

Quakers in Yorkshire

Reports presented at meeting on Saturday 21 January 2017

Under 19s Coordinating Group

Junior Holidays

Yorkshire Friends Holiday School

Easter Settlement

Under 19s Coordinating Group January 21st 2017 – report to QiY

1 Introduction

Along with Rosemary Daley from Keighley Meeting and Jude Acton from Leeds Carlton Hill Meeting I have been an independent member of the Quakers in Yorkshire Under 19s coordinating group throughout 2016. We met with representatives from Junior Holidays, Yorkshire Friends Holiday School and Easter Settlement on two occasions in 2016: in May and in November. These meetings were a chance for past events to be reviewed and future plans to be shared as well as an opportunity for us all to really think about what it is that is distinctive about Quaker work with children and young people. I will come back to that a little later.

2 Safeguarding

When I stood here last year I remember that there was a question mark about the future of holidays for our children and young people. These holidays can only happen if safeguarding measures are properly in place including having two named Safeguarding (SG) Coordinators. Madeleine Kay from York Friargate Meeting and Stacey Almond from Sheffield Central were due to step down from these roles and it wasn't clear who would be replacing them. As a result, Madeleine agreed to extend her service by another year, to the end of 2016 and Stacey stayed on in her role until the end of June 2016. I wish to record our thanks to both Madeleine and Stacey as not only did this mean events planned for early 2016 could go ahead, like the YFHS reunion weekend in February, it also gave us some time to try and find a way forward.

At the May meeting of the QiY Under 19s coordinating group, we were very happy to hear that Helen Orme from Settle Meeting had been appointed to serve as one of the two QiY SG Coordinators until December 2018. Rosemary, Jude and I then offered to write an appeal for the other SG coordinator which would be circulated to all AMs and LMs. We had expressions of interest from 5 Quakers from different Meetings in Yorkshire and Madeleine Kay offered to talk to each of them about what the role entailed and to send them the most up to date SG policy which she had been instrumental in writing. As a result, in January 2017, Rosie Yeoman from Sheffield Central will begin her service as the second SG coordinator until December 2019.

Philosophy

I have already referred to the SG policy which Madeleine has put together for QiY. Looking at the policy in detail at our May meeting, those present agreed it would be good to attach an appendix outlining what our Quaker approach to working with Quaker children and young people is – the philosophy behind our work. Jude circulated some documents including her own thoughts and at our November meeting we came up with eight statements which I will read to you now (See: ***The Philosophy behind our work with Quaker children and young people***)

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All that remains for me to say is thank you to all those who have contributed to the success of the many activities that have taken place for our children and young people in 2016. I am sure you will enjoy hearing the following reports from Junior Holiday Committee, Yorkshire Friends Holiday School and Easter Settlement.

3 Reports

Junior Holidays report – 15 minutes?

YFHS report – 15 minutes?

Easter Settlement report – 15 minutes?

Kate Marks (Sheffield Central)

Junior Holidays: Report to Quakers in Yorkshire on 2016

With a new Junior Holiday committee and many new volunteers, Junior Holidays this year felt like an adventurous journey for many of the adults involved – and hopefully also for the children! At our most recent committee meeting we spent some time reflecting on what Junior Holidays are for, in the context of other work done by Quakers in Yorkshire. We want to offer children the opportunity to make lasting links with Quakers outside their own families and Meetings, to have fun together and to spend time in an environment that's shaped by Quaker values – that's different from family or school. The main challenge we face at the moment is a lack of experienced volunteers and committee members. We're aware that we will have to build up our capacity over several years. In 2016 a major step towards doing this was a volunteers' team-building and training day in May; we hope to repeat this every year.

We are extremely grateful to all the Friends who give their time, energy and enthusiasm to make Junior Holidays possible, and especially this year to the many Friends who took on extra responsibilities at short notice. We're always glad to hear from new prospective volunteers and are also seeking committee members.

