NLS 60TH ANNIVERSARY WEEKEND AWAY

APRIL 2025



















OVERVIEW REPORT
IZZY SELKIN

Over 50 members of NLS spent a fabulous weekend in Derbyshire as part of the 60th anniversary celebrations.

Friends old and new gathered at Cliff College for a fun-filled weekend of learning, entertainment, prayer, lots and lots of food and so much more. We had everything from walks, treasure hunts, rich discussions of heritage, creative writing and a talent show filled with both incredible acts and performances so bad that they were comedic genius (if I do say so myself).

The weekend has been an opportunity for connection, re-connection and a celebration of everything we have built over the past 60 years. It was also wonderful to see the newest generation of NLS members embrace the activities.

The committee did a fantastic job of ensuring that we were entertained and nourished intellectually and spiritually, as well as many, many opportunities to eat. And what fantastic food we had!

One of my favourite quotes from the weekend was from one of our youngest members: "It's like camp but with old people." We all took it as a compliment... And during the creative writing session the quote inspired the following poem, which summarises the weekend: "It's like camp but with old people."

Old, bald, frail, fabulous, happy, calm, considered, caring.

People, lots of people. All sorts of people! But all one people. My people.

It was a very enjoyable weekend and was very heart warming to spend time with such a diverse, welcoming and interesting group, which I am very proud to be apart of. We all share immense gratitude to the wonderful committee for organising a fantastic and treasured experience and look forward to seeing everyone (and hopefully more!) at the next excursion.



I was asked if I could give, in a couple of sentences, my highlight from the shul weekend away. Wow, this is virtually impossible, as there were so many great activities and events to choose from. For example, mindfulness and relaxation from gentle dancing and movement to start the weekend; stimulating quiz participation; laughter (so, so much) from the entertainers, which included recorder playing (hilarious); slapstick (so funny); poetry reading (thought provoking); musical appreciation from the panel on Desert Island Discs, and so much more. Therefore, you can see the difficulty in choosing just one highlight!
The overall benefit, I feel, was the community essence and general feeling of enjoyment and pleasure at being together. "Not one criticism did I hear.".
A big thank you and mazel tov to the Social Committee.
Margaret Silk









Rabbi Gili: Our weekend away was a lovely, warm and joyous gathering. My favourite part was the talent(less) show. Beyond the really good laugh that I had, it was heart-warming to see an extended family of people all ages, enjoying together, with generous spirits and open hearts. I was looking around me, feeling so lucky, enjoying the sight of the audience no less than the lovely shows. These occasions when we get to express and experience, to be silly and honest, open and kind, are precious.
Naomi: The Weekend Away was definitely one of my best memories from England. It was so lovely to get to be with the community and feel a part of something big, I wanted to savour it so much and I felt like I didn't want it to end; the weather so was nice and the company even nicer 🙂
Elam: It was very fun to connect with more people that I haven't spoken to before, and I also enjoyed playing with the young kids.
Rabbi Gili, Naomi and Elam







First, thoughts from Lily: What did you like about the weekend? "The treasure hunt, the talent show, meeting Cath at the quiz, playing with Naomi, the bedroom, everything really." What didn't you like about the weekend? "I didn't like that it had to finish."
Haim liked the glow-in-the-dark tattoos and the treasure hunt best!
Philippa and David: We loved the atmosphere over the weekend – it was calm, welcoming and beautifully structured. We never felt rushed or pushed; it felt spiritual without being preachy; it made us think, it made us laugh. Being surrounded by such warm, like-minded souls was a real joy and we are very grateful for all the love, thought and hard work that made it possible. Thank you to all.
David, Philippa, Lily and Haim Erel



The highlight for me was the very first “Lecha dodi", in which I found myself, as it said, dancing my way to welcome Shabbat through music and movement, finding myself in an experience I never imagined. But it gave me the spiritual and the physical feelings of insight and experience – to my amazement! Thank you, Rabbi Gili.
David Lipman



A great weekend away. Probably the best we have attended. Excellent venue, relaxed atmosphere, with members across the ages and including both newer and older members. We particularly enjoyed the creative writing session with Moss Selkin and the interviewing of four members by Darren Barker. There was also talent in the talentless show. Of course, Derbyshire in the sunshine takes a lot of beating. Special mention should be made of the organisation by Cath Shipsides and her team.

