

FCJnews

in the Province of Asia–Australia

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Veronika Schreiner fcJ the tourist: visiting the Great Wall of China just before leaving The Philippines after twenty years of missionary work there.



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Recently, a celebration was held at the FCJ Province Centre Richmond to commemorate a significant birthday of Julie Chamberlin, the chairperson of the

Communications Committee which produces this newsletter. This publication is just one of the many ways in which Julie gives of herself to living her Christian calling, and to spreading the charism of Marie Madeleine d'Houët, the foundress of the Faithful Companions of Jesus.



Just like Marie Madeleine, Julie is a passionate believer in the power of education to transform lives and benefit society. She has taught in schools, taught teachers and has worked at the Catholic Education Office. In the 1980s Julie

joined the Genazzano FCJ School Board, sharing her expertise and her commitment to education in this governance role. She has been on a number of other metropolitan school boards and until very recently sat on the council of FCJ College in Benalla.

Providing scholarships and books for disadvantaged students has become a major activity for Julie since she established Friends of Romania (FOR) in the nineties, to aid students. Julie has her own unique way of working, for she begins by bringing people together and then she motivates them with her enthusiasm, and inspires their commitment with her wholehearted approach. The skill of making connections with other people and services is another of Julie's great gifts, for she has an entrepreneurial flair and can see the big picture and what is needed to make a project succeed.

Over the past eighteen years the major fundraising led by Julie has been fruit cakes (4,500 sold last year), which involves the participation of many volunteers, including students from various schools in Kew. Other fundraising has included High Teas, Concerts, and Games Days. The proceeds of these activities provide education for young people in The Philippines and Romania, and Julie has had the joy of visiting both these countries and meeting many grateful young people who have benefited from her generous and creative heart.

Julie is truly a companion to so many people as she offers opportunities for them to give of themselves through her inspiring qualities of respect, spontaneity, empathy, vision, enthusiasm and energy of mind. She has the mental stamina and ability to see a project to its conclusion, and then to dream up another one! May Julie's life continue to inspire our generosity.

Based on a talk given by Judith Routier fcJ at the celebration for Julie.

'Let them stay'



Sr Anne fcJ and one of her students at Dandenong

Many Christian organisations, including Catholic Care, Red Cross, the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project, and Catholic parishes, and others who are working tirelessly to support those refugees who live in Melbourne or other parts of Victoria. There are also several families or individuals who offer houses for rent at a minimum rate or offer rooms in a house.

Many asylum seekers are living in precarious situations and rely heavily on the support of the above organisations to be able to survive. Many live in fear that they will be sent back to their country of origin as they have temporary visas. In some cases, visas are for only a very short time and they are obliged to report constantly to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

At St Mary's parish, Dandenong, there is a centre for asylum seekers who want to learn English. The centre was begun by Norah McClusky several years ago. With the growing demand for learning English in the area, Norah has opened another venue at the Aquatic Centre in Noble Park. When I first returned to Australia in May 2011, I felt the need to work with people who were marginalised in some way, so later in the year I began working with a group of young men from Afghanistan who were living in the SVD (Divine Word Missionaries) Centre in Boronia. Due to funding changes I moved to Dandenong.

Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project is always looking for English teachers. Donations of non-perishable food are welcome. This supports parish houses, such as the one in Deepdene, Noble Park Centre for English and many other endeavours aimed at responding compassionately to arrivals on our shores seeking asylum or refuge. Please feel free to contact me with regard to these projects, at 0423 525 166.

Anne Morrison fcJ



ON THE COVER: 'Our foundress, Marie Madeleine Victoire, fascinated me: to follow Christ to the foot of the cross ...

and beyond. For me, this meant to accompany people in their way of life, whether they were the students in Paris, the EU Officials and their families in Brussels or the people in The Philippines with whom I had the grace to work.' Veronika Schreiner fcJ.

Australian Catholic Youth Festival (ACYF)

Adelaide 3–5 December 2015



Genazzano and FCJ Benalla students

Last December, a small group of 10 students from FCJ College, Benalla, travelled to Adelaide to attend the Australian Catholic Youth Festival, as did a number of students from Genazzano FCJ College, Kew. This event was a celebration and gathering of over 3000 people aged from 15 to 25 and an opportunity to enhance and develop our faith as young people of the Catholic Church.

