

Minutes of a meeting of Quakers in Yorkshire

15 October 2022

Held at the Mount School, York and on Zoom internet conferencing platform

Representatives

The following served as representatives, as notified to the Clerks:

Craven and Keighley AM: David Olver of Keighley LM

Leeds AM: Alice Hamar of Ilkley LM and Liz Schweiger of Roundhay LM.

York AM: Janet Dean and Pat Easton of Friargate LM, John Marsham of Harrogate LM and Liz Scurfield of New Earswick LM.

There were no representatives notified from the other LMs although there were members present from Central Yorkshire AM and Sheffield and Balby AM.

In total there were 44 Friends present with 10 attending online.

1. Meeting for Worship

During our opening worship we heard part of Quaker Faith and Practise 23.85.

2. Testimony

We have read a testimony to the Grace of God as shown in the life of our Friend, John Blamires of Brighouse West Yorkshire AM and Bradford Local Meeting, (3rd September 1930 to 29th January 2022). We endorse this testimony and thank those involved in preparing it.

3. Welcome by the Clerks and Appointment of Elders

Our clerks have welcomed us to our meeting today and introduced the agenda and the manner of holding this blended Quakers in Yorkshire meeting.

We ask Pat Easton and Barbara Windle to serve as Elders for our meeting today, with Rosemary Roberts serving during the afternoon session.

4. Welcome from Mount School

We have been welcomed to the Mount School by the Principal, David Griffiths, at his first QiY meeting. .

5. Presentations from pupils of The Mount School

We thank the students from The Mount for reporting to us. Their presentations will be available on the QiY website.

Sophie spoke of sustainability and the eco-festival with a focus on individual reflection within their houses to review and implement sustainable initiatives. Over two days the festival took place in the school grounds which featured a revival of the greenhouses and appreciating the wildlife on the campus

Share your light means sharing Quaker values through the internal and external community. A mural of recycled materials has been produced to bring together themes. Each house has a particular project to pursue during the year to support those in need, whether local or internationally

Social justice leads to discussions on local and wider issues and a reflection on the society in which we are living. Silent morning meetings for worship allow for further communal reflection. Participation in Pride week and Black Lives Matter weeks involves the whole school. Year groups have visited various locations in searching for Quaker history and seeing references to the Mount in unexpected places.

The leadership sessions involved students from Bootham and Ackworth.

Rosie told us that Quaker values run through the activities of all in The Mount, and impact on all stages of a student's life in school. They take these values to their families and the wider community and include volunteering in local schools as well as supporting food banks.

Angel told us of the role of music in the school as a showpiece for sharing individual talent, whether in weekday concerts or in the choir setting. Pupils visited Iceland for a month and learned how to interact with others. As well as visiting Quaker sites a highlight was the pantomime, Beauty and the Beast.

We thank Sophie, Rosie and Angel for their excellent reports.

6. Report from The Mount School

We have received reports from Margaret Bryan, Clerk and David Griffiths, Principal, his first since taking up the role in January 2022.

The full reports are available with the minutes

Margaret Bryan welcomed us to The Mount, in her 6th year as Clerk, and talked about the work of the School Committee, who are appointed by QiY. Two committee members have left in the last

year but appointments in 2022 mean that the group is now at full strength. In person meetings at the school are welcomed.

These are exciting times with the new leadership of David Griffiths in succession to the work of Adrienne Richmond who left in December 2021. Margaret finished with a plea for names of possible successors as she is due to retire in 2024 after completing 2 terms. The Mount or QiY nominations would be pleased to hear from any who have names or are interested in serving.

David Griffiths told us of the events of last year, the timetable already being in place when he arrived. He talked of five strategic pillars and how the girls might interact with boys in the wider community. There is a community choir; an orchestra developed from this and they practice on a Friday evening; York City AFC lost its amenity for girls and now a centre of excellence is set up whilst U13 boys are using the facility at weekends; provide continuity in the Duke of Edinburgh programme for boys in the wider community such as in Malton.

David also thanked Chris Jeffery for his support in David's first year and made a small presentation to Chris to mark his retirement.

In questions we heard there are 203 girls in school, there are bursaries of between £200-300k in particular and the talent of the boys sharing facilities has been impressive. There are about 20-30% of girls with special needs provision, limited by capacity to meet individual needs.