Peter and Maggie Gordon

Sunrise over Baslow Edge.
Mist in the valley early morning.
Painting a pebble.
Eating lots of different home-made cakes.
Singing together.
Networking with people.
Hearing lots of stories.
Getting to know new people.

Angela Donen





I would like to say what a lovely weekend it was. That doesn't do it justice. It was a fantastic weekend. The weather was kind to us, the venue was stunning, the participants were game for joining in most everything. The food was excellent too – both the unending supply of cakes and biscuits brought in by participants and the meals provided to us by the College restaurant. By Monday morning, I noticed that my waistline had expanded! What a programme too, jam-packed with exciting things to do and lots of opportunities to learn about each other and our very diverse lives. What great companions you all are!

I achieved a first during the weekend – attending all three services, Erev Shabbat, Shabbat and Havdalah, all in the very same weekend. For folk in a similar position to me, not having the support of a Jewish family around, I found the weekend an excellent opportunity to learn some of the nuances of Jewish life through listening to some of the conversations and other banter that that went on.

I would like to say "Can't wait for the next one", but wouldn't want to put the organisers under too much pressure. They all worked so hard to deliver a very successful weekend. I felt exhausted by the time I reached home, and slept exceptionally well on Sunday evening. Thank you all for a fantastic weekend.

Barry Callieu





I had so much fun at the weekend away! It felt like the perfect balance of planned activities and unstructured time to chat. It was amazing to get to know people on a much deeper level than before, and meet people who I never cross paths with at shul. The walk through the countryside was a big highlight for me; however, I also really enjoyed the talent show and the the Jewish chatting activity!

Adrienne Sugarman





A lovely variety of sessions with a lot of laughter and spirit throughout. I loved the range of people who came and how everyone got on so well. Young and old, long-standing and new members, those very involved with our shul and those who are not so engaged.

A real community event in our 60th year, which shows that our community is in such a good state for the future. Thanks to everyone for making it such a heart-warming and enjoyable weekend.

Karen Worth





Aaron says: I liked that we did lots of activities. I really liked the treasure hunt and the Havdalah singing.

Rachel: I think what we liked best was the chance for some community building, getting to know members we perhaps hadn't seen before, and sharing ideas on what Judaism means to all of us and how we can strengthen our community that way. It was also very healing to be out in such beautiful surroundings.

Stuart: I didn't have any idea what the planned activities for the weekend were, so I went in without much expectation! Highlights for me were Jessie's talk on synagogues as sites of heritage, and – against my anticipated feelings about such a thing – the Desert Island Discs session. The location was excellent and the site itself was superbly featured.

Rachel, Stuart and Aaron Reeves

Maya said that it was like LJY camp, but for old people. She enjoyed having 'cute privilege' as one of five children in a group of adults. She really enjoyed performing in the talent show and the karaoke.
Both Maya and Adam really enjoyed the treasure hunt. The clues and prizes were so well thought out and they found it really exciting solving the clues all around the college.
I loved all the sessions, and it was fantastic that I could attend the adult sessions while the kids were being so well entertained by Naomi (Zidkiyahu Kohen).
Judith, Maya and Adam Moffatt







We found it very rejuvenating to be with members of the community at Cliff College. We enjoyed getting to know a number of new members (and others we hadn't met before) and we found the planned sessions and activities to be stimulating and enjoyable. Well done planning team!
Andrea Chipman and Jonathan Corne

It was wonderful how everyone of all ages gelled on this brilliantly organised and hugely enjoyable weekend.
Naomi Posner





We have just returned from a very jolly community weekend based at Cliff College, just outside Baslow in the beautiful Hope Valley. The accommodation was great: comfortable rooms, good food, catering for all dietary requirements and wonderful scenery all around. The organising committee did an absolutely magnificent job in providing various activities and entertainments to suit all ages. There was enough to keep everyone busy at all times but the atmosphere was relaxed enough to enable as much quiet and free time as anyone wanted.
A tricky quiz, a talent(less) show and a Desert Island Discs interlude were among the highlights. Rabbi Gili was on hand to provide stimulating conversation and to lead a couple of short services. The whole weekend was a huge success in engendering a real sense of community, and it was a great opportunity to get to know some of the newer members of the congregation. If this was viewed as a possible 'bonding exercise' then it must be considered a wonderful success. Thanks to everyone involved.
Harvey Goodman