We at FCJ College began our journey in Penola, a small town where Australia's first saint, Mary MacKillop, worked. While in Penola we visited the Mary MacKillop Museum, the schoolhouse she and her sisters established and the local church. This experience allowed us to appreciate more fully and understand the works of this amazing woman and the struggles she overcame in order to live out her faith.

The Australian Catholic Youth Festival spanned three days and was filled with activities from workshops to prayer to rallies and singing. Each day began and ended with a plenary session. These sessions included thousands of young people and a variety of interesting and passionate speakers. From Father Morgan abseiling onto the stage from the ceiling or hearing Gary Pinto, the 'X Factor' vocal coach, sing and dance, there was never a dull moment.

Besides the plenaries, each day there was a wide selection of events to participate in, some of the most popular being Father Rob Galea and the Stronger team, Steve Angrisano's singing and stories and Jason Evert's views on relationships between young Catholics. However, as an FCJ group, the speaker we were most impressed by was Daniel Giles, who spoke about life with autism and how it affected his faith. Alongside him were members of the hearing-impaired Church community, who also demonstrated that any obstacle can be overcome.

Attendees could involve themselves in other exercises such as writing to politicians about the mistreatment of asylum seekers in the social justice activity centre, visiting the 'Xchange' space where topical issues were being discussed or meeting new friends in the INcounter area. Throughout the festival there were also moments for reflection and silence. We found this in Adoration and the sacrament of Reconciliation. We also completed an Examen, an Ignatian form of prayer. This helped us draw out highlights from our time spent at the festival and to be thankful for the positive things that occurred within our day.

During our time in Adelaide, there was a great sense of community and belonging, not only within our faith, but as a group. Overall, the festival was fantastic and created an opportunity to not only build our understanding and beliefs, but also act on them.

The trip would not have been possible without the support from FCJ College, Benalla, and St Joseph's Parish. We would also like to thank the teachers, Mrs Branigan, Mr Demase and Mr Daw, for giving up their time to take us and for sharing their love and knowledge of our Catholic faith.

Lauren Lucas, FCJ College, Benalla

'This experience allowed us to appreciate more fully and understand the works of this amazing woman and the struggles she overcame in order to live out her faith.'



Portrait of Mrs Patricia Cowling by Mrs Shirley Silverstein, Senior Art Teacher at Genazzano FCJ College

A farewell to Mrs Patricia Cowling, Principal, Genazzano FCJ College 2001–2015

The closing of a significant chapter always comes with both celebration and sadness: celebration for all that has been accomplished and sadness that the time has come to farewell the people and the place that have been so integral to the life and work of the individual.

And so it was that on the evening of 1 December 2015, a special closing Eucharist was celebrated at St Patrick's Cathedral to honour the fifteen-year principalship of Mrs Patricia Cowling at Genazzano FCJ College, Kew.

Surrounded by family, friends, colleagues, staff and row upon row of Genazzano girls sorted into year and colour areas, the Eucharist was a timely reminder of the duty and responsibility of leading a Catholic school in a particular spiritual tradition. Fittingly, the college theme for 2015, *Service in Companionship*, underscored the nature of Mrs Cowling's long and loving service to the College. Companionship is a core ideal at Genazzano, inherited from the foundress, the Venerable Marie Madeleine d'Houët. Marie Madeleine founded the order in 1820 in Amiens, France, to educate the poor, companionship on the journey to purpose, selfhood and faith.

Under Mrs Cowling's leadership Genazzano has grown and changed in response to the times and remains to its alumnae and current students 'the well-loved school upon the hill'. The holistic journey to selfhood – spiritual, academic and emotional – is at the centre of an FCJ education and Mrs Cowling's vision, enacted over the span of these fifteen years, has transformed the school into a vibrant 21st century institution, built on the bedrock of enduring values and tradition.

The Eucharist was celebrated by Archbishop Denis Hart, with college chaplain Rev. Dr Brendan Reed assisting and Genazzano altar servers in attendance. Before the service began the cathedral resounded with the glorious strains of Bach and Handel. Deputy Principal: Faith and Mission, Mrs Teresa Lincoln, introduced the proceedings as school captains and members of the executive, together with Sister Judith Routier fcJ, the Province Leader of Asia-Australia, processed in. Mrs Lindy Priest, Chair of Council, acknowledged the college's indebtedness to Mrs Cowling and outlined her many achievements and innovations and the legacy on which the next generation of students can confidently build.

