

Minutes of a meeting of Quakers in Yorkshire

Held as a blended meeting at Leeds Carlton Hill FMH

on 20th January 2024

Representatives

Brighouse West Yorkshire

Carol Hayward

Central Yorkshire Area Meeting

Ruth McTighe

Craven & Keighley Area Meeting

David Heslop

David Oliver

Chris Petrie

Leeds Area Meeting

Liz Schweiger

Barbara Parry

Pat Gerwat

Veronica O'Meara

Pickering & Hull Area Meeting

Sheffield & Balby Area Meeting

York Area Meeting

Eleanor Tew, New Earswick

Rosie Roberts, New Earswick

Graham Torr, New Earswick

Catherine Margham Harrogate

A total of 57 Friends either registered in advance to attend our meeting or attended in person.

1. Reading

In our opening worship we have heard read part of 3.02 of Quaker Faith and Practice.

2. Testimony

We have heard a testimony to the grace of God as shown in the life of our Friend, Marjorie Bliss of Pickering & Hull Area Meeting and Pickering Local Meeting. We thank the Friends concerned for preparing it and add our endorsement.

3. Welcome

Our clerking team has welcomed us to this, our first meeting of 2024 and introduced our agenda to us.

Robert Keeble welcomed us on behalf of Leeds AM and described the housekeeping for today.

We appoint Rosemary Roberts and Evelyn Shire to act as Elders for this meeting.

4. Reports of U19s events 2023 and planned events 2024

a. Under 19s Co-ordinating Group,

Andy Beck, convenor of the U19s group has prepared a report on behalf of the U19's co-ordinating group.

In 2023 Jo Baynham, our regional Youth Development Worker, continued to make an invaluable contribution to the group. Andy described the activities to be reported on in more detail later as well as the focus on safeguarding training.

Meetings were held in May and November although attendance in November was disappointingly low.

The main focus in 2024 remained on activities at Holiday School, Junior Holidays, the Link group and Easter Settlement. The meeting will hear more from each of these activities in their respective reports.

This year they have focussed on Safeguarding training and hope to have a plan in place shortly, to ensure that all volunteers at the various events have had appropriate training. They have deferred the unified U19 QiY volunteers day until the Spring, which links up social, safeguarding and communications between events.

We thank Andy for this report, which will be posted on the QiY website.

b. Junior Holidays 2023

Rebecca Gilmour has shared a presentation on Junior Holidays 2023 with us, in a year that saw a gap left by Bronwen Alty, but the volunteers have stepped-in to share roles. However, some may be less enthusiastic about committee work!

There were two residential weekends, 35 young people aged 7-13 at Nell Bank in June with 2 teenage volunteers, 6 adult volunteers and 1 staff member where the theme was 'looking after one another'. Several were new to Junior Holidays.

At Barmoor where the theme was Living Adventurously there were 18 children aged 7-11, 2 teenage helpers, 4 volunteers and one staff member. There seemed to be a lot of coffee and cake as well as ice cream.

Some children are active in their meetings whilst others are new to Quakers: the young people have learnt about the importance of explaining why we do what we do to help newcomers feel included and involved.

There has been a review of the continuing use of Nell Bank which is changing so has prompted a move to Curly Hill Scout Camp in Ilkley with new places to explore, camping and arranging our own activities.

The excellent numbers saw a surplus at Nell Bank of around £1000 whilst Barmoor broke even, the limiting factor being the low capacity at a much loved venue. Events are booked for Curly Hill in June and Barmoor in September 2024.

The challenge is to maintain inclusivity so that people are not swayed by lack of funding, and to ensure that diverse needs can be met in a safe way. Support from the wider Quaker community is welcome and there was an appeal for more volunteers to help run the events.

We thank Rebecca, and her committee, for this report which included a message of thanks to Jo Baynham for his energy and organisational energy.

c. Yorkshire Friends Holiday School

Abigail Darton has spoken on behalf of Yorkshire Friends Holiday School 2023 with a report from Elspeth Moore, illustrated by photos. This was the 90th year for YFHS held 20th-27th August 2023.

There were 37 13-18 year olds present together with 10 19-20 year olds who helped run the event, still down on pre-pandemic levels, with a theme of Community. There was a special welcome for newcomers prior to the start of the week before traditional activities welcomed everyone on the first day.

Abigail gave an outline of the activities for the week including themed events, some serious and others having odd/dotty/humorous themes to allow people to relax. There was an opportunity to reflect on each day in the epilogue.

Over 60 attended on the Friday to celebrate the 90th anniversary and share with their nest groups about YFHS events in the past. A noisy and joyous event!

Mark Rymer in discussing arrangements for 2024 told us that numbers in 2023 are down and organisers are grateful to Bootham for waiving their minimum numbers. We heard that newcomers tend to be loyal and enthusiastic supporters of YFHS. Pre-Covid there were around 75 participants. Help is needed to promote the events around Yorkshire. The 2024 event will take place at Bootham 18th-25th August.