7. Report from Bootham School

We have received reports from David Stanton, Clerk, and Chris Jeffery, Head, at the start of their bicentenary year.

David Stanton reminded us of the history of the founding of Bootham 200 years ago and the background to the current reporting process to Quakers in Yorkshire. We heard an introduction to the new Head, Deneal Smith, who takes up his appointment in September 2023.

We heard of the ISI inspection that took place in the last year and of the criteria which brought an outstanding rating from the inspectors, who appreciated the outstanding characteristics of the students that they came across during the inspection.

Despite the challenges of the cost of living crisis, which are affecting all schools in the independent sector Bootham is in robust financial health with recent post covid surpluses in 2020/1 and 2021/2 helping support investment in the school fabric and school resources. There are still pressures beyond direct control but the school roll at 665 is the highest ever. However, the resulting income has already been overtaken by increased energy prices.

In celebrating two hundred years of Quaker education in 2023 at Bootham, the school leadership has built on the legacy of its students creating a better world to be able to hand over an exciting and thriving school to its third century.

In his last report to QiY Chris Jeffery gave us some reflections on the role, purpose and value of a Quaker education which has chimed with so many people outside the Quaker community.

It speaks powerfully to the zeitgeist; parents are less hung-up about results, that their children become good people with a purpose and meaning that will serve them and their world well.

Education is not just for the individual but how others might benefit from that education.

Schools should be prophetic, to be forward thinking and encouraging young people to make a difference by speaking out. How can education create a better world? Two online meetings in November and February together with a conference in York in June 2023 are to be supported by a bursary from the Reckitt Trust for young people to attend. Reflections in a 30 second video would be most welcome, details to be on the QiY website.

There should be an impact on individual lives, to be still, to enjoy the silence and focus in truth as it reflects on those who have been in our schools. The death of Peter Woodmansey and the efforts to honour his memory at Bootham are a measure of the impact

The Quaker community and the support that community brings to the school, in terms of values and the work of the Society of Friends cannot be underestimated.

This is the last meeting of Quakers in Yorkshire for Chris Jeffery and we thank him for his service over 7 years and wish him well for a long and fulfilling retirement, which starts at the end of this academic year.

In questions we were told of connections with the local school community and how that community sees the purpose of education, 15-20% of pupils are identified as having special needs this provision being limited by the ability to provide individual needs, there is a recognition that mental health needs have risen over recent times, and not just from Covid.

8. Presentation by pupils from Bootham.

We thank the students of Bootham, Matei, Eleanor, Yelena and Tom, for reporting to us.

They spoke of the joy of being able to meet as a whole school again. The war in Ukraine was a sharp reminder of the dangers in the world and we heard of efforts to support the people of Ukraine whether through collecting goods or money or holding a peace vigil in York

The leadership sessions over two days for three Yorkshire schools and a programme on the use of the Quaker business method will help conduct their student meetings. The pilgrimage to 1652 country was shared with students from Newtown School, Ireland, and Ackworth and there were several spiritual highlights

Silent worship starts 3 mornings per week for year 7 upwards and is much valued by all. A residential gathering on leadership was much appreciated and they heard about leadership from someone who had climbed Everest

We had a student perspective on the outcome of the ISI inspection. The diversity in boarding was noted. The feeling of unity over the response to the war in Ukraine made a big impact on the community. A fund has been established in the memory of Peter Woodmansey, who we heard about at our meeting in October 2021.

In celebrating the bicentenary of the school there was a brief history of people and events that made their mark through those 200 years.

9. Racial Justice

Rosemary Roberts has reported to us on behalf of the Racial Justice Group and the substance of the report has appeared as an article in the Quakers in Yorkshire Newsletter. The theme of the report followed on from the consideration of how we might make meaningful reparations for the injustices of the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism and exploitation, as supported by Britain Yearly Meeting 2022

She has introduced the Racial Justice Groups Question of the month to us

"We have heard that love and justice also require us to consider deeply how the Society of Friends in Britain might make financial and other reparation for our part in the wrongs of the transatlantic slave trade.

Love and justice require us to examine our own practices and behaviours, and to work for systemic change.

