work with API to attract donations in the UK for our stated purposes.

Future priorities

The significant step forward made by the API in providing in-depth resource for travellers - including the extensive online guide with downloadable maps - means that some of the work of the UK charity will be rethought in 2015. Our priorities are primarily outreach and education, journey design and helping support programme work in the Middle East.

The Path itself has gone through a time of change and challenge. On the one hand there has been extensive development and growth - there is nearly 1000 miles of trail to be walked now and countless connections have been made between diverse Middle Eastern communities and international travellers. The Path has attracted support from major international funders such as the World Bank, notable stories in the media (including being voted the No 1 new trail by National Geographic Traveller), and the attention of the international travel market. On the other hand, the horrific outcomes of conflict - not least the Gaza War, which broke out literally as the Leeds Met students started home from Israel - has been a major setback to tourism and travel in the region.

So it is difficult right now to encourage and to lead the kind of journeys we hope British travellers will want to make: journeys that deepen appreciation of this wonderful part of the world; journeys that connect us with the region's endlessly hospitable and kind people; and journeys of self discovery as we face ourselves in the light of the reality we find when we visit. However that IS our mission: it is unchanged and we will continue to seek ways to deliver.

PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT

UK Friends of Abraham's Path provides information and educational materials to the public about routes of walking and pilgrimage in the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean where the story of Abraham can be followed and about the contemporary significance of the Abrahamic story and in this way complies with its duty as set out in section 4 of the 2006 Charities Act. In 2014, we did this through:

- leading a UK Friends journey with community service in the north of Jordan (May)
- leading a walking tour in East London of places of Abrahamic significance (April)
- supporting a second volunteering and walking tour in Israel and Palestine for university students from Leeds Beckett University (June)
- providing sponsorship and information to participants of the Limmud Festival (August)
- organising a talk and celebration of the Path and of Middle Eastern culture in Leeds to help students and others engage with some of the challenges of developing a trail and of walking in the Middle East and to reach new potential supporters and walkers
- developing a new public website to disseminate information about the Path and offer opportunities for people in the UK to talk to walkers
- helping to develop and disseminate a survey of people who have walked the Path to gather information about their experiences and what is important to walkers
- continuing to distribute information via social media
- research into potential funding sources for our work and for the development of the Path



Above: Penny Cowell (left), Phil Tarkowski and Sean Gallagher in Jordan; Left: a student and walker panel discuss the Abraham Path and its significance at an event held with Leeds Beckett university.

REPORTS FROM THE PATH

Disclaimer: The authors of the reflections below are expressing their own views and do not necessarily represent those of the Charity.

WALKING AP IN JORDAN

Penny Cowell from East Sheen writes about the UK Friends walk in Jordan in May:

Tinkling goat bells, the smiling welcome of our Jordanian hosts and their wonderful hospitality, the muezzin's call to prayer, ancient ruins lying long forgotten on the hillside, the laughter of refugee children – these are some of my abiding memories of a week in Jordan, walking along the Abraham Path, a long distance walking trail across the Middle East. There were eleven of us from the UK branch with a local guide. We spent three days trekking and it was like stepping back two thousand years as we walked amongst the olive groves and watched the Bedouin shepherds with their flocks on the hills. We stayed with local families, enjoying wonderful Arab hospitality. On one day of unheard of rain we visited the vast ruined city of Umm Qais, where Christ cast out the devils and they entered the Gadarene swine.

At the end we had the opportunity for three days community service. We spend one day working at a Friends of the Earth Middle East ecopark and two days with Syrian refugees. Jordan has one and a half million living in the country and 600 more arrive every day, most of them hoping to return. We entertained children in a tented city and delivered food parcels to families living in a squalid concrete shopping mall within sight of the Syrian border. I was struck by their quiet dignity and welcome.

It was altogether an amazing experience and I felt immensely privileged to have been able to go. As the leader of our group summed up: step by step we are all walking side by side towards a common goal. Yahweh, Allah, God. Shalom, salaam, peace.



LEEDS BECKETT STUDENTS RETURN TO THE REGION

Sean Culligan writes about the second Leeds Beckett student volunteering and walking trip in June:

The Israel and Palestine conflict has been one of the most important political and social issues of the last three decades or more. The conflict has been widely reported, so it is very prominent in minds of the public and the suffering of everyone involved in the conflict is clearer to see. The result is that many may feel they want to help relieve some of the suffering and contribute to building peace in the area. The Abraham Path trail and community service scheme, run in the UK through the UK Friends of Abraham's Path (UKFAP), often supported by Leeds Beckett, enables individuals to work in groups in communities on projects aimed at creating the environment where dialogue and understanding can flourish. UKFAP also aim to facilitate dialogue at home.