At Genazzano, Marie Madeleine's advice of always having *courage and confidence* is frequently invoked as to how Gen girls aspire to live and work in the world. Mrs Cowling has also had the courage and confidence to transform and enliven Genazzano FCJ College, judiciously reflecting contemporary education practices and promoting the charism of the FCJ Sisters in the daily life and endeavours of the college.

‘Under Mrs Cowling’s leadership
Genazzano has grown and changed
in response to the times
and remains to its alumnae and current students
‘the well-loved school upon the hill’.’

During his homily the Archbishop thanked Mrs Cowling for her loyalty and her leadership. He reminded all gathered that in the Catholic framework we are invited to love one another. He called on the students to be open to God’s plan for them. He urged them to use their God-given gifts for the good of others. He encouraged the students to be alert to the needs around them and to be articulate in advocacy. The Prayers of the Faithful reflected the importance of a ministry of service in leadership and the imperative of bringing hope and justice to the world.

The singing by choir and soloists was superb. Most moving of all was the Gaelic *Song of Blessing* sung over Mrs Cowling as an affirmation of affection for all she has done for Genazzano and a wish that the deep peace of Christ is with her as she embarks on a new chapter in her life and work. At the conclusion of the Eucharist a number of Christmas carols were sung.

For Mrs Cowling this special Eucharistic celebration was a tribute to her devoted service and a way of honouring her contribution to Catholic education in Melbourne as Principal of Genazzano. The college will continue to nurture strong and compassionate FCJ women who will challenge and change society. Mrs Patricia Cowling’s legacy and vision will live on in the courage and confidence of the next generation of grateful Gen girls.

Ann Rennie



Genazzano FCJ College, Kew



Student choir at the farewell Eucharist in St Patrick's Cathedral, December 2015

Ein leben als ‘Fremde’:

Celebrating Sr Veronika Schreiner’s ministry, including many years of service in the Province of Asia–Australia

Had I been asked to write this article last year I would not have used this title, but in the present circumstances when the whole Middle East and also great parts of Africa are on the move and knocking at the doors of Europe, it seems appropriate that I look at my life from this angle. I am 75 years old now and 49 of these years I have lived outside Germany, *als Fremde*. Before I entered I lived for one and a half years in France and Belgium. As an FCJ Sister, I lived for three and a half years in Great Britain, six years in Switzerland, eight in France, 10 in Belgium and almost 20 in Asia, mostly in The Philippines.

Let us look at this title in German: *Leben* is easy to translate. It simply means *life*. But *als Fremde* is problematic. Should I translate it as ‘as a foreigner’ or even worse, ‘as a stranger’? How long does one remain a foreigner in a country? Until you speak the language perfectly? Until you have a residence permit? Until you have a passport? Will there be a time when one is integrated into their way of life, into a society?

When I think of the one million refugees who have entered Germany in the last year with great hopes of finding a new home, of having a better future, of living in security, I wonder whether they, like me, will remain living ‘*in der Fremde*’. As for me, I have felt at home in many countries. I have been happy, I have worked with the local people where I am understood, where people laugh at my jokes, where I can talk about World War II without there being an ill-feeling on both sides. I find plenty of people with whom I can debate vigorously while keeping, even increasing, our mutual appreciation.



‘As I look outside my window and see the far-off Alps I know that there are huge treasures beyond these mountains: a world where people try to heal, save their lives, search for new possibilities, find meaning in their sufferings and joys, discover themselves, explore their potential and give thanks to God.’

Why am I still happy at 75 to be a Faithful Companion of Jesus? I got to know the Sisters in Belgium, where I was an *au pair* after having worked for three years in a bank in Germany. I wanted to learn languages and travel the world. God had other plans. It was particularly the name of the congregation that spoke to me: to be a Faithful Companion of Jesus seemed to give life a clear meaning and direction. Later on, when we started to explore the charism of the congregation, the phrase of the foundress, Marie Madeleine Victoire, fascinated me: *to follow Christ to the foot of the cross ... and beyond*.

For me, this meant to accompany people on their way of life, whether they were the students in Paris, the EU Officials and their families in Brussels or the people in The Philippines with whom I had the grace to work. But it means even more to me: not only to accompany them in their joys and struggles but to go beyond. In my present ministry – working with foreign women living in Munich who have experienced trafficking, were prostituted, forced into marriages and/or experienced different forms of sexualised violence – it is of course vital to give them a listening ear, to show compassion and caring love. It is equally important to help them to see a *beyond*. The Beyond is not paradise after death. No, it is a meaningful life here and now.

