



**International
Voluntary
Service**



A Joint Newsletter from IVS and VAP - September 2023

IVS and VAP have similar objectives working for peace and international understanding through voluntary work and particularly workcamps. This joint newsletter has been produced in recognition of that.

Projects to volunteer on this autumn

There are currently 45 Short Term voluntary projects on the SCI database of short term projects which start between 1 October and 31 December 2023. There are projects in various parts of Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia. Note many require a fee to be paid to the hosting organisation on top of the normal registration fee. For more details start from: <https://ivsgb.org/service-civil-international/>

Additionally, VAP is hosting a pre-Christmas project in south London. For further information contact Nuno action@vap.org.uk.

Feedback from some of the projects in Britain this summer

IVS project at LECKMELM FARM, Ullapool, Scotland (25 June till 7 July 2023)



A big thank you to the first International Voluntary Service guests since the pandemic!

Hailing from Slovenia, Belgium, the Netherlands and Turkey they did a beach clean and removal of invasive species in forests in the first week. Afterwards they joined the community gardening group to do some volunteering in Ullapool to restore an area for pollinators.

Leckmelm Farm sponsored their stay in two cottages with food and board and we are grateful for other supporters such as Welcome Ullapool who have helped provide a welcome meal for the volunteers.

VAP project at BRITHDIR MAWR COMMUNITY, Fishguard, Wales (21 till 30 July 2023)



It has been a great 10 days! It was rather different from the original plan as the volunteers stayed in the house and joined us for meals, but it worked well. The volunteers were lovely people and seemed to really enjoy themselves. They were always cheerful, happy to help and enthusiastic.

They did various activities, the main one being completing a beautiful cob pizza oven. They worked hard and also

seemed to appreciate the educational activities we organised and exploring the local area. We will miss them being around!

Eastern Europe this summer from Hannah Smith

This summer I was lucky enough to take part in two workcamps, thanks to both IVS and VAP, as well as the perks of being a teacher and having long holidays!

The first workcamp was organised by INEX-SDA in Terezín in Czechia. Terezín is more widely known by its German name, Theresienstadt, and its use as a horrific ghetto and concentration camp for Jews in the 1940s. However, the town was originally built as a fortress in 1788, and the volunteer project was more focused on this earlier history, while of course not forgetting its more recent past. Our work was mostly to clear some of the huge network of underground tunnels built beneath the fortress so that they can be visited safely, and also to clean, repair and weed the channels and moats around the original walls. On one day we also worked at a small farm also within the fortress, where children come on trips to learn about how the place functioned as a military town in the 19th century.

In the evenings, we cooked and played games together,



and on one night we were invited to a local performance of folk songs and music connected to the Czech tradition. We also visited the ghetto museum and the 'small fortress' just outside the town, which had been a Gestapo prison. The whole project was extremely interesting, even if it was strange (as well as important) to think about what had happened in all the buildings we passed or went into every day: for example, our accommodation had been used as barracks through many different periods, including in the years of the ghetto and under Communist rule. This was the first year that an international volunteer camp had been held in Terezín, so I hope it will continue.

The second workcamp was in Deliblato, Serbia. This was organised by Young Researchers of Serbia, to support the Lake Kraljevac nature reserve. Our tasks were all related to the nature reserve: removing invasive species that are threatening the ecosystem there, litter picking (around and inside the lake!), clearing paths and spaces for sustainable tourism and fishing, and painting picnic tables and information boards. It was a lot of physical work in the heat, but we were very well looked after and had plenty of breaks to share music and snacks and learn the odd bit of Serbian.



The really brilliant thing about this camp was that the main ranger of the nature reserve, as well as his whole family, were so involved with the group and such enthusiastic, generous, patient and fun people. We often cooked and ate with them, and they arranged several events and trips for us, including Deliblato Sands, the largest desert area in Europe, a folk dance festival rehearsal, a river beach where we accidentally swam into Romania, and a treasure hunt around the town that got some of us lost for hours, only to be saved by a group of small children who took pity on us. They truly were fantastic hosts. My main memory will be riding on the open trailer of the tractor as we did most mornings to get to work, with the wind blowing and sun shining and gigantic sunflowers all around.

Meet Molly: IVS Friend and supporter

This year IVS have been gratefully receiving support from Molly O'Doherty, who comes to us as a comrade from our partner organisation Volunteer Action for Peace (VAP). From February – August Molly, was helping IVS with book keeping.

