

Minutes of a meeting of Quakers in Yorkshire

Held as a blended meeting at Leeds Carlton Hill FMH

on 20th January 2025

Present

A total of 53 Friends either registered in advance to attend our meeting or attended in person.

1. Reading

In our opening worship we have heard read 23.48 from Quaker Faith & Practice.

2. Testimony

We have heard a testimony to the grace of God as shown in the life of our Friend, Elma Harland. 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 2025 and introduced our agenda to us.

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

We ask that our Clerks act as Elders for this meeting.

4. Reports of U19s events of 2024 and planned events for 2025

a. Under 19s Committee

Andy Beck, convenor of the U19s Committee has reported on behalf of the U19's co-ordinating group. His report follows:

In 2024 Jo Baynham, our regional Youth Development Worker, has continued to be an invaluable source of information and expertise to the committee, as well as being involved in running some of the events. We are very grateful to all Area Meetings for agreeing to fund Jo's position for a further 3 years.

Holiday School happened as usual in the school summer holiday, and there were 2 Junior Holidays weekend events, which you hear about in their respective reports.

Responsibility for Link Group has now transferred from Britain Yearly Meeting to Quakers in Yorkshire. There have been several weekend gatherings, which you will also hear about in their report a little later on.

The committee met three times in 2024 – in March, May, and November.

Our main focus has been on activities at Holiday School, Junior Holidays, and Link Group. The Meeting will hear more from each of those groups in their respective reports.

We have continued to develop a model for Safeguarding training, which is now in place. We have focussed on delivering training either on-line, or in-person at planning meetings and at the start of the events themselves, to minimise the need for leaders to make special trips to training courses.

On the subject of Safeguarding, Ruth McTighe has now finished her service as safeguarding co-ordinator, and we extremely grateful for all her hard work. BYM's safeguarding policy (for all ages, not just Children and Young People) has recently been updated, and Ruth's final task has been to update QiY's policy to ensure it is still aligned. We look forward to working with the new co-ordinator: a name would be welcomed to serve, either to Andy Beck or QiY Nominations Committee.

I reported last year that in conjunction with Trustees, we were reviewing whether our structures need re-shaping, in order to best support the under-19s activities and events. What has emerged from that exercise is that we have been renamed from a "group" to a "committee" and we've agreed a new Terms of Reference document. This is going to include the list of specific regulatory responsibilities and where each one sits – i.e. whether with Trustees, the Safeguarding Officer, or our committee.

Finally, we've considered the way that organising groups for each "event type" are formed, and we don't think that direct appointment from QiY via Nominations Committee is the best way. Essentially, Holiday School has been successfully self-nominating for many years, and Link Group has been set up this way, so it makes sense for Junior Holidays to move in the same direction.

We have heard that further discussion on the proposal on Nominations will continue and result in a formal proposal being made to a future meeting of QiY.

We thank Andy for his report to us today.

b. Junior Holidays 2024

Rebecca Gilmour has shared a presentation on Junior Holidays 2024 with us.

There were two residential weekends. There were 33 young people aged 6-13 at Curly Hill, a new venue in Ilkley, in June with 2 teenage volunteers, 6 adult volunteers and 1 staff member, where the theme was 'nurturing nature'. The weather was perfect for an outdoor venue although the marquee was welcome for activities and the area is perfect for walks.

Support within the group was excellent and levels of participation were high. There was good food and plenty of cake.

At Barmoor where the theme was 'Friends and friends' there were 20 children aged 7-11. A highlight was the northern lights on the first evening. Barmoor indoors offers opportunities for making friendships and there was much talk of friendships being made.

Both holidays broke even which meant that Junior Holidays were able to support local bursaries. The cost of holidays seems to provide a good basis for attendance.

There is a strong volunteer team which has grown and the team is looking at 3 holidays in 2025 with a tighter age range and in particular to support the younger attenders. The extra holiday will be at Raywell Park, near Hull. There is a strategy to encourage the transition from Junior Holidays to Holiday School.

We thank Rebecca, and the team, for this report and associated photographs, which will be posted on the QiY website.

c. Yorkshire Friends Holiday School

Elisha Cruthers, a staff member of YFHS, has spoken on behalf of Yorkshire Friends Holiday School 2024 Elspeth Moore, illustrated by photos.

There were 63 participants of 13–20-year-olds present, still down on pre-pandemic levels, but with encouraging numbers of new participants. The theme of 'A Waste of a World' covered a range of ideas. Space was a key feature of the second day.