In 2016 we held two Junior Holidays for children aged between 7 and 12, one in June at Barmoor and one in August at Robin Hood's Bay. The Barmoor weekend was attended by 17 children in the relevant age range, 2 teenage helpers and 5 adults. The weather was kind and we were able to take part in traditional Barmoor activities like exploring the moors, playing football, getting very wet in the stream and eating icecreams. An online survey after the holiday – kindly created by one of our new volunteers – received overwhelmingly positive responses; the only suggestions for improvement were that the holiday should be longer! Later in the year, the Junior Holiday committee were glad to see a report on the Barmoor holiday by Friends from Huddersfield Meeting, both children and adult volunteers. Quotes – Friends can decide whether these are from children or adults - include: “Just the perfect post-referendum therapy - shame it didn't last for a week”; “The best bit was the walk, especially when we went in the stream! I loved that bit”; “I realised that Quakers weren't just grumpy old people. Although the downside was we had to do the washing up”.

The summer holiday was much less well attended this year, with only 10 children. There were 4 adult volunteers who were present all week, with other adults kindly stepping in to cover shorter periods following some unavoidable last-minute issues. With small numbers and a less stable adult team, this holiday was more challenging, but again there has been much positive feedback from those who attended.

After reviewing this year's activities and asking for advice and comments from Friends across QiY, we have decided not to run a summer holiday this year. Instead, we will aim to run two weekend holidays. One of these is confirmed for 23rd-25th June at Barmoor, and the other is planned for the end of September (date and venue to be announced).

We are aware of the need to keep good records for the holidays and we want to administer them efficiently; this is challenging with the current setup. We are glad that the Under-19 Committee has supported our suggestion that Quakers in Yorkshire should pay for administrative support in order to allow these activities to continue.

Epistle from YFHS 2016 – Quakers in Yorkshire January 2017

We gathered a week ago, new and familiar faces greeting one another with the warmth and affection that is always a central part of Holiday School life. Nervous newcomers were made to feel welcome by our amazing student helpers, and given opportunities to begin conversations that would grow into full blown friendships before the week was out.

Despite a poorly PA system, not letting us dance on the first night, and a poorly Elspeth, not present to lead proceedings, the ice was broken in traditional HS style in our first social. The nerves were still there for some; others were wondering what they'd let themselves in for. Holiday School had started.

The theme for this week was Social Justice, putting an emphasis on what we can do collectively or individually to help reduce suffering and unfairness in our communities. The inclusive community we try to create each year at Holiday School felt a distant place during the first session of the week, led by Becky Shaw, owing to the sensitive subject she was talking about. Although this was not our customary interactive Monday session, it provoked strong emotions and discussions around issues of anxiety, mental illness, and social exclusion.

Our first full day together also meant choosing an activity group, with a wide array of options on offer. Perennial favourites were present: the newspaper, craft, sport, film studies and Level 42. Other activities returned: baking, knit-and-knatter, and the video group; while we were delighted to also have the choice of dancing and creative writing. The excellent Guy Milner led our Tuesday session, which got us mingling and talking to each other. Guy gave us a chance to realise how geographically diverse Holiday School is, and how drastically life chances can vary depending on where we live. In small groups, we discussed a range of controversial statements related to our theme, showing how difficult it can be to provide clear-cut answers to questions of social justice.

On Wednesday we were visited by Paul Burr, who told us about his life and the choices he had made, towards helping others rather than enriching himself. We were inspired by his story, and his energy and enthusiasm towards making the world a better place for people in need. His was a simple message: if you discover a problem, use your own talents and the skills of others to create a solution. Aim for the flag pole, don't follow the crowd.

The highlight of the week for many was our day of social action on Thursday. To spend part of our week here actively striving to help others brought us even closer together. Some participants visited a community garden, helping to produce food that will be freely available for people to eat. Others packed bags at a local Sainsbury's to raise money for a special care baby unit. A peace vigil was held in St Helen's Square, to show solidarity with people affected by conflict. Others remained on site at Bootham to write letters to their MPs and create 'twiddle-things' for people living with dementia, to keep their hands active. After a few days of listening to and being inspired by stories of social action, it was incredibly rewarding to give something back ourselves.

On Friday morning we were visited by STEVE BURKMAN, who delivered a talk about the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Charitable Trust and Reform Trust. This gave us another perspective on social action, particularly focusing on the work of Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree, a pioneer in the study of poverty in the early 20th century.