Love and justice require us to believe those who have the bravery and honesty to share their stories with us.

We encourage local and area meetings to begin, or continue, work to understand how Quakers and Quaker structures benefited from the transatlantic slave trade.

Love and justice require us to tell the truth, as best we can, about historical and contemporary injustices."

from Britain Yearly Meeting 2022 minute 27

Which of these points is receiving attention in your Local or Area meeting?

Which of these points, if any, should be a priority for Quakers in Yorkshire?

We ask that Local and area meetings who consider these questions send minutes to us.

Ruth McTighe reminded us of how the Quakers in Yorkshire Racial Justice group was founded and highlighted that the group is open for all Friends in Quakers in Yorkshire to get involved in as it is not a closed, formally appointed committee. The Quakers in Yorkshire Youth development worker is also involved in the group, but at least a further two members would be welcome.

10. Releases, Appointments and Nominations Required

a. Releases from Service

We have received request for the following to be released from service to Quakers In Yorkshire

Position	Released	Area Meeting
West Yorkshire Churches Together (QiY representative) formerly West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council (Church Leaders)	Rachel Muers	Leeds

We agree to this release and give thanks for the service of our Friend.

b. From Quakers in Yorkshire Nominations Committee

Our Nominations Committee brings forward nominations for appointments as follows for the period from 1st January 2023 until 31st December 2025 (except where stated otherwise):

Position	Nominated	Area Meeting	Notes
Under 19s Coordinating Group	Bronwen Alty	Central Yorkshire	1st term
West Yorkshire Churches Together (QiY representative)	Robin Fishwick	Leeds Area Meeting	From now until 31/12/24 to complete the term of Rachel Muers

And for service from 1st January 2023 until 31st December 2026

Custodian of Yorkshire Quaker Archives	Chris Skidmore	Craven and Keighley	1st term
Bootham School Committee/Governors:	Keith Knight	York	1st term
	Pippa Farrington	Old Scholar	1st term
Mount School Committee/Governors	Holly Gardiner	co-opted	1st term

These nominations being acceptable, these Friends, and nominated governors, are appointed accordingly.

c. Nominations Required

The convenor of our nominations committee reports that they are still searching for nominations for several posts and in particular:

Position	Nominations Sought
Co-clerk of Quakers in Yorkshire	A Friend to serve from 1st January 2023 until 31st December 2025
Treasurer of Quakers in Yorkshire trustees	A Friend to serve from 1st January 2023 until 31st December 2025

We give thanks for the prayerful discernment and work of the members of QiY and AM nominations committees for finding nominations for service to Quakers in Yorkshire and uphold them in their continuing efforts. We authorise the co-clerks in consultation with the convenor of Quakers in Yorkshire Nominations Committee to make appointments between meetings as necessary for right ordering and to report such appointments at our next meeting.

11. Causes and Consequences of Resource Scarcity on the well-being of our environment

We have devoted our afternoon session to the impact of Causes and consequences of resource scarcity on the well-being of our environment. The speakers discussed the issues in the context of conflict, the demands of a growing world population and international development. We have heard from Paul Rogers, Emeritus professor of Peace Studies at Bradford University, Martin Schweiger, from Roundhay LM and the Yorkshire based member of Quaker Concern Over Population (QOCP) and with a professional background in medicine and public health and Digby Swift from Balby Doncaster LM is a consultant in education and international development working globally on UK and other government-funded programmes. Our speakers followed their presentations by taking part in a panel discussion with Friends present and online. Slides from the presentations will be placed on the Quakers in Yorkshire website and a full set of notes attached to these minutes.

12. Concluding Minute

There being no further business to be taken at this time, we conclude, hoping to meet again, should nothing occur to prevent, on January 21st 2023 on Zoom and at the Carlton Hill Meeting, Leeds



David Bunney



Gavin Burnell

Co-Clerks

Notes on the Afternoon Session

Paul Rogers, Emeritus professor of Peace Studies at Bradford University spoke on the threat of conflict in the search for 'vital' resources that have a perceived strategic value. Paul spoke to us from his long experience as a regular commentator on global security issues, his role as Open Democracy International Security Editor