Games included making music videos, with each nest group covering all the roles involved in making films.

There was a challenge on what sort of action will make a change within society. One session looked at waste and sustainable fashion, followed by Social Action in practice with a group vigil in St. Helens Square in York. There was plenty of discussion as well as moving musical performances and many activities. It was a very full week.

Everyone present feels included and valued for who they are.

The 2025 event will take place at Bootham 17th-24th August.

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

d. Yorkshire Link Group

We were joined by Sasha Lawson Frost who reported on behalf of the Yorkshire Link group. Sasha talked to her presentation.

The group meets on 3 weekends a year for school years 7-13, the last meetings in 2024 being at York and Barmoor. It offers a distinctly Quaker space although not all are Quakers but there is a broader atmosphere where people can relax into their friendships.

Sasha has told us of the events at the Link Group and also described some of the things that participants have learned so far by being there.

There is a good level of volunteers who provide continuity in understanding those present, who respond really well to deep conversations about Quakerism. There are also things that still need to be learned as they move into 2025 including how to foster ministry within and outside meeting for worship. There have been many highlights as well, all being place on the QiY website.

Volunteers are really valuable to the continuation of the Link Group.

We thank Jo Baynham in his role of re-opening the Link group over the last 2-3 years and his efforts behind the scenes to facilitate the events to encourage more participation from young people.

We thank Sasha for her report, the slides of which will be on the QiY website.

5. Easter Settlement Report

Pauline Leonard has spoken to the report from the Easter Settlement Planning group, as follows:

Forty Friends and one two-year-old gathered together at the Cober Hill Guest House over the Easter weekend in 2024. Fifteen stayed over until the Tuesday morning.

The theme for the weekend was “Hope, Seeing Light in the Darkness” and we were pleased to welcome Ben Wood, theologian and author of “The Living Fountain”, to be our main speaker. Ben stayed with us all weekend and his input was much appreciated. He brought tremendous insights and enabled a welcome continuity to the whole weekend of exploration. This included formal presentations, small group discussions, practical art using hard-boiled eggs and meeting a deadline to produce a very special edition; the Hopeful Friend.

Friends were generous with their offers of activities including crocheting, wood-block printing, knitting and Tai Chi. Country dancing and circle dancing on Saturday were facilitated and on Sunday evening we enjoyed singing and clapping rounds, poetry and expressive dance and thought-provoking readings.

Easter Sunday morning started with Tai Chi and Easter hymns and then an egg hunt in which we were joined by the children and young people from the Link Group. Jo Baynham, Youth Development Worker for Quakers in Yorkshire had organised the Link Group to meet for a couple of nights stay at Scarborough Meeting House. The youngsters brought much liveliness and energy and we were happy to provide the Easter eggs.

We give thanks to the four Friends who facilitated Home Groups, providing the opportunity to meet in a smaller number for discussion and a chance to get to know other friends. We organised helpful online preparation for the Home Group Facilitators this year, which was enabled by support from QiY for a facilitators’ course provided by Woodbrooke. We thank Jenny Sergeant for this initiative.

Finance

Cost for the weekend was £370 for full board for three nights and £450 for four nights. We were very grateful for donations of £430 from four Friends which subsidised two young people and three other Friends to participate in the weekend. Also some Friends received a bursary from their local Meeting.

INCOME	
<i>Booking Fees</i>	<i>£15,990</i>
<i>Bursary</i>	<i>£200</i>
<i>Total Income</i>	<i>£16,149</i>
EXPENDITURE	
<i>Cober Hill deposit</i>	<i>£3,000</i>
<i>Cober Hill payment</i>	<i>£11,249.50</i>
<i>Cober Hill final payment</i>	<i>£1,382.51</i>
<i>Woodbrooke fee</i>	<i>£400</i>

In 2024 there was little financial support from Quakers in Yorkshire apart from making payments to Cober Hill which were covered by booking fees. This was possible because unlike previous years there was no programme provided by children's workers, who in the past were subsidised. Only one family attended and so there were no applications to QiY for a family subsidy.

We feel that though the cost of the weekend is comparable to that of other hotels and guest houses, it is not affordable for many families.

COSTS

Child 0 – 4years is free

Child aged 5 – 13years is £182.99

Child aged 14 - 18 is same as an adult £365.87

QiY are sponsoring a new venture in August 2025 - the Yorkshire Quaker Camp - which will experimentally offer families a cheaper option to gather together. Jo Baynham and Craig Barnett are leading the planning.