Throughout the week we spent time in our nest groups - this year named after vegetables - reflecting on the events of each day, sharing our feelings, playing games and continuing more serious discussions from the sessions. Nest groups become very tight-knit as the week goes on. They allow each of us to create bonds with people of all ages, who we might not otherwise get the chance to spend time with.

We started each day with Meeting for Worship, an integral part of our week, offering a chance to reflect and connect as a whole. As we have become more and more reliant on our phones and social media, year on- year, it can feel difficult to fully unplug and be still. But detaching ourselves from busy lives reminds us how to be truly present and helps us to form a stronger community together.

As ever, the socials at Holiday School provide the perfect end to each day, bringing us all closer. Seeing people lose themselves in the dances and games, laughing and smiling, reminds us how special Holiday School is, and how lucky we all are to be part of it.

In the words of one participant:

“Holiday School is a break from real life; a hole in the ground in the middle of a storm. It’s revitalising and safe. Void of judgement, it’s a quick place to duck down and gather your thoughts and energy. But nothing can last forever, and I always feel like I’m being dragged through and before I know it, I’m falling away from it, back into real life. The panic I get on the last full day, however, shows me how important HS really is, and what it means to people like me; people like us. I’ll allow myself to feel comforted by the knowledge it will be here for me the next time summer comes around.”

EASTER SETTLEMENT

REPORT TO QUAKERS IN YORKSHIRE JANUARY 2017

2016

38 families comprising 51 adults and 10 children booked to come, mostly for the 3 night option and 4 as day visitors.

This year again about one third of the applications were by e-mail and about a quarter of the payments were by BACS. There were 32 empty beds, due to the lack of fit between beds in rooms and sizes of family. More families would help to fill this gap. Three new rooms, each with 2 beds, were not ready in time, which caused some last minute changes but they are in use now.

The cost was kept down by having a Soup-and-sandwich lunch on Sunday, and this year we will have such a lunch on both Saturday and Sunday.

The theme was "Building a confident Quaker Voice", led by Arthur Pritchard and Arthur started with an introduction to the weekend on Friday evening which included him playing "Ode to Joy" on a clarinet, part of a rather tall story about his meeting part of an orchestra earlier in the day. Saturday saw us role playing and thinking about the "project" for Monday. Briefly, a treasure chest had been discovered in the cellars of Cober Hill, and its contents were to be used in promoting Quaker work, each group competing as to how to make best use of this windfall. The story of how the treasure got into the cellars was left to the Children's Meeting, which was in disunity, producing four highly inventive, if implausible stories. The treasure turned out to be less than had been thought, and the prospect of buying out Murdoch and News International had to be discarded. Needless to say much fun was had by all.

On Sunday afternoon while Arthur worked with the children, Emma Roberts involved us in some Quaker Questing, which definitely needs a confident voice.

Non-the-less the weekend produced much food for thought and along with the usual functions - Easter Egg Hunt, walks, hot-cross buns, jigsaw puzzle, etc – was enjoyed by all.

2017

This we year we have decided to tackle a more demanding subject, Education. It will not be about Quaker Schools, although they will get a mention, but about the current state of education in Britain – the variety of school types, their pros and cons, the demands made on these schools in terms of curricula, exams, lack of staff, lack of funds, lack of support for primary schools, lack of support for non-academic subjects etc – do come to get the full list. You will note from the theme that we are preparing for disunity. It has already aroused the interest of Paul Parker, who says that he is coming. We will draw on the experience of such Quaker bodies as QVinE (Quaker Values in Education) and FSC (Friends Schools Council) and also consider the militarisation of schools and what can be done about it.

As usual it will be held at Cober Hill from 14th to 17th April, over Easter. Costs have been kept down as far as possible and people under 21 are substantially subsidised by QiY.

If Friends are prepared to share sleeping accommodation it will be possible to accommodate more Settlers. If you want to stay elsewhere and just come for the days and the meals, that is fine, too.

Brochure, posters and application forms have been posted to all QiY Local Meetings in early January; they are also on-line and down-loadable at the QiY website and a few are at the desk here. Closing date for bookings is 10th March, but the sooner the application is received, the better the chance of attending. I have 19 firm bookings and 4 day visitors to date.

Finally, please note that the Account number has been changed for those who make BACS transfers. The correct number is on the application form.