We thank Abigail for her excellent report, which will be posted on the QiY website.

d. Yorkshire Quaker Youth Development Work

We have heard a report from Jo Baynham at the end of his second year as the Quaker Youth Development Worker in Yorkshire and explained his position as part of the Quaker Life team for BYM. The funding by the seven Yorkshire AMs is due to be renewed at the end of August 2025.

It has been a busy 12 months with many contacts made and initiatives for young people either revived or started, focused on accompanying and resources and helping groups to reach out to young people in Yorkshire. Links with groups over

weekends continue to thrive and the key opportunity is to reach out to non-Quaker young people. He gave a really heart-warming example of how a short notice vacancy for the Barmoor weekend was filled.

His report, to include his priorities in the role, will be published on the QiY website and this covers the details of his role and activities.

The youth proposition for young people can work as so many conditions exist for successful outcomes in our Quaker community. In particular Jo is so positive that we can reach out to those who are not engaged currently in Quaker activities and offer them a spiritual home that is relevant to their needs.

We thank Jo for his report and for the energy and impact that he continues to bring to the role. Quakers in Yorkshire look forward to seeing his ideas reaching more young people as a pathway to membership through the ages.

5. Easter Settlement Report and Plans 2024

Pauline Leonard has spoken to the report from the Easter Settlement Planning group, a copy of which will be placed on the Quakers in Yorkshire website.

Easter Settlement provides an opportunity for Friends to strengthen their spiritual basis. In 2023 a survey was launched about the future of Easter Settlement and we have heard of some of the questions and feedback, which was generally positive from 35 respondents although there were comments about food and cost. Craig Barnett and Jo Baynham are exploring options for an alternative programme and venue for 2025.

There were 47 adults at Cober Hill for the weekend, with Jo Baynham leading 7 children in their own activities, and 2 babies. They shared the weekend with a group of Scottish dancers which seemed to chime with the theme for the weekend, 'Dancing with the World'. Pauline gave an overview of the activities, which are detailed in the report.

The next, and final Easter Settlement at Cober Hill (?), will take place from 29th March- 1st April 2024, an opportunity to celebrate over 100 years of gatherings. The theme is 'Hope, seeing light in the darkness'.

Due to cost there will not be a planned programme for children and young people although Jo Baynham will arrange a Link group for 11-18 year olds at Scarborough LM to run concurrently with the event at Cober Hill. Families are still welcome, children under 5 being free, but we recognise the cost being prohibitive for many families. For 14-18 the charge is full adult price, and 5-13 year olds are charged at about half the adult price.

Details are available online on the QiY website along with booking forms.

We thank Pauline for her report as well as all those who have taken the courageous decision to seek alternative venues for a Yorkshire gathering that is more accommodating for 21st century participants.

6. Quaker Outreach Projects Committee

Carol Hayward from Brighthouse West Yorkshire has reported on behalf of the OPC for a thin year for the group, having been down to 2 members. Numbers have recovered recently.

There have been 4 successful requests in 2023: New Earswick Local Meeting have used their underspend to give further help in funding their Warm Hub Places project; 1 from Sheffield for a multi-cultural arts project, Utopia, the overspill going to Sheffield City of Sanctuary; Wooldale have applied for a grant for music to celebrate the 400th anniversary of George Fox; Airton requires a grant to reprint their book on the Roots of Radicalism in the Yorkshire Dales. The OPC report is published on the QiY website.

New members of OPC are welcome to ensure that there is full representation on this group and volunteers should make themselves known to their AM nominations committee. The current members of the OPC warmly encourage Friends and meetings to apply for support, via the Activities section of the QiY website or direct to Committee members.

We thank Carol for her report.

7. Racial Justice Group Update

Ruth McTighe has reported to us on the latest developments for the Racial Justice group.

The theme for this session came from the Friend about Cadburys' using cocoa from Sao Tome and Principe produced by slave labour at the beginning of the 20th century. The project was entitled 'Chocolate, Slavery and Bournville'. This is a surprising and disturbing element of Quaker life that we had not considered. The trade was only abolished in 1909 despite 8 years of investigation by William Cadbury and Joseph Burtt, because the UK government had asked for the report to be edited to prevent upsetting the government in Portugal.

It appears that similar conditions exist West Africa today, OXFAM reporting that cocoa farmers were engaging in human trafficking and child labour. A lawsuit in 2005 from 6 Malians against manufacturers Nestle and Cargill was blocked in 2021 by the US Supreme Court because any abuse was taking place outside the USA!

So the question is taken from new suggestions for advices and queries to help us consider our responses to racism and exploitation.

'Who are you? Do not hide behind ignorance. Do you know your own history or the history of your own country? Try to understand the filters through which you view the world and question the ways you may be privileged. Are you aware of the origins of what you consume? Take time to learn about the structures that underpin our consumption.'