The Future - 2025

Easter Settlement has changed over the last 10 years and has gone from having families with up to 25 children taking part to one two-year-old in 2024.

The Planning Group has discussed the best way forward and bearing in mind that QiY are not in a position to offer substantial subsidies to families we will try a new approach in 2025.

There will be no formal Easter Settlement in 2025. Friends will gather over the Easter weekend but will make a booking direct to Cober Hill. The staff are very willing to enable us to carry on meeting and to use some of the public areas but not on the scale of past years. The gathering from Friday 18th to Monday 21st April 2025 will be more informal though we hope to share activities such as eating together, walking, dancing, creative times and discussion.

We thank Pauline for her report together with all those who are contributing to the future of the Easter Settlement with their work in the Planning group. 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. Outreach Projects Committee

Ken R Smith has read the report from the Quaker Outreach Projects Committee, which follows.

During the year we held 3 meetings, all on line, and authorised grants in response to 4 applications for funding.

- 1. We authorised a grant of £400 to help pay for the reprinting of a book entitled **Roots of Radicalism in the Yorkshire Dales**. The first edition was published in 2020, concerned with the history of Airton Meeting and the early development of Quakerism in West Yorkshire. The reprinted edition, which came out in time for our George Fox tea at July 2024 QIY contained new*

material on the circumstances and context in which Quakerism developed in Yorkshire and the reasons for its rapid, early adoption and growth in our area.

- 2. We discerned the need and recommended a grant of £660 to support the *Elderly Social Club* which meets at New Earswick meeting house.**

Quakers at New Earswick meeting applied for a grant to run a monthly social club for older people in the New Earswick and Huntington areas of York, in collaboration with Age UK. These areas have a relatively high proportion of older residents. Age UK York will provide transport (at cost) to enable people to get to the club. The Social Club meetings will start in October and run for a year in the first instance.

'The initiative is intended to help older people make social connections and directly help to reduce loneliness and increase happiness. In York, 25.7% of York residents reported that they felt lonely often/always/some of the time in a 2020 survey and this isolation increased further as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Locally, loneliness "is a larger problem in York than elsewhere, with our loneliness figures the third worst in the region...

The proposed collaboration between Age UK York and the New Earswick Quaker Meeting House is a local and person led response to this need.

- 3. We authorised a grant of £400 to fund *Shared Worlds Creative Community* event at Sheffield Central Quaker Meeting. This funding is to support a further Shared World event to combine a performance by a multi-cultural dance group 'Create Dance Pitsmoor', with a performance by One World Choir and others on 11th May 2024 at Sheffield Quaker Meeting House.**

Sheffield Quakers write:

"We have a Meeting House that is currently under used. We have a Quaker community that is predominantly white. We have limited contact with people from our diverse Sheffield Community including underrepresented groups. We would like to forge stronger links with our wider Sheffield Community through collaboration, shared events and offering use of our spacious city centre Meeting House. The groups named above already reach out to their wider community and work with a diverse range of people. We are keen to engage with them, learn from them and help enable them to flourish. 'Create Dance Pitsmoor' is a junior dance troupe situated in a socially deprived part of Sheffield with a very culturally diverse community. It is led by the sister of one of our Members. One World Choir brings together people from many countries currently living in Sheffield. It works with many refugees and brings a strong sense of belonging. One of our Members is part of the choir. We have run previous successful events with One World Choir at the Meeting House which have been very popular".

- 4. We agreed to a request from Settle Meeting for £200 in order to run a Quaker Quest event over 3 evenings in October 2024.**

27 attended the first night - 40% were non-Quakers

22 attended both the second and third nights approximately 50% were non-Quakers.

Leaflets and books were also taken from our dispenser at the gate so we do feel that we reached out to more than actually attended."

As you can see from these events, we have funded, to a total of £1,660, a wide variety of outreach opportunities.

It's important that Quakers and Meetings in Quakers in Yorkshire know that there are funds available to support outreach opportunities.

We thank Ken for this report.

7. Racial Justice Group Update

John Margham, on behalf of Ruth McTighe, who is indisposed as a result of an accident on black ice, has reported to us on the latest developments for the Racial Justice group.

He has spoken to the UN report on Racial Discrimination in the UK. The group looks to the elimination of such discrimination and this report is the first in UK for 8 years.

The full report from Ruth McTighe follows.