Chilly Berlin was where Molly's international voluntary service began. In 2013 she volunteered for two months at a memorial centre for the Berlin Wall. With an original stretch of the wall, an outdoor exhibition and a church of peace, volunteering at the site was a chance to dig deeply into Germany's recent history and cultural heritage.

Not deterred by a winter in Berlin, Molly got a taste for international volunteering and went back for more. Since then she's travelled to Naples, Athens, Kalamata and Istanbul, amongst other places;

where she's had lots of great experiences, made long-lasting connections and learnt about cultures abroad and at home.

Back in the UK, Molly got involved in VAP as a committee member, workcamp leader and later a coordinator for the European Solidarity Corps programme. Since 2019 she has been coordinating projects in the UK and sending young people to volunteer across Europe.

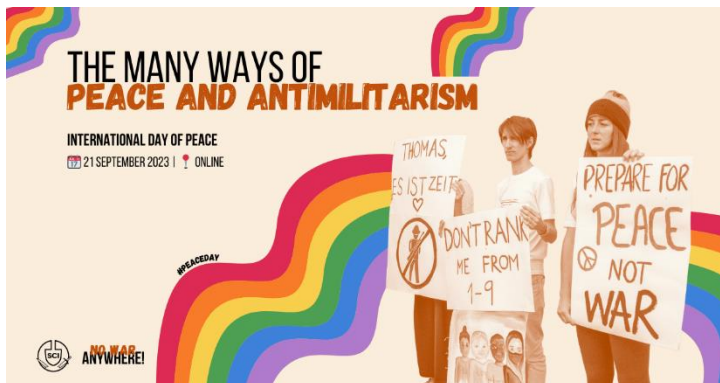
Molly is now going on to another post, but will continue to be in touch as a 'friend' of IVS and will also be connected to us as a committee member of VAP.



Molly (far right) volunteering in the Peloponnese, Greece in 2017.

International Peace Day – online event 21 September 11-12.30 pm

Hear concrete examples of peace activities from special guest speakers, learn more about the No War Anywhere project, and have time to discuss key topics with the speakers and other participants.



In this increasingly polarized and militarized world, peace movements like SCI need to share ideas and experiences about countering the dominant narrative and acting for peace.

Register: <https://bit.ly/idp2023sci>

How you can help IVS

Volunteer

The Joint Chairs of IVS. They, and the rest of IVS's Board of Trustees, are volunteers. If you'd like to volunteer with us, please do get in touch.

We are looking for:

- an extra person to sit in on our IVS Board meetings until June 2024
- an extra person for our Finance Advisory Group, or to serve as Assistant Treasurer
- a couple of people to assist IVS with its publicity and recruitment efforts.

If you are interested in any of these opportunities please write to director@ivsgb.org

Also, we would particularly like to hear from recent volunteers about their experiences, impressions and views on how IVS can establish a digital presence on social media. If you can help here please write to info@ivsgb.org

Donate

IVS relies on donations to run its activities. A donation would help us to recruit, train, support and send volunteers overseas to support our work. It would also enable many more volunteers from overseas to come to Great Britain to support local charities to deliver hundreds of important services to those most in need. For instance, the UK government charges IVS £21 for each invitation we issue to a long-term volunteer as well as seeking approx. £800 in fees from that volunteer. Further information is on our website <https://ivsgb.org/donate-2>

IVS Memories Project

Firstly, thank you to everyone who has contributed a memory and shared your reflections on your experience with IVS and SCI. The range and depth of experience is humbling. We have now selected 18 contributions to be included in the forthcoming publication. Colleagues have been so generous sending updates, photographs and short biographies to give context to the IVS part of their life-story. We are working with two colleagues at Mark Allen Publishing Group on the design and production of the final booklet. No doubt there will be much back and forth between ourselves, the selected contributors and our publisher colleagues over the next few months. We are on track to publish in early December 2023, all being well.

We are still collecting new memories, recent or older, and will be advertising shortly in Peace News for more contributions. Please send to memories@ivsgb.org

Amitiés

Helen, Rosemary and Raj

IVS Archives

Hull university holds the records of IVS however they are largely uncatalogued. Some work has been done on this but the pandemic delayed work substantially. A blog from 2019 is available to read though: <http://hullhistorycentre.blogspot.com/2019/04/volunteering-for-peace-in-aftermath-of.html> about the activities of IVSP (as we were then known) immediately after the Second World War.

The university make the archives available to researchers who request access, and if anyone from IVS would like to view them that can be arranged, The archivist also says “we are happy to continue to add to the archive, if that’s something IVS would like to look at doing. It’s a wonderful collection, and will be really valuable for researchers looking at a range of subjects.”