I thoroughly enjoyed getting together with so many lovely people in such beautiful surroundings. One of my highlights was having the time to get to know people on a deeper level than the usual quick chats at shul. It was lovely to be amongst people of all ages, from a variety of backgrounds. Rabbi Gili's services were uplifting and thought provoking and connected us together as a community.
I thoroughly enjoyed the art activity – it's very rare to have (or make) time to let my creative juices flow. It was really therapeutic, in combination with talking to the other artists at work. Another obvious highlight was the incredibly irresistible cake counter. We are blessed to have so many talented bakers amongst us! The quiz was really good fun, although a bit hard! I liked the way we were organised into teams so that we got to know people we'd only just met.
Overall, the weekend was brilliantly organised and the team kept us all on track and more or less keeping to the schedule, prising us away from conversations and (more) cake to keep things running smoothly. The facilities at Cliff College exceeded my expectations. Not a bunk bed or splintery floorboard in sight. Lovely, comfortable accommodation and friendly, helpful staff. It was great to have a choice of places to mix and mingle. With such good weather, the outside space was appreciated too. A big THANK YOU to Allyson, Cath, Gemma, Gill and Michelle for being FAB!!! XXX
Katherine Kraven





The NLS Weekend away was a wonderful experience. I greatly enjoyed the relaxing Shabbat weekend filled with religious activities, discussions, and fun activities out in the Peak District. However, the real highlight was getting to know so many of my fellow NLS community members better and getting to spend time with them outside the synagogue!

Jesse Golden-Marx



We had the best time! It was great to have the opportunity to spend time getting to know friends better, and to have proper conversations and spend time with people I knew but hadn't interacted with much before. Having a non-Jewish spouse, I so value the fact that Anil was also able to participate and make his own connections and friends in our community. He was gutted to learn that it's not an annual thing – but maybe it could be?!

Georgia Parmar-Thresh



The weekend away seemed to exist outside of the real world, an oasis in these worrying times. New friends felt like old friends, and old friends were seen in a new light. I'm sure we're all counting the days until we can do it all over again!

Kay and Moss Selkin



AND FINALLY, A FEW WORDS FROM SOME OF THE ORGANISERS – TO WHOM WE ALL OWE A HUGE DEBT OF GRATITUDE. THANK YOU!



With any event we as a group organise, I like to take some time just to stand back and observe.
While doing this at the weekend I thought, 'It's the people who attend these events that make them work', and that was so true at the weekend away; so many generations mixing and having fun made me smile. So a big thank you needs to be said to everyone attending – you all played a part in making it a very successful event.
Allyson Kingsley



It's difficult to pick out particular highlights, but I think for me it was how everyone just seemed to relax into the weekend straightaway, with conversation flowing and lots of laughter amongst everyone. And everyone seemed to join in with all the activities that we'd planned; it was lovely to have that support. That was especially demonstrated by the Talent-less Show, with loads of people signing up to participate; and what a hilarious collection of acts – it was brilliant! (Maya is definitely a performer in the making – she had all the mannerisms of a budding comedian😊 and she's got a beautiful voice too. Wonderful.)
Gill Clark

I think we were all happy with how things went, probably better than we had hoped. For me personally I have two real standout moments. The first was seeing the beautiful friendship blossom between Cathy Lasher and Lily. L'dor v'dor comes to mind. It brought a lump to my throat seeing them together.

The second was a comment from Maya, after she had finished the treasure hunt and we were discussing if she was enjoying herself. She said, "It's like camp [Jewish camp], but with old people." Meeting people I hadn't seen or met before and seeing everyone joining in and laughing together was lovely. Quizzes certainly bring out the competitive side of people!! That's four things, so I'm going to shut up.

Cath Shipsides














































