UN report on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in the UK 2024

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) is the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination by all states that have ratified it. They reviewed progress in the UK in August 2024 for the first time in 8 years. Quakers in Britain and civil society organisations have repeatedly suggested ways to address racial discrimination, but the UK government has habitually failed to act on them.

Quakers in Britain and many other organisations submitted evidence to the review. A summary of the Quaker submission and a video that was also sent are available at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/quakers-submit-video-evidence-on-lack-of-uk-progress-on-racism-to-the-un> .

The report was published at the end of August, and makes concerning reading. There is a Quaker press release at <https://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/un-committee-echoes-quaker-concerns-over-racism-in-the-uk> and the full report is available at https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2FC%2FGBR%2FCO%2F24-26&Lang=en The committee welcomed the announcement that the Rwanda scheme was to be cancelled, but the only other positive aspects identified were the range of legislative and policy measures that have been implemented in 2024, all of which were by the devolved governments of Scotland and Wales, or the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

Areas of concern included

- ↯ hate crimes, hate speech and xenophobia, including by politicians and public figures*
- ↯ recurring racist acts and violence by far right extremists and white supremacists*
- ↯ disproportionate impacts on ethnic minorities of official actions such as stop-and-search, strip searching (including of children), racial profiling, excessive use of force by the police, the whole legal justice process, the Prevent programme, and school exclusions, as well as the effects of poverty, unemployment and low wages*
- ↯ discriminatory immigration law*
- ↯ failure to include the history of colonialism and slavery in the school curriculum*
- ↯ the restriction of the right of peaceful assembly*
- ↯ inadequate data on the extent of racial discrimination*

There is an extensive list of recommendations, including a requirement for the UK to ratify Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights regarding discrimination. While the Welsh Government published an update of their Antiracist Wales Action Plan in November 2024, I have been unable to find any equivalent evidence of action by the governments of the UK or Scotland.

Friends are encouraged to access the YouTube video in the first link which represents the submission by Edwina Peart to the UN Commission.

We have heard that Sheffield has a very active group looking at racial justice and there are groups that meet regularly in Leeds. We ask if someone from the BYM Reparations group might join us at a future QiY meeting.

We thank Ruth and the group for their work in bringing racial justice issues to our attention.

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

We are advised that Madeleine Kay of York AM has requested release from service on QiY Nominations Committee. We agree to this request.

c. Appointments

(i) The Nominations Committee from the Mount School has brought us the following nomination for service:

From 1st February 2025 until 31st December 2028:

Alison Lydon to serve as a governor for a first term

This nomination being acceptable, the Friend is appointed accordingly.

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

Ruth McTighe of Central Yorkshire AM to serve a second term as QiY trustee from 1st January 2025 until 31st December 2027.

Pat Easton of York AM to serve on QiY Nominations Committee from 1st January 2025 to 31st December 2026.

Ann Bettys of Brighthouse West Yorkshire AM to serve on QiY Nominations Committee from 1st January 2025 to 31st December 2027.

These nominations being acceptable, the Friends are appointed accordingly.

(iii) We are grateful to receive an offer from Roy Love for him to continue his service as acting QiY Treasurer until 31st December 2025.

We thank Friends for accepting nomination for service.

d. Nominations Required

Quakers in Yorkshire are seeking a Safeguarding Coordinator to serve for 3 years from January 2025. Our Nominations Committee would welcome names brought forward for their consideration.

9. Report on Simplification and Reinvigoration

David Olver, Clerk of QiY Trustees, has spoken to us about the steady progress being made towards the simplification and reinvigoration of Quaker bodies in Yorkshire, a process that is being coordinated by the working group formed of AM representatives. One aspect in particular will be at the forefront of concern for all Friends, namely the appointment of trustees to serve the new body, Yorkshire Quakers. This is an important stage of the process and all Area Meetings are asked to support the QiY Nominations Committee with suitable names when requested by the Nominations Committee.

This meeting agrees that QiY as a charity supports the work that has taken place so far and hopes that the working group will be able to finalise details in due course. On this basis QiY agrees to join the new charity as previously notified to all AMs with the benefits that those changes have for QiY as a whole.

Friends will also be interested to know that Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, will be joining us at Doncaster for our meeting on 26th April to prompt a discussion on the spiritual benefits that we might seek from the reorganisation and simplification of our necessary business. Paul will be using examples from the other schemes that are underway in the UK and showing how our meetings might change in the future.

10. Report on 2024 and Plans for 2025.

Craig Barnet and Jo Baynham have reported on their hopes and plans.