This expression of the charism of the FCJ Sisters is a daily source of the courage I need in this ministry. It is a guideline for evaluating the ‘fruit to be reaped’ (FCJ Constitution 242b) and dealing with ‘things more urgent’ (FCJ Constitution 243b). The women I meet regularly now are destroyed both in body and soul.



‘How long does one remain a foreigner in a country?
 Until you speak the language perfectly?
 Until you have a residence permit?
 Until you have a passport?
 Will there be a time when one is integrated into a culture, into a society?’

Translation of SOLWODI
 SOLidarity with WOMen in Distress

Sr Veronika Schreiner fcJ (right) at her farewell as President of the SOLWODI group at home in Germany

One needs perseverance in dealing with the authorities. Every woman who gets a permit to stay in the country, every one who can find a job and has her own apartment, is a precious ‘fruit reaped’. But it demands many hours of work, too many hours. It demands emotional involvement, which can lead to exhaustion. A balanced lifestyle is demanded – I am getting better at it!

I would not want to miss any day of my life *als Fremde*. I appreciate the friends I made, the different cultures which enriched me, the global view which prevents me from getting focused only on the immediate and the local problems. I see that all is connected and that every small effort has an effect worldwide.

As I look outside my window and see the far-off Alps I know that there are huge treasures beyond these mountains: a world where people try to heal, save their lives, search for new possibilities, find meaning in their sufferings and joys, discover themselves, explore their potential and give thanks to God, the God who wanted to pitch his tent among us, walk, suffer and laugh with us and through us – the One who opens a future beyond our dreams.

He is the One who accompanies each one on our daily journey to the Beyond in the here and now.

Veronika Schreiner fcJ

‘...it means even more to me:
 not only to accompany them in their joys and struggles but to go beyond.’

Camino Companions

In early 2015, Katherine O'Flynn fcJ and I began the new ministry of Camino Companions, accompanying pilgrims from many parts of the world in Santiago, Spain.

The Camino, as it is more usually called, was made more widely known through the 2010 film called *The Way*. The Archbishop of Santiago describes the Camino as 'an allegory of the Church as people of God' (Archbishop of Santiago, n. 1). It indicates a possible way of journeying through life – a way of caring, receiving and sharing, carrying each other's burdens, making space for and welcoming the stranger, recognising blessings and mystery at the heart of our ordinary lives.

What is it that attracts tens of thousands of people to undertake the Camino each year? There are a multiplicity of reasons, ranging from the desire for adventure to the search for a profound spiritual experience. A South Korean man recently said in a reflection session; 'I came to do the Camino because for many months I felt my heart was withering'. A woman from the United States was more direct and said, 'I wanted to experience God in a more intimate way'. The God of Surprises works in all circumstances and, it seems, can slip through and touch hearts and lives in a multitude of ways. We're constantly touched by the naked desires and longings of the human heart and the quest for meaning that are expressed in reflection sessions. It is a very great privilege to be able to companion pilgrims at such moments as these.

We witness people living heroic lives – lives of great brokenness, fragility and vulnerability, but lived with enormous love, courage and hope. So many pilgrims carry far greater weights in their hearts than they do in their backpacks and the blisters on their feet heal far more quickly than the blisters in their hearts.

Camino Companions offers a space for quiet reflection, an opportunity to:

Stand still. Lay down your load.
Take your life firmly in your two hands,
(Gently ... you are trusted with something precious)
While you search your heart's longings:
What am I seeking? What is my quest?

Sr Raphael Considine PBVM



Marion Dooley fcJ (centre) and Katherine O'Flynn fcJ (far right) and friends celebrate in Santiago, Spain

One of the groups that stand out is the number of middle-aged women whose lives have been turned upside down after the breakdown of their marriage. They face unknown futures with great insecurity. They undertake the Camino as a time to grieve, to come to terms with this new reality, to find peace, inner strength, and hope for what lies ahead.

Another group that has lifted our hearts is the many young women in their 20s and 30s whom we have met, who ooze energy, enthusiasm and life – women with a sensitivity to the spiritual and who travel with gratitude. It gives great hope for the Church in the West.

We have received so, so many blessings from the pilgrims we meet. One young man from Asia shared his sense of immense gratitude that he experienced each time he came across a yellow arrow indicating clearly the way forward as he journeyed along. In order not to take for granted this blessing, he decided to tangibly express his gratitude by bowing and placing a small stone near the arrow. His attitude to life is one of deep gratitude: this invites us to reflect on how we express gratitude for the many small blessings we receive in life. How do I pay attention to outer and inner yellow arrows and tangibly express appreciation for them?