Legacy to IVS

IVS recently received the first instalment of a generous legacy from Hazel Walker. The total due to be received is big enough to enable investment of the gift to produce income every year into the future rather than spending it all over the next few years.

The IVS trustees are giving this idea full consideration. The legacy would form what is known as an endowment fund and the income from it would help keep IVS and international volunteering going into the future.

IVS Annual General Meeting

IVS held its AGM on Saturday 17 June. Members present agreed to change IVS's Articles of Association to formally permit people's virtual attendance at meetings and to allow people to submit postal votes on all items on the AGM agenda and not just on candidates for the Board of Trustees.

Gheorghe Zugravu was elected as a Trustee, and Rosemary Hobday and Richard Williams were re-elected for a second term of office. Other, continuing, Trustees: Neil Alldred, Mohammad Rashid, Tim Marc. [At a Meeting of the Trustees after the AGM Kerry



Hargadon was co-opted as a trustee for a period of up to one year.] The position of Chair of IVS will be occupied in turn by Trustees from one meeting to the next. Gheorghe is to be Vice Chair. Richard agreed to continue as Acting Treasurer.

A possible merger of IVS and VAP

Outside the formal business of the IVS AGM there was an informal discussion on the proposal by some members of Volunteer Action for Peace that the existing collaborative arrangements should move to a closer partnership with IVS and perhaps a merger. VAP has partnerships which would be useful to IVS such as CCIVS and Othona. IVS is the British branch of Service Civil International. SCI is an international network of national voluntary organisations. VAP is associated with the Alliance which has its own, largely different, network of voluntary organisations. Nigel Watt advocated that if the merger took place that IVS should revert to its original name International Voluntary Service for Peace, IVSP. Other points made:

- The two organisations have different charging arrangements for incoming volunteers to Britain. VAP fees for outgoing volunteers are greater than IVS's fees.

- As both organisations have similar structures a merger should not be too difficult, but it would probably take a year or two. We should be aware that there could be hitches on the way so we should proceed with caution.

A VAP perspective on the possible merger of IVS and VAP

The voluntary service or workcamp movement as a whole is in crisis. Before the pandemic the number of international volunteers taking part in exchanges and the number of projects was already in decline in most countries – and the pandemic hastened this process. In the case of the UK other factors have played a part: high university fees discouraged volunteers from going to “south” countries; rigid “health and safety” regulations made many suitable projects unable to provide workcamp sleeping accommodation; Brexit has made it more difficult and less attractive to come to the UK and our exclusion from Erasmus puts an end to EU funded exchanges; voluntary organisations have found fundraising increasingly difficult.

VAP (as its ancestors CMP and YAPUK) has always been a low cost operation, usually having no office and relying on volunteers’ fees for its income. It has a very tiny membership and the declining number of returning volunteers has made it increasingly difficult to provide enough committee members. Nigel’s house has served a useful purpose as a meeting place and a legal address but Nigel and the house will not be available for ever. Our only resources are our committee members, our relationship with Othona, a good list of partners in Africa and Asia and our active presence in CCIVS.

VAP should therefore work towards a merger with IVS-GB (which is also weak but stronger than VAP). Ideologically we are on the same page, working for peace. Nigel is a member and former general secretary of IVS and was once International President of SCI. Nuno is currently working for both VAP and IVS and Molly was also doing some work for IVS. Our work is complementary: both have workcamps but IVS has more MLTV projects. IVS has a larger membership base, mainly elderly. It has a culture of having an office, having paid staff and raising funds from charitable trusts etc. IVS is the British branch of Service Civil International which means that its volunteer exchanges are mostly with other SCI branches and it contributes to the cost of SCI’s international structure. It has no direct membership of CCIVS but SCI is a member and has recently provided its president. VAP is a fairly active member of CCIVS.

VAP Annual General Meeting

The AGM is on Saturday 7 October 2023 3-5pm and by zoom click on this [link](#)

The venue for in person attendance will be 17 Overhill Road, East Dulwich, London SE22 0PH. If you wish to propose a resolution, or stand for the VAP Executive Committee, please email to nigel@vap.org.uk or write to VAP at the above address. The possible merger with IVS will be discussed at the meeting.

Members of IVS are also welcome as observers. Anyone wishing to come in person can inform Nigel and he can send travel details if required. There will also be an evening meal (at

7pm). All VAP and IVS members are welcome but please let Nigel know if you are planning to come.