Jo thanks us for agreeing to re-new his contract and support his efforts to encourage and invigorate Quaker activity in Yorkshire.

Three priorities stand out:

- A new all age and family programme;
- A network of volunteers at all levels;
- Support all meetings to be multi-generational.

Jo reported that the all-age summer camp is fully booked, a sign of the level of demand in Yorkshire.

Craig spoke very positively of the working relationship that has been established with Jo and helping the Quaker community to thrive in Yorkshire. He has spoken of the new people and families who are now attending his local meeting in Sheffield. There is support for all meetings in how we welcome and encourage new members. LMs will be encouraged to sign up to 'Discovering Quakers' designed to support newcomers and Craig can also provide resources for families and young adults.

There will be further building on the activities for young people provided by QiY as long as they are relevant to the needs of those people. This is the way to a vibrant Quaker community across Yorkshire that is multi-generational. There is a planning group running the summer camp that will eventually open up to LMs over Yorkshire but the summer camp for 2025 is fully booked at this stage which is taken up by families and young people, a significant expression of demand.

There will be local and regional workshops on how meetings can simplify their processes on a local and national basis. Meetings will be notified for role holders to take part in sessions for achieving simplification and reinvigoration.

Friends are encouraged to read the supporting document on the QiY website.

11. Report from the FWCC Plenary session, August 2024

We have been joined by Catherine Putz and Mark Holtom from Hebden Bridge LM and Brighouse West Yorkshire AM to share with us their experience of attending the FWCC Plenary session held in South Africa in August 2024.

The theme was 'Living the Spirit of Ubuntu'. Ubuntu is a concept of interdependent community from the Zulu language. A small prompt led to a trip of discovery through travel and involvement with the international community of Friends.

Mark joined the Worship planning group that involved many different traditions and looked at how a group could manage and provide the daily worship sessions.

Catherine joined the Programme planning group which needed to include people across the world, as individuals or in hubs, and being available daily from 08.00 to midnight.

The groups presented significant challenges to meet the needs of such a diverse community.

Special mention was made of Simon Lamb, Clerk of FWCC from Ireland, who died unexpectedly and recently.

Catherine and Mark travelled overland from Hebden Bridge to the FWCC world plenary in Johannesburg. Trains and buses were the main modes and some areas required a bus journey where timetables did not always exist. Faith was a key quality on this journey.

We saw the presentation of the journey from Hebden Bridge which was achieved in stages. Catherine and Mark along the way met with various bodies who they have

supported and who are working on projects, including the American Friends Service Committee who are very active in the Horn of Africa and we are invited to check their website. In Burundi they attended a Quaker meeting of over 1000 people. They visited a range of varied and inspiring projects in DRC, supported by the Quaker Congo partnership. Part of the journey around DRC and Burundi required car, boat and motorbike but the rising level of Lake Tanganyika and recent rains led to flooding that complicated travel.

The journey from Burundi to Dar-es-Salaam required a 3-day train journey before arrival in South Africa, with a stay in Soweto before the 7-day plenary from 5th to 12th August. It was a bit of a Quaker bubble, albeit in a very diverse group of 500 people. There were many delegates from Kenya, and other parts of East Africa. Friends from northern hemisphere paid a premium to attend whether in person or online as a means of subsidising the participation of global south delegates.

There were challenging moments dealing with the conditions under which some young Quakers live and the impact of legislation on their chosen way of life.

We saw pictures of some of the events and personnel during the plenary as well as later visits to Cape Town and Johannesburg meetings. It was quite a trek.

Documents supporting the FWCC Plenary session as well as the presentation of slides will be placed on the QiY website.

We thank Catherine and Mark for sharing their experience of a momentous journey through Africa from Hebden Bridge.

12. Concluding Minute

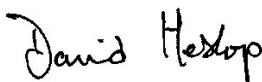
We thank Leeds Carlton Hill LM and Leeds AM for their hospitality today and for the technical support provided by Robert Keeble.

We are grateful to all those who have reported to us at this meeting and we are encouraged by the energy being demonstrated in the activities that we have heard about in Yorkshire

There being no further business to be taken today, we conclude. We intend to meet again in person and online at Doncaster Meeting House on the 26th April 2025, should nothing occur to prevent.



David Bunney



David Heslop

&

Co-Clerks - Quakers in Yorkshire

Notices

Pauline Leonard, in a postscript to her report, has told us again of the informal meeting at Cober Hill to 18th to 21st April 2025 and 10 people have already applied.