'We're constantly touched by the naked desires and longings of the human heart and the quest for meaning that are expressed in reflection sessions. It is a very great privilege to be able to companion pilgrims at such moments as these.'



We have a Facebook page called *Camino Companions*, through which we keep in contact with pilgrims. If you have a Facebook page, we would like to invite you to interact with Camino Companions and share it among your family, friends and colleagues. We can also be contacted at caminocompanions@gmail.com. Many thanks for all your support.

If you are considering walking the Camino, an avalanche of blessings awaits you! It may not always be the blessings you expected but they will leave an indelible imprint on your heart. This year we are expecting an enormous increase in the numbers of pilgrims arriving in Santiago because of the Holy Year of Mercy. In his encyclical, Pope Francis has encouraged people to go on pilgrimage and allow the experience to renew and invigorate their lives.

Buen Camino!

Marion Dooley fcJ

References

Archbishop of Santiago 2010, *Pilgrims of Faith and Witnesses to the Risen Christ*, Pastoral Letter for the Compostellan Holy Year 2010, Archbishopric of Santiago, Compostella, Spain.

Considine, Raphael PBVM 1996, 'Trasna', *Songs for the Journey*. Used with permission.

'We witness people living heroic lives – lives of great brokenness, fragility and vulnerability, but lived with enormous love, courage and hope.'

Left: Pilgrims waiting to enter the Cathedral



Left: Walking the Camino

Around the parishes

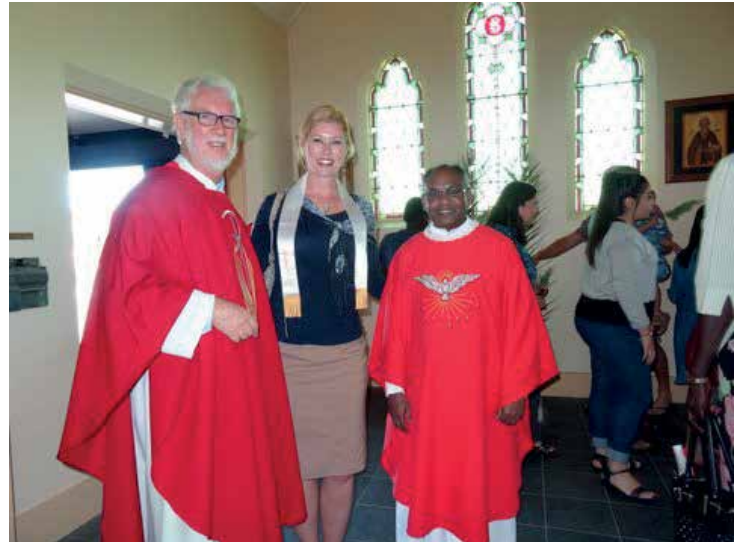
Introducing a new section about the parishes in which the FCJ Sisters minister in the Province Asia–Australia. We begin with St Brendan’s, Shepparton, in north-east Victoria.

St Brendan’s Parish Church is situated in Knight St, Shepparton, and is in close proximity to the parish primary school and Notre Dame Secondary College. As you walk into the church grounds you pass by a Mimovich bronze statue of St Brendan holding aloft a celtic cross as he travels in his boat on his missionary journey. The present church was opened in July 1900, replacing an earlier building that was destroyed by fire. Over the years St Brendan’s parish has been fortunate in having innovative pastoral and caring clergy who engage the laity in the celebration of meaningful liturgies. Our present Parish Priest, Fr Joe Taylor, is ably assisted by his assistant, Fr Berny Agustines from Cebu, and an effective, compassionate pastoral assistant, Anthony Kilmartin. Fr Joseph Alluri from India recently returned to his home parish. Adi Indra, an Indonesian seminarian for the Sandhurst Diocese, is spending time in the parish before continuing his studies in Rome.

Today St Brendan’s is a vibrant and active parish with approximately 1,800 families. It is very much immersed in a traditional and multicultural fusion. In recent years many refugees from Africa, India and Afghanistan have joined with older migrants, who are mainly Italian. Each year on the feast of Christ the King, representatives from twenty countries carry ‘their’ flag in procession to the sanctuary where they are placed around the altar in specially designed stands.

The Italians are largely engaged in orchards and market gardening. Shepparton Preserving Company (SPC) is one of the biggest employers in the area and employs 1,200 at the height of the fruit season.