We thank Ruth for this work and pointing out that modern slavery still exists.

8. Appointments and Releases

a. Thanks

We give thanks for the service of all those Friends whose appointments for Quakers in Yorkshire have been completed since our last meeting.

b. Releases

The following have left their service on the Mount School Committee; Joan Concannon, parent governor and Ursula Fuller after a first term. We thank these Friends for their service.

c. Appointments

(i) Our nominations committee, from the Mount School has brought us the following nomination for service:

From 1st January 2024 until 31st December 2027:

Melissa Nurcombe to serve as a parent governor for a first term

This nomination being acceptable, the Friend is appointed accordingly.

(ii) Area Meeting nominations committees bring us the following nomination for service

From 1st January 2024 until 31st December 2026 unless otherwise stated:

Dawn Beck (Brighouse West Yorkshire Area Meeting) as a Quakers in Yorkshire Trustee for a first term.

Rachel Twort (Brighouse West Yorkshire Area Meeting) to serve on the U19s Coordinating Committee for a first term .

Ken R Smith (Craven and Keighley AM) to serve on the Quaker Outreach Project Committee to 31st December 2024

Martin Wyatt (Sheffield and Balby AM) to serve on the Quaker Outreach Project Committee

These nominations being acceptable, we appoint the Friends named accordingly.

We thank Friends for accepting nomination for service.

d. Nominations Required

Quakers in Yorkshire are still seeking a co-Clerk to serve for 3 years from January 2023. Our Nominations Committee would welcome names brought forward for their consideration.

9. Afternoon Session: Reaching out to others? Means to Revival?

At the start of our afternoon session we welcomed Jess Beck, a member of YFGM for 18-35 year olds meeting 3 times annually, in February, May and October. First formed in 1911 Friends from all over the UK are welcomed, and send a representative to MfS as well as being active in Yearly Meeting. They will be represented at the FWCC in South Africa later this year.

They are the present of UK Quakerism, not the future, even if they are not always seen on a Sunday morning. Generally 50 -70 participants attend their weekends away, involved in meeting for business, for worship, meeting with local Friends as well as a specific but a broad range of activities to build networks with local young people.

They uphold a high standard of discipline in their business meetings, whether standard business or issues that might be considered important but singular. They are run for the community by the community and have a full range of officers to ensure that meetings run smoothly. A number of members also serve their local and area meetings.

The next meeting is to be held in York from 23rd to 25th February, strictly for those aged 18-35, there being a strict interpretation of the higher age.

We then engaged in a short spirituality session entitled 'Let's talk about God'? There were suggestions about how we might refer to God, or even whether we believe in God.

We thank Jess for engaging with us on YFGM and we look forward to further connection in the future. Her report will be added to the QiY website.

We were joined by Craig Barnett, Local Development Worker for Yorkshire and Jo Baynham Youth Development Worker, whose role is to help Quakerism to thrive. There are many people looking for what Quakers are seen to represent, a feeling that has grown since Covid.

There is talk of growing numbers who like Sunday mornings for meeting but there are significant numbers who do not see Sunday morning worship as meeting their spiritual and practical needs but who feel some affinity with Quakerism. They might be seen as being on our periphery until we can help blend our activities with them.

Craig and Jo are exploring ways to make the right connections for the broader Quaker community. We had an opportunity to think about how this might be put into practice to help 4 examples to participate in a Quaker group. Our thoughts were then shared between us on these scenarios.

Jo Baynham then spoke to the data emerging from the survey around the Easter Settlement, to reach out, to learn together the sense of a fresh and thriving community and the fellowship of being together. The idea of a camp/residential gathering that can allow all these desirable aims to take place is being explored for introduction in 2025, to include families not in membership, not in the Sunday setting and that all of us in Yorkshire own the concept to enable everybody equal access. Jo and Craig would like to hear from us about what we think, volunteers to serve on an arrangements committee, views on this vision and to act as ambassadors for the concept.

This is something that can bring us together, that is enjoyable at all stages to all those who are participating in whatever role they are comfortable with, or even that they are prepared to go beyond the comfort zone. It is a real opportunity to revive Quakerism in Yorkshire. The meeting has fully supported this vision and we are prepared to act to bring it to fruition.

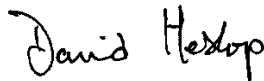
Details of the vision will be available on the website to allow people to respond.

We thank all our speakers and those making reports for making this meeting flow so well and for keeping us involved throughout.

10. Concluding Minute

We thank Leeds Carlton Hill LM and Leeds AM for their hospitality today and for the technical support provided by Robert Keeble.

There being no further business to be taken today, we conclude. We intend to meet again in person and online at Huddersfield Meeting House on the 20th April 2024 should nothing occur to prevent.



David Bunney & David Heslop

Co-Clerks - this time, Quakers in Yorkshire