He spoke of two American women, Rachel Carson and Donella Meadows and their fight against vested interests and the impact on the environment as more resources are used. There was much criticism from many bodies about the information that underpinned their writings about limited resources from the 1960s and 1970s, but their work was very prescient. The Israeli wars at that time and the impact of OPEC were the first direct instances of the use of a commodity for a political intervention. Visionaries who spoke of limits to growth were soon shown to be so accurate of what would take place. Eventually resource issues became militarised as a prime mover in conflict and is more frequent than we might think. Food was brought into the military realm in the 1980s. We now see the use of oil in the Middle East by the activities of Russia around the current Ukraine conflict. Whilst climate breakdown is the main threat to the world there are particular issues emerging from conflict. Oil and gas are obsolete as energy sources, use being moved away from fossil fuels, meaning a move to renewables. This gives some hope given the moral will to make changes, as long as what can be done will be done. A decarbonised world will succeed only if such resources are shared around.

Martin Schweiger, from Roundhay LM and the Yorkshire based member of Quaker Concern Over Population (QOCP) spoke about the causes and consequences from the perspective of a Quaker concern over population, a controversial consideration around sex. In a review of his life journey Martin told of his experience as a medical student, encountering the condition of septic abortions as well as meeting the unhappy woman, either wanting to conceive or did not want to be pregnant. He saw a country change in Bangladesh on how to deal with issues around sex. Family planning was also an issue when he returned to the UK in the 1980s.

All resources are finite but sharing by, and within, countries is difficult. Meanwhile current trends show that differences between rich and poor are increasing, with shortages of land, water and energy causing conflict.

QOCP aims to help Friends appreciate the dangers of over-population and its relevance to sustainability and living in harmony with other species, some of which were considered in this presentation. A growing population is not sustainable, perhaps the elephant in the room. The question asked was: And what should we do now Friends?

Digby Swift from Balby Doncaster LM is a consultant in education and international development working globally on UK and other government-funded programmes. Digby was an adviser for Africa and the Middle East to the UK Department for International Development and he spoke to us about the benefits that development work can bring to poorer nations as they struggle to obtain some level of financial independence by making effective use of their own resources.

The UN has 17 development goals all dealing with a lack of resources, but nothing relates to population. Digby has 50 years of experience in international development with a particular focus on education and with many years of support for UK government development programmes aimed at aid for poverty reduction.

Digby gave us three countries with missing resources. Uganda is a land of plenty but there is a shortage of well-educated women, a low status of women in society and a high level of domestic violence. There are some notable exceptions but this is a major constraint on the economy as there is only a small female professional group. The mainly rural population has a high birth rate, leading to a 7 fold population increase in the last 50 years. Foreign aid is being focused in this area.

In Kenya the issue is energy, where 90% is from renewable sources. But access to the power grid is difficult because of cost. A lot of cheap, accessible, energy is polluting and unsustainable, contrary to COP. Causes include rapid population growth, corruption and conflict. One solution is to focus on small appropriate technology applications. Again girls education is part of UK aid.

In Yemen there is a continuing conflict with Saudi Arabia but the main issue is the scarcity of safe water. It used to be the richest country in the middle east; not any more. Conflict and clan rivalry has prevented essential reconstruction. Population has more than doubled in 30 years. The qat, a mild narcotic, addiction is taking water from other uses. Yemen has resource potential but cannot access it in a time of conflict.

As Quakers we can give more for development projects, especially for female education and challenge negative aid; unfair trade and exploitation and the practice in the NHS of taking valuable personnel to support UK needs.

Our three speakers then formed a panel to take questions in a lively session.

Are individual desires at the root of the resource crisis? We can recycle, reuse and repair and take heed of education. Economic activity is based on resource use for short term profits and we must live within our means. What can we do for others? Can we focus on reducing our own consumption and encourage others to also limit consumer spending?

Wateraid and Practical Action have been active for a long time and their contribution to making a difference has met a particular need but more is required and on a bigger scale.

The view was expressed that the attitude of men towards women's needs and rights needs radical change and there is a continuing threat from terrorism as young men with little or no life chances are proving easy to recruit

We thank all three speakers for their insight into such a potentially fraught issue that has to be grasped by the developed and developing nations in an honest and transparent manner.

The presentations from Martin Schweiger and Digby Swift will be available on the QiY website.