‘St Brendan’s is a vibrant and active parish with approximately 1,800 families. It is very much immersed in a traditional and multicultural fusion.’



Father Joe Taylor PP, Susan from San Diego St Brendan's Shepparton to be received into the church, Fr Joseph Alluri



Dressed in their Sunday Best



MacKillop Faith and Light Group, Shepparton

Until recently the schools were serviced by the Sisters of Mercy and the Marist Brothers. The Mercy Sisters arrived in 1902 and took over the primary school and began Sacred Heart Secondary College for girls. Sr Alphonsus McCarthy was the last Sister to leave Shepparton in October 2010. The Marist Brothers were invited to the parish in 1951 and began St Colman’s Secondary College for boys.

The Brothers left in the 1990s and the schools became co-ed, first in Years 11 and 12 and later, the combined colleges were re-named Notre Dame College with an enrolment of close to 2000 students. The vision and memory of the religious founders is visibly maintained by the present leadership. Social justice awareness is a strong element among the students and teachers. Every year students visit the Kimberley, Fiji, East Timor and some of the African nations, as well as significantly supporting our own Indigenous families here in the area.



St Brendan's statue outside the church in Shepparton



A typical family group at St Brendan's



Pictured above: Marita Taverner with baby Mary Godalive Muperda

Pictured left: Unity in Diversity in Shepparton

A recent noteworthy annexe to the secondary college is known as the MCP Project. This Mercy Champagnat Project has proved to be very successful under the leadership and care of Mr Peter Chalkley. This unit is designed for students who have complex and multiple needs. The multiple barriers to education they face make it difficult for them to attend mainstream schools.

There are approximately thirty active groups operating in the parish – mostly volunteer and interest groups. An action taken up to help with the complexities associated with sexual abuse and violence has a qualified parishioner offering counselling to those who request it. Another interest group, named MacKillop

Faith and Light, provides spiritual support to special needs parishioners. This includes monthly attendance at the parish Mass followed by role play, a meal and other activities. Each year the RCIA program attracts a number of interested enquirers.

The parish supports a large Aged Care Facility at Ave Maria and takes Communion to residents at other facilities in the area. The local public and private hospitals are visited each week by the pastoral care worker whose visit is followed up by volunteers taking Communion to patients each Sunday.

Being central to the diocese and having adequate facilities, we often have visiting lecturers who share their knowledge and wisdom with all who wish to attend.

Annual instruction and update are given to all those who are missioned to special ministry in the parish.

We FCJs – Shirley, Peter and Rosemary – came to St Brendan's parish in July 2010, Frances in 2014, and are delighted to participate in the life of such an alive and vibrant parish. It is a privilege to be part of St Brendan's family.

Rosemary Crowe fcJ

Genazzano student writes a modern Magna Carta

Recently, I entered the My Magna Carta writing competition and had the good fortune to receive the junior award for the Australia-wide region. As a Year 7 student at Genazzano FCJ College, Kew, I was completely shocked and honoured when I found out about this wonderful news.

The competition itself was a creative writing competition to celebrate the 800th year of the sealing of the *Magna Carta*. It involved writing a modern version of this famous document, which would include protecting the rights and liberties of people in our world today. The prize was \$1000 and a trip for two to London to compete in the World Grand Final. This competition was established by the English Speaking Union (ESU), a charitable organisation that works to educate and build connections between English-speaking countries.

In London, I participated in a wide range of activities and experiences. On my first day of activities we woke up in the early morning and I was greeted by the freezing cold of London in winter. We caught a train out of London to Runnymede. Here we were given public speaking training and a visit to the site at Runnymede where this famous charter was sealed. The training involved practising our presenting skills for the big Grand Final the next day. The site itself was nothing but a muddy field in the middle of nowhere, but I was in awe. This was the very ground where this significant historical document was sealed. The day after the Grand Final we participated in a cultural activities day involving a visit to Churchill's War Rooms, Kensington Palace and a very British afternoon tea. It was a lot of fun!

The second day of the competition was the Grand Final, held in the ESU Headquarters, Dartmouth House. We presented our essays in front of an invited audience including many lords, ladies, barons and distinguished guests! The presentation also included questioning from the audience. In all, the experience was amazing and I learnt so much. I am so thankful for this remarkable opportunity.

Ella McEvoy



Ella McEvoy

'It involved writing a modern version of this famous document, which would include protecting the rights and liberties of people in our world today.'



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