Leeds Beckett and UKFAP organised a trip to Israel and Palestine in the summer of 2014 that involved a mixed schedule of volunteering, hiking and educational outings. The volunteering was based in two places; in a Bedouin community in the Negev desert and in the Tent of Nations just outside Bethlehem.

The Bedouin community in the Negev desert is increasingly being pushed into a small area of the desert. As a semi nomadic people, this has become an issue. When they have tried to settle in traditional villages, their homesteads are considered illegal so that new houses are destroyed by the state. The volunteering project in this community was focused on finding a way to build new houses, cheaply, quickly and out of natural material. Our group was almost used to test this project, which a local Israeli woman hopes to extend across the Negev. Visiting this community can also be viewed as an act of solidarity, showing the Bedouin that they are not forgotten. Our hosts urged everyone who visited to go home and talk about their plight.

The second base for volunteering was in the Tent of Nations, a Christian Palestine family farm that aims to bring a message of peace within the community. Surrounded by Israeli settlements, they are exercising their right to remain and their motto is "we refuse to be enemies". Groups from all around the world (including Israel) come to work on the farm, see the consequence of conflict first-hand and show solidarity with the Palestinian family. The work that was undertaken involved planting a small vineyard, and clearing a stony area for further planting of crops.

I believe the Leeds Beckett/UKFAP volunteering opportunity is important. It enables everyone who goes on the trip to gain a fuller understanding of the conflict and history of the area. It also enables us to help in whatever way we can in bringing hope to the people of Israel and Palestine. The trip lasted two weeks and involved 60 hours of volunteering. We stayed with local families in the Negev desert, and were able to wander around historic Jerusalem and the modern capital of Tel Aviv. Along our journey we were able to see a Palestine and Israel that most other visitors would not. We gained first-hand accounts from people from all walks of life about the conflict. We worked alongside activists on both sides of the conflict and local people. Abraham's Path aims to give a powerful educational experience that means people bring home a fuller view on the culture of both Israel and Palestine – a view that has the potential change people's lives.

UK FRIENDS OF ABRAHAM PATH

Accounts to 31 December 2014

| | 2014 | 2013 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| INCOME | | |
| Donations | 4295.00 | 14950.00 |
| Interest | 17.56 | 11.07 |
| Grant from SOAS re Intern | 1500.00 | - |
| HMRC Refund | 11471.76 | - |
| Total Income | 17284.32 | 14961.07 |
| EXPENDITURE | | |
| Contribution to Abraham Path | 2258.00 | 12510.00 |
| Development of student programme | - | 2001.27 |
| Overheads | 191.51 | 364.76 |
| UK Fundraising and Information event [Leeds] | 271.30 | 1000.00 |
| AP Initiative meeting and Path visit | 1366.87 | 710.54 |
| Visit of Palestinian students | 471.50 | - |
| Web Development | 895.47 | - |
| Intern | 3040.00 | - |
| Total Expenditure | 8494.65 | 16586.57 |
| BALANCE OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE | <u>8789.67</u> | <u>[1625.50]</u> |

BALANCE SHEET as at 31 December 2014

ASSETS

| | | |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Bank balance | 11004.70 | 4866.57 |
| Cash balance | <u>1.44</u> | <u>60.44</u> |
| Total Assets being Bank and Cash balances | 11006.14 | 4927.01 |
| Less Liabilities - Creditors | <u>-</u> | <u>2710.54</u> |
| Total assets less total liabilities | <u>11006.14</u> | <u>2216.47</u> |
| Represented by Total Funds | <u>11006.14</u> | <u>2216.47</u> |

Audit Exemption

For the year ended 31 December 2014 the company was entitled to exemption under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 [‘the Act’]. The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476. The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts.

Approved by the Trustees on 9 July 2015 and signed on their behalf by Louise Sibley Chairperson.

Independent Examiner's Report on the Accounts

Report to the Trustees of the UK FRIENDS OF ABRAHAM'S PATH on the accounts for the period ended 31 December 2014 as set out in the attached Accounts.

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and Independent Examiner

The Trustees [who are also the directors of the company for the purposes of company law], are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required (under section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the act)) and that an independent examination is needed.

Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination as the Independent Examiner, it is my responsibility to

- examine the accounts (under section 43(3)(a) of the Act);
- follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners (under section 43(7)(b) of the Act); and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in a full audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matters have come to my attention

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - to keep accounting records
 - to prepare accounts which accord with these accounting recordshave not been met;
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed by: MIKE EGAN FCA 168 Lee Lane, Horwich, Bolton BL67AF

Date: 30 June 2014

